

A Study on Knowledge Management of Tirupur Garment Industry Workers

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Abstract—

India's textile sector in the country's second largest industry, after agriculture. It provides direct employment to about 40 million people. It is also India's largest foreign export earner, accounting for 35% of the gross export earning in trade. The Indian garment manufacturing and export industry is expected to exploit the opportunities and respond to the challenges especially in the areas of market penetration, technology upgradation, cost control and cost reduction, addressing environmental problems, managing time pressures and fine tuning delivery systems. As the Indian knitted garment production is reserved for small scale operations. It is facing some knowledge problems which are intrinsic to small scale operations.

Keywords— Garment Industry, Knowledge Management, Tirupur, Workers Satisfaction & Experience

I. INTRODUCTION

The essential need of the human resource in the modern world is garment. Scientists found bits of cotton bolls and pieces of cotton cloth in Mexico caves that have been proved to be at least 7,000 years old. India is the third largest producer of cotton yarn and the largest exporter of cotton yarn in the world. The direct garment workers in Tiruppur are more than 5 lacs and the indirect workers constitute more than 3 lacs. The floating population in Tiruppur is around one lakh people, who migrate to the region as daily labourers and employed in 6 towns around Tiruppur namely Dharapuram, Kangeyam, Mangalam, Avinashi, Palladam and Perumanallur. These migrants settle in slums and it is indicated that there are more than 80 slums around Tiruppur and that nearly 65 % of the population are migrants. The concentration of the migrants from southern parts of Tamil Nadu is high amongst other parts and they constitute 62 %. Typical profile of the migrants is men or women in the ages of 16 to 55 years working in the works as helpers, ironers, cutters, singars, flatlocks, chockers, overlocks, living in a constrained room, unvaried minimum wages for their survival, assigned in contract works, working for a prolonged hours of over 12 hours, involved in continuous shifts and not enjoyed the welfare measures. Thus, capital accumulation being nothing but the accumulation of labour, it requires the availability of cheap and tractable labour whenever and wherever it needs it.

Knowledge becomes a crucial factor of production. It becomes a tool, a means for fulfilling results of social and economic development. In a modern economy, knowledge applies to knowledge. In such a society, education becomes an imperative – a society of knowledge asks for educated individuals, who are responsible and, by their skills, contribute to development of the society.

According to Deming (1996) there is no substitute for knowledge. To achieve it, there is a path he called “a deep knowledge” consisting of the following elements: understanding and admitting the system; knowledge in the field of variations, knowledge theory and technology. Deming considered that preparations for the future imply permanent education of the employees. Such an education implies continuous “sense” of the environment (technical, social and economic) in order to feel the necessity for innovation, a new product, a new service or simply innovated method

II. ABOUT THIRUPUR GARMENT INDUSTRY

Thirupur is a textile town in Coimbatore District of Tamilnadu and is popularly known as the Baniyan City/Knit City. Tirupur is situated at 50 Kms. East of Coimbatore and the City area of the town spreads over 27.20 Square kilometers with a population of around 7 lacs. It is a centre for cotton market and cotton ginning factories. Tirupur is an important garment cluster, which contributes more than 50% of cotton knitwear exports from India, mainly to the European Union, the USA, UK, Asia and Japan. The origin of the cluster dates back to 1920.

III. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The most important resource of any organization is often said to be its workers. The growth, development, prosperity and progress of any organization is mainly influenced by the strength of the knowledge management potential it possesses. Many societies have growth rich with a great potential for growth and development because they have people rich in drive, vision, ingenuity, creativity and spirit of enterprise.

Knowledge can be defined as (Awad and Ghaziri, 2004) the understanding that is obtained through the process of experience or appropriate study. The Knowledge management principles if applied to management education will enhance the quality of academic learning process. The term “Knowledge Management” (KM) is used to describe everything from the application of new 17 technology to harnessing of the intellectual capital of an organization (Sallis and Jones, 2002). (Rowley, 2000) describes the term KM as follows:

“Knowledge management is concerned with the exploitation and development of the knowledge assets of an organization with a view to furthering the organization’s objectives. The knowledge to be managed includes both explicit, documented knowledge, and tacit, subjective knowledge. Management entails all of those processes associated with the identification, sharing, and creation of knowledge. This requires systems for the creation and maintenance of knowledge repositories, and to cultivate and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and organizational learning. Organizations that succeed in knowledge management are likely to view knowledge as an asset and to develop organizational norms and values, which support the creation and sharing of knowledge” (Rowley, 2000).

From an organizational context, it has become fashionable to downplay the significance of an organization’s information processing and communication capabilities for the success of Knowledge Management (KM) (Cross and Baird, 2000). It is certainly true that KM’s salient issues go far beyond the infrastructure of information systems (King et. al., 2002). Several frameworks on organizational learning have been suggested (Akgun et. al, 2003; King, 2005). (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Zollo and Winter, 2002) stress on improved levels of organizational performance. (Kim and Street, 2004) hint on the concept of analytical software for high performance in organizational learning. Though advances in computer and telecommunication technologies have linked people together, geography does matter in the new knowledge economy as per the evidence from research (Hansen et. al, 1999; Hildreth et al, 2000). (Davenport and Prusak, 2000) give examples on knowledge working culture in any organization

IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Carr, Chen and Tate (2000), While some garment and textile workers are employed in factories or workshops, a large proportion are subcontracted home workers who carry out paid work for firms/business or their intermediaries, typically on a piece rate basis, within their own homes.

Chen, Sebstad and O Connell (1999), Estimates suggest that as much as 60% of garment production, especially of children and women’s clothing, is done at home in both Asia and Latin America.

Garud and Nayyar (1994), Some knowledge is more easily codified. Explicit knowledge is knowledge that can be easily communicated to others and is thus more readily codified. For example, the process used to manage retail inventory replenishment is explicit and codified. Tacit knowledge is typically more intuitive, learned over a long period of time, and, therefore, not that easy to codify and communicate to others. For example, the art of French cooking is a learned experience, even with recipes as guides.

Garud and Nayyar (1994), Another characteristic of knowledge is its degree of simplicity or complexity. The continuum of simple – complex captures the amount of information needed to communicate knowledge. Simple knowledge needs little information, whereas complex knowledge needs a greater amount of information An example of simple knowledge would be how to recognize cotton growing in a field (a few simple cues), while complex knowledge would be how the chemical structure of Teflon adds value to cotton if blended into the fabric (complex chemical engineering information).

Bhagat et al., (2002), Another aspect of knowledge is the degree to which it is embedded within a system. Independent knowledge exists independently of a social or organizational system whereas systemic knowledge is dependent on context. An example of independent knowledge is the chemical structure of Teflon as compared with knowledge of how product development teams are selected within a specific organization. The final two characteristics of knowledge that are important for understanding knowledge transfer are velocity and viscosity. Velocity refers to how rapidly knowledge can move through an organization while viscosity refers to the “richness” of knowledge.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study the knowledge management by the workers of garment industries
- 2) To study the effectiveness of the workers in achieving of their working period
- 3) To study the personal profile of the workers of garment industries
- 4) To identify the critical dimensions related to knowledge management
- 5) To identify the critical factors that influences the knowledge management to a greater extent
- 6) To analyze the various support rendered by the employers to improve the knowledge of work life of their workers

VI. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to analyze the knowledge management related with workers life of garment industry of Tirupur. The garment industry will be able to identify the problems related to the KM of its employees, their job satisfaction, and work life balance.

VII. PERIOD OF THE STUDY

Data were employed in the study. Data were collected from the respondents in interview schedule method. Data collection was done during the period of March 2014 to April 2015

VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The results of the study applicable to the Tirupur belt only and are not to be generalized for the entire garment manufacturing sector.
2. Around hundreds of workers are directly engaged in the garment manufacturing industries at Tirupur

IX. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Age Distribution of workers

The collected data was collated and fed into the computer using Excel 2007. Based on the objectives of the study, the data were analysed for interpretation and presented with statistical inferences using charts and tables

Table 1: Age Distribution of workers

Age Between	%	Cumulative %
18-27	39	39
28-37	42	81
38-47	14	95
48 and above	5	100
Total	100	

Table 1 shows the age distribution of the workers who are involved as garment workers, it is apparent that majority (42%) of the workers were in the adult age group of 28 to 37 years and least (5%) among the total workers were in the threshold of the old ages of 48 years and above. Considerably 39 % of the workers were in the young ages of 18 to 27 years. 14% of the workers were in the middle age group of 38 to 47 years.

2. Gender Distribution

Gender is an important sexual characteristic that points out the male and female working population distribution, concern to this study this factor would give a picture on gender variation in the garment industries in Tiruppur. Chart 1 shows the gender distribution of the workers. Just a variation of 5 percent exists between male (58%) and female population (42%) in the garment industries.

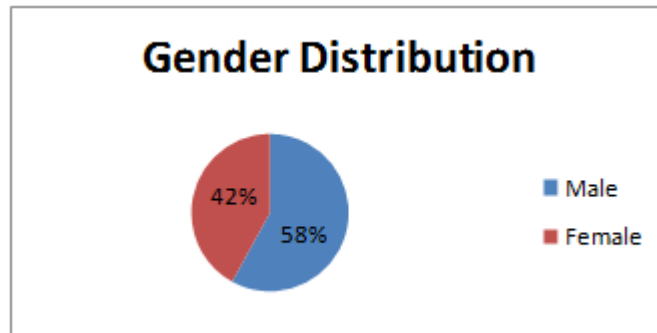


Chart 1 – Gender Distribution

3. Education Level of the Workers

Education provides a person with knowledge and informative abilities and enables one to have an equity status with others. Educational standard of the workers is presented in the below table 2\

Table 2- Educational Qualification

S.No	Educational Qualification	%
1	No Education	28
2	1 st Standards to 8 th Standards	38
3	9 th Standards to 12 th Standards	31
4	Diploma Education	3
5	Degree	0

4. Workers Experience in Garments

Experiences in garment industries, signifies the knowledge and skill acquired in the concern garments at various categories of works, and the involvement of the workers as well as the employers attitude in keeping the experienced workers in their fold. Below table 3 Assignment workers level of experience in garments. More than half of the sampled workers had been working for more than two years and less than three years. One fifth of the sampled workers were working for a period of one to two years and one tenth of the workers were working for less than one year. A sharp decline was observed that 39.67% of the workers only working more than 5 years, which divulge that either the skilled workers are refuted to be taken as workers by the employers

Table 3 Workers Experiences

S.No	No of Years Experience	%
1	Less than 1 Year	22.43

2	1 Year to 2 Years	36.29
3	2 Years to 5 Years	39.67
4	Above 5 Years	1.61

5. **Contributing towards work load**

Table 4 indicators contributing to work load, the analysis is carried out as mentioned below.

Table 4 Contributing towards work load

Work Load	%
Work at Home	27
Over time work	28
Flexibility in work	45
Total	100

6. **Knowledge Tasks**

With this measure we estimated that we have a workforce – 33% in work with high knowledge content, 27% in work with some knowledge content, and 40% in work with less knowledge content. Within our 33% ‘core’ knowledge worker group, the highest group of all these high intensity knowledge work with combined high level cognitive activity with high level KM tasks



Chart 2- Knowledge Tasks

7. **Involved in the work factor dimension**

Table 5 indicators indicating to work factor the analysis is carried out as mentioned below.

Table 5: Work Factor Dimension

S.No	Work factor	%
1	Co Worker Relation	3.92
2	Supervisory Behavior	5.40
3	Job Autonomy	5.45
4	Need Training	13.40
5	Skill Utilization	8.33
6	Work Knowledge	7.55
7	Respect in work	6.04
8	Job Satisfaction	8.44
9	Work Stress	9.15
10	Work involvement	7.05
11	Work Load	7.05
12	Relaxation	10.20
13	Teamwork	8.02
	Total	100

The significance value In the table indicate that all the existing independent variables Training, Skill Utilization, Respect in work, Work load, work involvement, Job Autonomy, Job related stress are significant and they are indicating to knowledge management

8. Knowledge work

Table 6 the total study participants about 21.3% respondents heard about safety information, 71.5% had no knowledge about Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), 81.7% knowledge respectively knew about safety signs and fire extinguisher. Others clearly mention in the below table 6.

Table 6 Knowledge regarding work related

Knowledge variables	Percent
Ever heard about safety information	
Yes	78.7
No	21.3
Knowledge to safety sign	
Yes	66.2
No	33.8
Knowledge to fire extinguisher	
Yes	81.7
No	18.3
Knowledge of MSDS	
Yes	28.5
No	71.5
Knowledge of workers right	
Yes	64.0
No	36.0
Knowledge of workers' obligation	
Yes	76.9
No	23.1
Knowledge of PPE	
Yes	72.3
No	27.7
Knowledge of accident prevention	
Yes	80.6
No	19.4
Knowledge of safety information	
knowledgeable	68.7
Less knowledgeable	31.3

9. Sharing of Knowledge Management

Knowledge management in the part of knowledge sharing are mean by identifying, creating, representing, distributing, and enabling adoption of insights and experiences extracted from the sourcing of data. Such below chart is identified sharing of knowledge management.

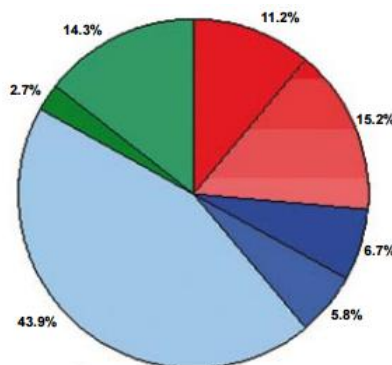


Chart 3 – Knowledge sharing

- ✓ 43.9% Shairng of Knowledge learning
- ✓ 15.2% Creating Ideas
- ✓ 14.3% Organizing the Community
- ✓ 11.2% Accesssing
- ✓ 6.7% Capture of Shairng information
- ✓ 5.8% Discovering in the field
- ✓ 2.7% Knowledge Training

Chart 3 the total study participants about Sharing of knowledge management 43.9% respond, second one 15.2% workers can creating Ideas, 14.3% organizing the workers community other then mention above cart.

X. CONCLUSION

A workers oral interview was conducted for analyzing aspects of workplace discrimination with relevance to psychological and emotional abuses. The workers were select based on criteria: genders and different category of work in the garment industry.

It is apparent that majority 81% of the workers are in the adult age group of 28 to 37 years. Least (5%) among the total workers are in the old ages of 48 years. Nearly four fifth of the workers are in the productive young ages. 42% of women workers are observed nearby equal proportion with the men workers 58%. Knowledge tasks 33% in work with high knowledge content, 27% in work with some knowledge content, and 40% in work with less knowledge content. Within our 33% 'core' knowledge worker group, the highest group of all these high intensity knowledge work with combined high level cognitive activity with high level KM tasks. The total study participants about 21.3% respondents heard about safety information, 71.5% had no knowledge about Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), 81.7% knowledge respectively knew about safety signs and fire extinguisher. 43.9% of the workers having knowledge management through sharing of information.

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