

**SILENTLY STRUGGLE: EVERYDAY DIVERGENCE IN
SURVIVING IN TEXTILE & APPAREL INDUSTRIES IN
INDIA**

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Abstract

Many scholars have noted the rise of labor militancy in contemporary India. This rise is often linked to the growing discontent of an expanding working class facing harsh market conditions. We might expect workers in Textiles & Apparel enterprises, which have suffered state-cut backs and harsh privatization, to be among the most militant. This study reveals, however, that workers at one of such Private industries are far from militant. The urgency of survival and the denial of alternative work opportunities have effectively prevented any form of collective resistance on the part of these workers. Instead, their resistance only manifests in forms of so-called everyday resistance. Furthermore, these forms of resistance work as a double-edged weapon with harmful consequences for both the regime and its workers.

Key words

Everyday resistance, labor movement, neoliberal policy, state-owned enterprise workers.

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Introduction

Labor unrest, whether in the form of collective confrontations or law suits, has increased dramatically in contemporary India. Recent statistics from the Supreme Court showed that the number of participants in industrial disputes in India has grown from around 10,000 in 1993 to 317,000 in 2009, with the total number of participants increasing from 0.7 million to over 5.4 million. This means that in 2009, approximately 21.7 million industrial workers were involved in some form of labor dispute. Similarly, according to one scholar's estimation in that same year, there were around 90,000 mass incidents throughout India, one third of which were labor-related. This puts the number of strikes and collective worker protests in 2009 at around 30,000. Such widespread labor militancy has caught the attention of labor studies scholars both within and outside of India, and numerous accounts of these labor movements have been recorded and analyzed in a recently published article, claim that, along with the mass movement of capital into India and the deepening commoditization of labor, a consolidated Indian working class has finally been created that responds to economic transformations through collective organization and even revolutionary actions. Their argument speaks to the turbulent labor formation process and labor movement development in contemporary India, where workers are having to adjust to, negotiate with, and fight against the oppressive labor regimes that have accompanied India's great transformation from an autarkic socialist country to a major player in the framework of neoliberal global capitalism.

Amidst all this turbulence and excitement, however, there is another form of resistance that has been constantly and, to a certain degree, understandably dismissed – the so-called 'everyday resistance' famously identified and examined by James Scott (1987). This kind of long-lasting resistance, with its more spontaneous, individualized, subdued, and relatively safer manifestations, is always adopted by subordinated social groups in human history (Hobsbawm 1965; Bloch 1970; Gaventa 1980; 1991; Friedman, Pickowicz, Selden and Johnson 1991). This study aims to re-explore and re-evaluate this easily ignored, but prevalent form of resistance as it is enacted by Indian workers, either as a complement to open collective resistance or as the main or sole form of resistance to the massive transformations of India's entry into globalized capitalism. It investigates how workers have responded to the sharp deterioration in their living and working environment caused by neoliberal market reform, from the middle of the 1990s to the present.

Statement of the Problem

The Textiles & Apparel sector in India employs nearly 38 million workers of which the Bangalore units employ around 10 lakhs. The demography of the workforce reveals that it is predominantly young, semi-skilled and un-organized.

This study is an attempt to evaluate the conditions of labour in Textiles & Apparel sector. The task undertaken might look somewhat unrealistic as the organized sector in the country is yet to fully adopt the labour standards and practices imposed on them by a very well developed regime of labour legislations.

The ILS was imposed on the exporting units mainly because the public opinion in developed countries, who import goods and services from developing countries, requires the business firms to do so. It's a proof of higher level of human consciousness in the developed world.

The ILS is an extension of the principles of human rights as enunciated in UN charter. They are:

Freedom of association & Collective bargaining

Employment policy

Employment promotion

Employment security

Wages

Working time and Occupational safety and health

It can be seen clearly that most of the labour standards are also expressly stated in the various Indian Labour Laws. It seems the attempt by the importers to enforce the same provisions of labour laws is an open admission of laxity or non-enforcement of Indian labour laws.

Scope of the Study

Though being a descriptive study, an assessment of the current state of affairs of the labour conditions in Bangalore cluster is the main objective. However this study is limited to A sample of Textiles & Apparel units is subjected to an evaluation of current state of affairs and the ILS that expected to adhere.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to assess the current status of labour conditions in Bangalore cluster, through a descriptive method.

The study proposes to meet the following objectives:

- ✓ To make an assessment of current status of labour practices in Bangalore cluster.
- ✓ To list the international labour standards with reference to Textiles & Apparel industry.
- ✓ To evaluate compliance with international labour standards in Bangalore cluster.
- ✓ To evaluate the consequence of the variations between the standards and the labour practices.
- ✓ To make suggestions for managements, policy makers and governments.

Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- Labour standards adopted in Bangalore cluster are not in accordance with International labour standards.
- Labour standards have no impact on the performance of the employees of Textiles and Apparel factories
- Lack of awareness of the labour rights as per Labour standards on the part of employees.
- Social security measures of Indian firms are not comparable with International social security measures. There is laxity in enforcement of labour standards on the part of the management and government

Research Methodology

Basic Research Design

The basic research design adopted for the study is descriptive. Primary and secondary data pertaining to selected units in Bangalore cluster is analyzed using various statistical methods to evaluate the current status of Struggle conditions and standards.

Secondary Research Design

The tools of secondary research design such as observation, personal interviews were also used. As part of the study, a constant interaction with various stakeholders was carried out. Discuss various aspects of the study with the Managements, stakeholders. Trade unions, workers, NGOs, consultants and government agencies were invited to the meetings.

The study highlights the growing complexity of Textiles and Apparel industry owing to globalization.

Questionnaire Design

Structured questionnaire, personal interviews and discussions were the methods adopted for gathering primary data. These interviews and discussions were held during 2012 and were clearly focused on the research objectives.

Sampling Design

Population

The population for the study consists of 150 (approx) Textiles and Apparel manufacturing units in Bangalore cluster.

Sample Size

Ten Textiles and Twenty Apparel units are selected for the study based on convenience stratified sampling – Both units from each of the large, medium and small segments.

Sample Unit

Workers and officers constitute the sample unit. One hundred and leaven employees from each unit are selected for interview and questionnaire administration. The break up is as follows:

- ✓ One General Manager, five managers and five supervisors from each of the selected sample units will be interviewed with open-ended questionnaires.
- ✓ One hundred workers from each sample units will be interviewed with close-ended questionnaires. .

Limitations of the Study

There are nearly ten clusters across India. This study focuses only on Bangalore cluster. Being a sample survey, the study suffers from limitations that generally affect a sample survey

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that global Textiles and Apparel industry value chain has benefited the companies that are able to design and brand clothing successfully. It is natural to expect that the factory workers who are at the lower end of the value chain also benefit reasonably in the value creation process. However, various empirical studies have shown that in global trade the benefits of a successful value chain are not fairly distributed. The factory workers are put to long hours of work under conditions that have long-term consequences for the health and welfare of the workers. Establishment of ILS is an evidence of the unsatisfactory labour conditions that prevail in globalized garment industry. The pretext of the intense competition and the need for being cost effective cannot be justification for non compliance or lacks adoption of ILS. Bangalore cluster being an important cluster in India needs to be studied closely.

LITERATURE SURVEY

A number of studies have been conducted on various issues of garment industry. However studies focused on labor issues have been few indicating insufficiency of research. Among the available literature, recent studies are reviewed here.

Ray Marshall [2005]²⁸ concluded that labour standards have always been very controversial because they are at the centre of the clashes between strong political, economic and ideological interests. Building consensus on labour standards therefore could help improve the rules governing an open and expanding global economy.

R. Gopinath Rao (2005)²⁹ reveals that the network among cluster actors is very realizable. The role of the association ends only in organizing meeting only, when the entrepreneurs face problems otherwise there is no meeting or interaction. This may be due to the fear that technology may be replicated and marketing related information may be passed on. Totally they work in isolated form. A strong net work has to be created among cluster actors so that they can jointly solve their problems like pressurize government in liberating the rules and regulation,

Eric Graval and Quentin Delpech [2008]⁴⁰ stated that over the last two decades, complementarily between national and international labour law and the impact of international labour standards on national legal rules have generated ever-widening debates – well beyond the confines of the legal profession. The issues raised by the incorporation of international labour standards into national law have provoked extensive legal discussion of the impact and effectiveness of ILO standards

Anuradha Kalhan (2008)⁴² evaluated empirically the impact of export- oriented garment industry in Bangalore on its workers in terms of the conditions of their employment; wages; cost of living; and expenditure patterns; working conditions, and the state of their unions.

Gregg Nebel [2008]⁴³ opine that when considering the garment manufacturing industry, there are consistent linkages between garment production, raw material

supplies, and the cost of labor. Proximity and availability have driven competitiveness.

Table 1: India's Garment Exports Segment-wise and Fibre-wise Composition: 1991/92-1999

Knitted Garments			Handloom Garments				Mill Made Garments		
Year	Cotton	Synthetic	Wool	Cotton	Synthetic	Wool	Cotton	Synthetic	Wool
91-92	22.1	0.9	0.30	0.4	-	0.00	41.3	28.9	0.2
92-93	26.5	0.9	1.2	0.7	0.2	0.00	46.1	24.2	0.5
93-94	26.5	1.3	1.8	0.7	0.2	0.00	47.9	20.4	1.4
1995	23.3	1.06	1.46	0.2	0.03	0.00	44.8	25.12	2.29
1996	26.59	1.6	2.48	0.61	0.01	0.02	44.1	23.08	0.98
1997	29.4	1.23	2.52	0.25	0.01	0.01	42.01	23.67	1.33
1998	28.11	1.86	2.26	0.16	0.01	0.02	42.51	24.26	0.81
1999	30.97	2.28	2.16	0.13	0.03	0.03	39.34	23.88	1.18

Source: Handbook of Garment Export Statistics, AEPC, various issues.
www.aepcindia

Table 2: Units in Various Operations

Operations	Number of Units
Knitting/Stitching Units	75
Dyeing and Bleaching	50
Fabric Printing	50
Embroidery	65
Other Ancillary Units	40
Compacting and Calendaring	15

Total	295
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Source: South Indian Hosiery Manufacturers Association (SIHMA), Bulletin, 1998

LABOUR CONDITIONS IN THE TEXTILES AND APPAREL INDUSTRY

Labour legislations in India are regarded as relatively strong and exhaustive. But, they have failed miserably in enforcement. Labour rights were achieved in India mainly through strong collective bargaining measures by the labour unions during 1950 and 1970s. These efforts received only marginal support from the governments, in spite of the fundamentally egalitarian constitutional framework and industry leaders. The route of collective bargaining in this phase, which was also the period of heavy industrialization though large public sector undertaking in manufacturing and utilities was also marked by high wastage of man hours and other destructive consequences that result from a highly organized, highly rights charged labour situation.

Table 3: Employment in the Textile and Garment Industry in India (2001)

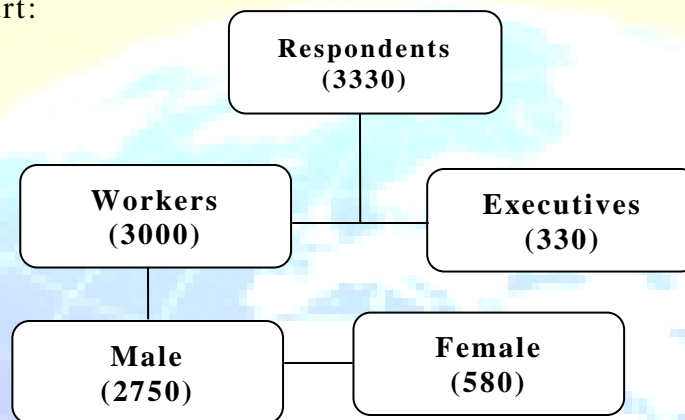
No. Sector	Employment (In Millions)	Employment (percent of Total)
Handicrafts	7.1	18.64
Sericulture (Silk Industry)	6.0	16.00
Readymade Garments	3.0	7.87
Woolens	1.2	3.15
Handloom	12.4	32.5
Decentralized Power loom	6.8	17.85
Man-made Fibre/Filament Yarn	0.06	0.16
Cotton/Man-made Fibre/Yarn Textile/Mills	1.14	2.99
Jute	0.4	1.05
Total	38.1	100

Source: Tait N, 2001.

FINDINGS LABOUR STANDARDS COMPLIANCE IN BANGALORE CLUSTER

Five labour standards to be followed in the sector are explained here. The compliance position in Bangalore with regard to statutory regulations and standards follows this section. (I) Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, (II) Employment Policy and Promotion, (III) Employment Security (IV) Wages and Working timings, (V) Occupational Safety Health welfare & social security

This analysis of primary data pertaining to employees and executives collected through a questionnaire. The composition of the respondents is given in the following chart:



In order to meet the research objectives and analysis more accurate, opinion is collected under ten different labels viz., (I) Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, (II) Employment Policy and Promotion, (III) Employment Security (IV) Wages and Working timings,(V) Occupational Safety Health welfare & social security

The analysis in the first step is based on descriptive statistics. The responses are recorded as “Yes” or “No” to various items and the percentage of responses is tabulated. In the second step a Chi Square table is prepared along-with the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis.

Table 4: Comparison of opinions between workers and executives – Freedom of Association & Collective Bargaining

(In numbers and percentage)

Employees	Descriptions	Opinions		Total
		No	Yes	
Worker	Count	3000	0	3000
	Percentage	100	0	100.00%
Executives	Count	20	310	330
	Percentage	6	94	100.00%
	Count	3020	310	3330
	Percentage	90.69	9.31	100.00%

Source: Questionnaire data

Null Hypothesis:

There is no difference of opinion between workers and executives.

Alternative Hypothesis:

There is difference of opinion between workers and executives.

Significance Level: 1% Chi-Square Test Results

X ² Calculated value	118.751*
Significant at	0.000
Degrees of Freedom	01

*Significant at one percent level.

The above tables reveal that there is marked difference in opinion between executives and workers regarding the existence of freedom of association and collective bargaining. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5: Comparison between Workers and Executives- Employment Policy and Promotion
(In numbers and percentage)

Employees	Descriptions	Opinions		Total
		No	Yes	

Worker	Count	1750	1250	3000
	Percentage	58.33	41.67	100
Executives	Count	45	285	330
	Percentage	13.63	86.37	100
Total	Count	1795	1535	3330
	Percentage	53.91	46.09	100

Source: Questionnaire data

Null Hypothesis:

There is no difference of opinion between workers and executives.

Alternative Hypothesis:

There is difference of opinion between workers and executives.

Significance Level: 1%

Chi-Square Test Results

X ² Calculated value	81.035
Significant at	0.000
Degrees of Freedom	01

Significant at one percent level

The above tables reveal that there are differences in opinions between executives and workers regarding the EPP. The chi-square test results are significant at one percent level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6:

Comparison between Workers and Executives – Employment Security
(In numbers and percentage)

Employees	Descriptions	Opinions		Total
		No	Yes	
Worker	Count	1400	1600	3000
	Percentage	46.67	53.33	100
Executives	Count	88	242	330
	Percentage	26.67	73.34	100
Total	Count	1488	1842	3330

	Percentage	44.69	55.31	100
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Source: Questionnaire data

Chi-Square Test Results

X ² Calculated value	225.707
Significant at	0.000
Degrees of Freedom	01

Significant at one percent level

The above tables reveal that there are differences in opinions between executives and workers regarding the Employment Security. Fifty three percent of workers and seventy three percent of the executives have given the positive response. The chi-square test results are significant at one percent level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 7: Comparison between Workers and Executives-Wage and Working Time (In numbers and percentage)

Employees	Descriptions	Opinions		Total
		No	Yes	
Worker	Count	740	2260	3000
	Percentage	24.67	75.33	100
Executives	Count	50	280	330
	Percentage	15.15	84.85	100
Total	Count	790	2540	3300
	Percentage	23.73	76.27	100

Source: Questionnaire data

Null Hypothesis:

There is no difference of opinion between workers and executives.

Alternative Hypothesis:

There is difference of opinion between workers and executives.

Significance Level: 1%

Chi-Square Test Results

X ² Calculated value	36.784
Significant at	0.000
Degrees of Freedom	01

Significant at one percent level

The above tables reveal that there are differences in opinions between executives and workers regarding the WWT. Seventy five percent of workers and 84 percent of the executives have given the positive response. The chi-square test results are significant at one percent level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected

Table 8: Comparison between Workers and Executives - Occupational Safety Health Welfare and Social Security

(In numbers and percentage)

Employees	Descriptions	Opinions		Total
		No	Yes	
Worker	Count	1660	1340	3000
	Percentage	55.33	44.67	100
Executives	Count	103	227	330
	Percentage	31.21	68.79	100
Total	Count	1763	1567	3330
	Percentage	52.94	47.06	100

Source: Questionnaire data

Chi-Square Test Results

X ² Calculated value	60.147
Significant at	0.000
Degrees of Freedom	01

Significant at one percent level

The above tables reveal that there are differences in opinions between executives and workers regarding the OSHWSS. Forty five percent of workers

and 68 percent of the executives have given the positive response. The chi-square test results are significant at one percent level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, the main objective of this study is to make an assessment of the current status of labour practices in Textiles and Apparel industry and make an evaluation of these practices against the international labour standards. It is also intended to evaluate the consequences of any variation between the practices and the standards and their impact on the units, workers and the society at large.

To meet the above mentioned objectives, literature survey has been made and the background of the labour standards has been discussed in detail. The labour standards that have been established by the UN and ratified by almost all the member Countries have been the culmination of long years of struggle by the labour and enlightened political leadership. In this present study, ten ILS have been adopted and a sample survey has been conducted to evaluate the labour practices against these standards. Appropriate research methodology has been used for this purpose.

Obtaining primary data was a difficult task. For this reason alone, research work in this particular area has stagnated. So far, there are not many research works involving empirical data. This study has used a questionnaire that elicits opinion from workers and executives about the compliance with ILS.

The sample for this study consists of 3330 respondents of whom 3000 represent workers and 330 represent executives. Of the 3000 workers 600 are male workers and 2400 are female workers.

The nature of employment in industry which uses masses of low skilled workers most of whom are migrant and who are unable to establish their residents in a cluster has led to lack of unity, lack of unionization and consequently poor

bargaining power. The workforce in the industry is in a very vulnerable position and has no recourse to the protection of the government or the backing of law. In spite of adverse working conditions in the factory such as long hours of work, low wages, unhygienic conditions of work, hazardous operations and poor quality of supervision at the work place, there are not been any significant protests or strikes by the workers to assert their lawful rights and to get remedy. Another important aspect of the industrial relations and labour conditions is the prevalence of forced labour practices. Workers particularly female workers are denied the benefit of job rotation. Most of them are forced to perform the same operation for very long time, which is definitely detrimental to their mental and physical health. Confining workers to long hours of repetitive and monotonous job is a cruel labour practice indeed. Focusing on labour standard compliance in Bangalore cluster, it could be said that the results of the empirical study have reinforced in the earlier findings. A perceptual analysis of eight stakeholders reveals that there is no unanimity about the enforcement of the ILS. There is complete division of opinion between workers and management. Analysis of the responses to the questionnaire is made. In every case the null hypothesis is rejected indicating that the opinion of the workers about compliance with the labour standard is in direct contrast to that of the executives. This is an indication of the miss trust between workers and executives. It also indicates a very unhealthy organizational climate characterized by lack of trust, lack of free flow of information and more importantly absence of enlightened management.

Recommendations

In spite of these real world factors, many successful government manufacturers have been able to get through the hurdle of ILS. But, the same relaxed and permissive situation cannot be hoped to continue forever. The growing concern for environment, human rights and declined in the economies of Europe and America portends difficult times for the garment industry. Complete reliance on export led growth is getting riskier.

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