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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSIFICATION AND BANK PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM ETHIOPIA <i>DR. P. HRUSHIKESAVA RAO & ELEFACHEW MOSSISA</i>	1
2.	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FIRM RESOURCES AND SMALL FIRM GROWTH IN BANGLADESH <i>MD. MOSHARREF HOSSAIN, YUSNIDAH IBRAHIM & MD. MOHAN UDDIN</i>	6
3.	INNOVATION NETWORK IN TAIWAN TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY BASED UPON SOCIAL NETWORK PERSPECTIVE <i>CHUN-YAO TSENG & TZU-LIN CHIANG</i>	11
4.	ADVENT OF THE RETAIL SECTOR IN INDIAN ECONOMY: A PERSPECTIVE ACROSS DECADE <i>SWATI SAXENA & DR. HUSEIN ABDULRAHIM HASAN</i>	16
5.	GOODS AND SERVICES TAX: A LEAP FORWARD ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT <i>MINAKSHI GUPTA</i>	19
6.	INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERING UNDER-PRICING: A CASE STUDY OF TWITTER IPO <i>SAVITHA, P & B. SHIVARAJ</i>	25
7.	THE CONFINE OF EFFICIENT CONTRACT BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND DISTRIBUTORS PERFECTLY CONTROL MARKETING MIX STRATEGIES: CHANNEL MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE OF FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS (FMCG) INDUSTRIES IN INDONESIAN <i>DR. AGUS TRIHATMOKO, R., DR. MUGI HARSONO, DR. SALAMAH WAHYUNI & DR. TULUS HARYONO</i>	31
8.	AN ANALYSIS OF NON PERFORMING ASSETS OF INDIAN BANKS <i>OMBIR & SANJEEV BANSAL</i>	37
9.	FINO'S TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE YESHASVINI COOPERATIVE FARMERS HEALTH CARE SCHEME <i>DR. G. KOTRESHWAR & V.GURUSIDDARAJU</i>	43
10.	PERFORMANCE OF FISH WORKERS COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES <i>A. NALINI & DR. P. ASOKAN</i>	46
11.	A STUDY ON ASSOCIATION AND CAUSALITY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NSE EQUITY SPOT AND DERIVATIVE MARKETS <i>SATYANARAYANA KOILADA</i>	48
12.	DIVIDEND POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON STOCK PRICE: A CASE STUDY ON SENSEX COMPANIES <i>BHAGYA LAKSHMI.K & DR. N. BABITHA THIMMAIAH</i>	54
13.	IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE EXTERNAL SECTOR OF INDIAN ECONOMY <i>IBRAHIM CHOLAKKAL</i>	58
14.	A STUDY ON GROWTH AND INSTABILITY IN INDIA'S BANANA CULTIVATION AND EXPORT <i>DR. R. GANESAN</i>	62
15.	ROLE OF ASHA WORKERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT WITH REFERENCE TO KOTTAYAM DISTRICT <i>TISSY ERUTHICKAL</i>	66
16.	ROLE OF MECHANIZATION IN AGRICULTURAL IN THE PRESENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF ANDHRA PRADESH <i>H. RAMANJINEYULU & DR. K. SOMASEKHAR</i>	70
17.	CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RIGHT TO FAIR TRIAL <i>RIDDHIMA MUNSHI & DR. SANJAY SOLANKI</i>	73
18.	DYNAMIC CAUSALITY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FDI INFLOWS, TRADE BALANCE, AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN WORLDWIDE SELECTED TOP 25 HOST COUNTRIES DURING POST LIBERALIZATION REGIME: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH <i>SARMITA GUHA RAY</i>	78
19.	WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE UNORGANISED SECTOR IN KERALA: REFERENCE TO SALES WOMEN IN THE TEXTILE SHOPS <i>FREEDA V SIMON</i>	84
20.	INTRA-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE AGED PENSIONERS OF BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA <i>AMITA MOHAPATRA</i>	86
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER	91

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WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE UNORGANISED SECTOR IN KERALA: REFERENCE TO SALES WOMEN IN THE TEXTILE SHOPS

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ABSTRACT

The study is based on sales women in the textile shops. An attempt has been made in the paper to understand the wage pattern, working hours, working conditions, facilities and break timing at work place. For this 150 sales women from the textile shops of Thiruvananthapuram city were purposefully selected for administering interview schedule. The findings show that majority of the sales women in the textile shops are satisfied with the facilities at their workplace but are not satisfied with the working hours and the break time.

KEYWORDS

sales women, textile shops, unorganised workers.

INTRODUCTION

The operation of an economy depends to a great extent on the employment of people, i.e., on the purchase, sale and performance of labour services. In fact, labour is the source of all 'wealth' and 'backbone' of a nation. The labour force participation rate is a measure of the proportion of a country's working population that engages actively in the labour market either by working or looking for work. The major sectors of the economy have shown declining trend of employment elasticities over time. Much of the employment activities, which have come to be known as informal sector, supplies jobs, income, products and services to an enormous segment of the population. The potential of the job creation in this sector is immense. This has been most effective means of improving the economic condition of poor, as cost of employment generation in these activities has been very low.

The term 'unorganised labour' has been defined as those workers who have not been able to organise themselves in pursuit of their common interests due to certain constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy, small and scattered size of establishments, etc. Unorganised workers consists of those working in the unorganised enterprises or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits, and the workers in the formal sector without any employment/ social security benefits provided by the employers.

The employees with informal jobs generally do not enjoy employment security (no protection against arbitrary dismissal), work security (no protection against accidents and illness at the work place) and social security (maternity and health care benefits, pensions, etc.) and therefore any one or more of these characteristics can be used for identifying informal employment.

CATEGORIES OF UNORGANISED WORKERS

1. WAGE WORKERS IN THE UNORGANISED SECTOR

Wage workers are persons employed for remuneration as unorganised workers, directly by employers or through agencies or contractors. Wage workers include casual and temporary workers, migrant workers, or those employed by households including domestic workers. Wage workers also include regular workers in the unorganised sector.

2. SELF-EMPLOYMENT IN THE UNORGANISED SECTOR

These are persons who operate farm or non-farm enterprises or engage in a profession or trade, either on own account, individually or with partners, or as home-based workers. Own account workers also include unpaid family workers.

3. UNPROTECTED WAGE WORKERS IN THE ORGANISED SECTOR

Unprotected workers in the organised sector are mainly in the categories of regular, casual and contract workers who remain unprotected because of non-compliance of the provisions of the existing laws. This is a growing segment in the organised sector.

4. REGULAR UNORGANISED WORKERS

Regular unorganised workers refers to those self-employed workers in the unorganised sector and unprotected wage workers in the organised sector who works for others in return for salary or wages on a regular basis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leela Gulati (1983) in her paper presented a macro level picture of work participation by women in India as a whole as well as Kerala state and also to the extent to which working women are concentrated in unorganised sector of the economy of India and Kerala. In the second part of the paper she offered insights gained on the basis of micro level studies of the working women in Kerala drawn from different occupational categories, putting together the main stands of observation. And she also emphasis that women who work in the unorganised sector come from household where the parents are in casual wage labour and also tend to get married to men who are in this sector.

Eapen (2001) described the broad magnitudes of the informal sectors in Kerala focusing on some of its characteristics. Even though statics reveal the increase in women's employment is more in the nature of casual and irregular, contractual labor. Moreover, through women's earnings contribute substantially to the household this is more often than not denigrated. Women, especially in the lower class and the lower castes, not only have to cope with physical hardship that impact their health, they continue to be paid much lower wages than men in the same category.

Geetha K.T. (2010) conducted study on Women in Informal Sector-A Case Study. This study was focused on different types of socio-economic problems of female workers in urban informal sector. The study was based on primary data collected. An interview schedule was administered to 100 female workers working in various activities in the informal sector in urban areas. Findings revealed that females in informal sector were overburdened with work and exploited. It was recommended that at the policymaker level, required policy should be prepared and appropriate steps should be taken to improve working and living condition of female workers in this sector.

Martin Patrick (2012) provided an overview of the size, structure and other dynamics of unorganised labour in Ernakulam district, he found that unorganised labourers themselves are fragmented almost always not organised into unions. They suffer from access to imperfect information and not fully aware of their limited rights. This led to bad conditions of work like long hours of work, hazardous nature of work, absence of safety conditions and above all poor wage rates. The 93 per cent of India's work force, working as informal workers, has not been benefited even by inclusive growth, the objective of the Eleventh Plan. Lack of reliable data about the unorganised labour stands in the way of the development of this neglected category. Thus the urgent need is to develop a data bank about the unorganised labour.

Das Kabita, Das.B.K, Mohanty Subhransubala (2012) conducted a study on Social Security in Informal Sector. The aim of this paper was to know the degree of social security of the working women in the informal sector in Odisha. Keeping in view the objective of the study, a sample survey was conducted in districts like Keonjhar,

Mayurbhanj and Cuttack. Accordingly, 100 women from each district were randomly selected and supplied with structured questionnaire pertaining to their availability of social security measures taken by the Govt. of Odisha. Available data suggested that social security in the organised sector was steadily shrinking but the major concern was for informal sector which imposes a heavy cost on society in terms of jobs, income and health care.

Vandana Dave (2012) conducted a study on Women Workers in Unorganised Sector. The study focused on female construction workers, agriculture workers and domestic workers. The objective of this study was to know the socio-economic, working and living conditions of workers. The multistage stratified random sampling technique was applied, data was collected from 350 female workers from urban and rural areas of 3 districts of Haryana namely Panipat, Kaithal and Kurukshetra. Workers faced problems like disparity in wages where female workers were paid less. Working hours were not fixed and harassment at work place was common. Usha P E, focused on the determinants and consequences of women's work in the unorganised sector. The study revealed that women in the textile sales sector are working with very low wages even lower than the minimum fixed wage. They are not getting any service benefits such as increment, leave, pension, P F and insurance.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Majority of the women workers are working in the unorganised sector. The growth of unorganised sector is very high in Kerala. With the growth in the tertiary sector, the growth of unorganised labour market is also high. Many of these workers are working under poor working conditions without any employment security and social security and are under paid. Most of them working in this field are working as sales women and a good number of them are working in the textiles too. It's in this context the author proposes to enquire into working conditions of sales women in the textile sales sector of Thiruvananthapuram city in Kerala.

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the working conditions of sales women in the textile shops.
2. To identify the problems of women workers in the textile shops.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 150 sales women in the textile shops in Thiruvananthapuram city by using interview schedules. Secondary data have been collected from various books, reports, journals and online resources.

FINDINGS

The volume of saleswomen is at a high number compared to that of women workers in the construction and other unorganised sector. The reason behind this female participation in sales is the easy accessibility to work, no special skills is required and even less hardship. One of the concerns revealed through the study is the inequality faced by women workers in terms of wages, working hours, break timing compared to that of male workers in the sales sector. Also what is noticed is their work demands them to stand for the entire day and is not provided with any chair. Their voices are never raised as this would have an adverse impact on their job. In some textile shops very poor salary has been paid to sales women. Fearing that their employers would sack them from the job, these women seldom speak out. On the offset it is observed that workers of certain shops are satisfied with the facilities provided by their employers like food, accommodation, quarterly bonus and transportation.

TABLE 1: OPINION OF SALES WOMEN IN THE TEXTILE SHOPS

OPINION	Highly Satisfied		Satisfied		No Opinion		Dissatisfied		Highly Dissatisfied	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Wages	0	0	80	53	4	3	27	18	39	26
Working Hours	7	5	38	25	0	0	47	31	58	39
Facilities at Work Place	15	10	78	52	6	4	30	20	21	14
Break Time	0	0	20	13	6	4	68	46	56	37

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 show that 39% of the respondents are highly dissatisfied with the working hours. This is because they are forced to work for almost 12 hours wherein the defined working hours is 9 hours which includes an hour of break. 46% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the break time. This issue revolves around the flexibility to utilize their allotted breaks as and when required rather it's a pre-scheduled slot allotted for the employees.

53% of the respondents are satisfied with the wages. Recent study shows the sales women enjoy quarterly bonus in addition to their wages. 52% of the respondents are satisfied with the facilities provided by their employers. Which comprise food, transport and accommodation facilities.

CONCLUSION

This study here sheds light on the rampant rights violations faced by women in the unorganised sector. There were certain schemes and Acts formulated by both the Central and State governments to support and protect the workers in the unorganised sector. But the failure to implement these schemes full proof has nullified the prime purpose of its introduction. The outcome of the study suggests that the majority of the sales women in the textile shops showcased satisfying trend with respect to wage and the facilities provided at the work place. On the other hand, a dissatisfying trend on working conditions with long working hours without adequate rest.

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