

Social Success of the Women Workers in the Garment Industry in Sri Lanka: A Case of Women Workers in Katunayake Free Trade Zone

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Abstract

There are a number of Free Trade Zones (FTZ) in Sri Lanka, which house a variety of industrial businesses, including garment manufacturers. Most of the workers on the factory floor are women who work as machinists. Scholars highlight labor exploitation, gender subordination, and social perceptions in the apparel sector. But there is no research to explore the social success of women employees in the apparel sector. This research adds to the literature by providing empirical information from the Sri Lankan clothing industry about the success of women in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. A qualitative approach utilizing information gathered from interviews with female shop floor employees in the garment industry who work in export processing zones (EPZs). Thematic analysis was used as the analysis tool to process the research. The analysis identifies how those women workers started their careers as women machinists at a young age, and with time, they successfully adapted to the job role and the evolution of their lives through social aspects. Contrary to the social acceptance within the Sri Lankan context that women prefer government jobs, women have mentioned they prefer and that it is better to be a woman machinist. Finally, this paper concludes that women machinists have succeeded in their lives in social aspects by achieving work-life balance, well-structured families with educated children, and recognition and respect from the villagers and the whole society.

Keywords: Free Trade Zone, Garment Industry, Social Success, Women Workers

INTRODUCTION

There are several Free Trade Zones (FTZ) in Sri Lanka, primarily three FTZs named Katunayake, Biyagama, and Koggala, along with three additional mini-export processing zones in Mirigama, Malwatte, and Wathupitiwala. According to the World Bank, an FTZ is a "fenced-in industrial estate that specializes in export-oriented manufacturing and offers its resident firms free-trade conditions and a liberal regulatory environment". Sri Lanka's economy relies heavily on the apparel manufacturing sector, which increases the nation's income, employment rate, foreign exchange, and direct investments. More than 250 apparel factories have been developed in Sri Lanka's garment sector private ownership by domestic and international investors, in both EPZs and village areas (Samarakoon et al., 2022). The value of apparel exports was \$2,098.28 million in 2019. Sri Lanka exports clothing, including streetwear, lingerie, swimwear, athletics, uniforms, and children's clothing. The bulk of the workforce in the sector is made up of female employees, who are mostly employed in lower-level positions on manufacturing floors (Samarakoon et al., 2022 as cited in Gunatilaka, 2019; Jayawardena, 2014; Lynch, 1999; Madurawala, 2017; Seneviratne, 2011). According to the literature on female shop floor employees in the Sri Lankan clothing sector, impoverished, rural, and rural migrant

women make up the majority of the labor on the shop floor (Hewamanne, 2003). Scholars indicated that women who work in garment factories come from rural villages with the intention of achieving success but fail to achieve what they want to achieve. As Mani (1989) demonstrates, women are affected by negative social-political rhetoric, even when they are not the subject of discourse or policy decisions, due to their lack of power and the propagation of negative perceptions of women without addressing issues of inequality. The Sri Lankan garment sector is very important economically and socially. Many scholars (Samarakoon et al., 2022, as cited in Mirza & Ensign, 2021; Perry, 2012; Ruwanpura & Wrigley, 2011) studied the economic aspect of women workers in the garment industry. However, scholars have not given adequate attention to studying the social success of women workers, particularly in the garment industry in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the social success of women workers in the garment industry in Sri Lanka

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social identity theory is a psychological concept that offers valuable insights into understanding the social success of

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women workers within various contexts. According to this theory, individuals derive their sense of identity and self-esteem from the groups they belong to, and their behavior is influenced by the desire to maintain a positive social identity. In the case of women workers, their social success can be explained through the lens of social identity theory. In the workplace, women workers may experience challenges and discrimination due to gender stereotypes and societal expectations. However, when women identify with their gender as a social category, it can lead to positive outcomes. For instance, women may form strong social bonds and support networks with other female colleagues, creating a sense of solidarity and empowerment.

Moreover, identifying as a woman worker can foster a collective identity that promotes the pursuit of common goals and objectives. This shared identity may lead to increased confidence, motivation, and resilience, enabling women to overcome obstacles and achieve career success. In addition, organizations that foster an inclusive and supportive environment for women workers can enhance their social identity. When women perceive that their workplace values and respects their gender identity, they are more likely to experience a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization, leading to greater job satisfaction and productivity.

Overall, social identity theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the social success of women workers. By recognizing the significance of their gender identity and promoting an inclusive and supportive workplace culture, organizations can contribute to the empowerment and success of women in the workforce. Embracing social identity theory can pave the way for gender equality and more equitable opportunities for women, fostering a diverse and thriving workforce.

Social identity theory is an interactionist social psychology theory that examines the function of self-conception and associated cognitive processes and social beliefs in group activities and intergroup connections. Social identity theory has been significantly expanded through a variety of sub-theories that focus on social influence and group norms, leadership within and between groups, self-enhancement and uncertainty reduction motivations, deindividuation and collective behavior, social mobilization and protest, and marginalization and deviance within groups. The idea has also been utilized and expanded to explain organizational phenomena as well as the dynamics of language and speech style as identification signals (Hogg, 2016). Accordingly, this research is related to Social identity theory. Following are the empirical findings referring to different literature.

Apparel sector and preference for women machinists

The study intends to explore the social aspects of the success of women working in garment factories in Sri Lanka. Thus, the literature review covers previous studies relating to garment workers and their lives. According to Hakimian (2011), FTZs are established with the primary purpose of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and creating a diverse industrial base in order to enhance manufactured exports and achieve long-term economic diversification and development. More than 990,000 employment are supported by the clothing sector in Sri Lanka (Mirza & Ensign, 2021), which accounts for 33 percent of the country's total manufacturing workforce (Asia Garment Hub, 2021). More than 78 percent of the industry's operational grades (such as machinists) are occupied by women (Asia Development Bank, 2020). The Katunayake

Free Trade Zone only produces goods for export, with foreign investments enabling a variety of free trade privileges, including tax holidays, use of subsidized land and buildings, reduced customs taxes, and duty-free entry of equipment and raw materials (Hewamanne, 2008). Company's preference for women machinists results of their discipline. Women are inherently less inclined than men to join trade unions, and they are also better suited for repetitive, monotonous work in the manufacturing industry. (Samarakoon et al., 2022) Barnes and Kozar (2008) believe that due to their lower levels of education, women may be recruited at a reduced pay in a cost-effective way. Women are usually seen to be more exploitable than males, and it is exactly this portion of the female population that endures the greatest abuse and prejudice in the garment business. According to Ahmed (2004), the advantage of these garment factories is that expanded employment opportunities for those who were born into poverty or were affected by a sudden disaster.

Individual social success and failure

According to Vykopalová (2013), a person's core existential and social requirements and the manner they are met define their level of living, which indicates that social success is dependent on the person's financial situation and again correlates with behavior. Work is a crucial component of socialization that includes aspects of self-fulfillment and social connection. It also serves as a way to rise socially, which is often linked to both internal and external rewards. Lack of interpersonal social interaction creates feelings of isolation, which raises the risk of criminal or delinquent conduct, which helps people succeed in society. People use social networks to satisfy their social demands. Social integration, a bright future, the lack of health hazards, and the ability to meet basic needs for survival are all directly related to one's feeling of safety. An rise in the negative social phenomena linked to social failure is indicated by a decline in the quality of living, an increase in unemployment, and a decline in the possibility of social integration. Furthermore, according to Vykopalová (2013), poor economic circumstances have a range of social repercussions, including unemployment, poverty, and deprivation, which raise the frequency of crime, homelessness, and other detrimental social phenomena in our lives.

Starting and adaptation to career life

Literature depicts a variety of ways in which garment machinists in FTZ began their careers. The recruitment process relies heavily on word-of-mouth. The use of formal advertising methods such as newspapers and posters is extremely limited. Instead, they notify the current employees, who will subsequently notify their neighbors, friends, and sisters (Amin, Diamond, Newby, & Naved, 1998). Schlegel (1995) asserts that starting a job as a garment worker is the first stage in the development of adolescence, which involves activities such as the social and personal control of sexuality, the impact of peers and social organizations, and the development of work skills. However, according to O'Donnell and Williamson (2017), the major corporations in global supply chains use their dominating position to impose pressure on suppliers in underdeveloped countries to produce items quickly and at cheap rates. These pressures are subsequently transmitted to workers, leading to low salaries, increased job intensity, and health and safety concerns. (Reinecke et al., 2018; Wright and Kaine, 2015).

Social Interaction

Concentrating on how women in garment factories interact with society, Amin et al. (1998) assert that women who migrate to cities have a good quality of life. Hewamanne (2008) asserts that as new employees engage with society, their social, moral, and cognitive circumstances and attitudes might undergo quick changes. Women acquire self-assurance and a feeling of modernity when exposed to new social networks and lifestyles (Standing, 1989). Despite their financial independence, rural Sri Lankan women who accepted wage employment in multinational companies have been vilified for breaking traditional patriarchal norms (Lynch, 2007). In Sri Lankan society, the inherent feminine value of *lajja-baya* (shame and fear of transgression) has aided male managers in their pursuit of disciplined and compliant manufacturing workers. Female employees in EPZs who defy these customary boundaries are referred to as "bad girls" (Lynch, 2007) or "bad whores" (Hewamanne (2008a, p. 35)). This labeling could be the result of social notions that rural women should live under the supervision of their dads or brothers and that society is unable to acknowledge their emancipation from this kind of patriarchy in the EPZs (Lynch, 2007). In addition to that, Amin et al. (1998) add that they have a positive self-image and a higher quality of life than others in the villages due to their higher income and ability to operate technologically advanced machines.

Role in family and Employment

Multiple scholars have remarked on how these women connect with their families in diverse national settings. In terms of family influence, the advantages of garment factory labor for women in Bangladesh at best. (Kibria, 1995). In the context of Sri Lanka, most women who make these garments make a concerted effort to achieve a successful family life, and these women also strive to educate their children (Amin et al., 1998). According to Barnes, Wendy D., and Joy M. Kozar (2018), it is somewhat difficult for a garment employer to become pregnant. Sadullah, M. Niaz, and Fahema Talukder (2019) were able to conclude a recommendation regarding the provision of childcare facilities in their writings. The results suggest that practices that improve worker well-being make it easier for workers to get childcare at work and put more women in positions of power, both of which are likely to improve worker well-being even more.

Health

When we consider the health conditions of female machinists in garment factories, we find that they suffer from eye, ear, and lung damage, as well as pain. Although the Sri Lankan Board of Investment has established industrial safety standards, they are not implemented (Hewamanne, 2008). According to the findings of Harrington (2004) in the United States, the reasons for these health issues are as follows: Complaints about conditions include limited access to toilets, poor ventilation, headaches, back pain, vision loss, and being yelled at, publicly humiliated, or slapped. Each worker performs the same small task hundreds or thousands of times per day, creating health concerns due to the repetitiveness and high speeds of the labor process.

sexual orientations with social acceptance

According to the findings of a study conducted at the Katunayake Free Trade Zone, society has a negative view of female machinists relating to sexual orientations in contrast to social acceptance. Thus, FTZs are called "ganika puraya"

(cities of prostitutes). The women were subjected to sexual harassment and abusive sexual relationships. (Hewamanne, 2008). There are situations in which even single employees with irregular menstruation are concerned about pregnancy. This may be the result of women working alongside young men for extended periods of time without family supervision (Hewamanne, 2008). Garment workers find their source of income in the informal economy, such as the sex industry. According to Harrington (2004), even employees who continue to work in the garment industry work additional hours in the informal sector to increase their incomes. They work as domestics in private homes, prepare goods for street vendors, and engage in sex work. The expansion of the sex industry is a result of the inability of other informal sector jobs to satisfy women's needs. The women earn these informal incomes without considering the limits of the law and are subject to harassment, evictions, and possible penalties. Women who work as machinists are referred to as "bad girls" (Lynch, 2007) or "bad whores" (Hewamanne, 2008a, p. 35). This labeling could be the result of social notions that rural women should live under the supervision of their dads or brothers and that society is unable to accept their independence from this form of patriarchy in the EPZs (Lynch, 2007). In accordance with this view, there is a dearth of research in exploring the social life and the social success of women machinists. Filling this gap in this environment, it is vital to explore how rural, impoverished women workers, who have been given a negative identity in society, are marginalized in the factory context by organizational processes and practices, and how they attain societal roles as women machinists. There are studies on the Sri Lankan apparel industry and its employees, but none on the social success of female machine operators. This study investigates the lives of women in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone in order to determine "whether the women machinists in garment factories achieved social success in their lives."

METHODOLOGY

The analysis sought to determine whether women machinists in Sri Lankan garment factories have achieved social success as women machinists in FTZ. This descriptive research project concludes that women machinists in Sri Lankan garment factories have achieved social success in life by considering a variety of perspectives, perceptions, and ideas regarding social factors. The study employs an inductive methodology for its research. This study collects more detailed, in-depth, and objective data employing a qualitative technique for data collecting. The selected technique for the research project is the case study method, in which data is collected on a specific item, event, or activity, such as a business unit or organization (Saunders et al., 2009). Choosing participants from various geographical locations allowed us to produce a comprehensive data collection and gain wide knowledge covering a cross-section of people from various socioeconomic backgrounds. In this study, it is determined that data will be collected only once per period. Here, the unit of analysis is the female workers in the garment industry. The population of the study consists of all female machine operators in Sri Lankan garment factories.

In Sri Lanka, there are primarily three FTZs named Katunayake, Biyagama, and Koggala; the study will be conducted in the Katunayake FTZ. This research employs the non-probability sampling technique of convenience sampling, in which a sample is drawn from a population at

the researcher's discretion. Twenty female machinists will be chosen from the Katunayake FTZ. In this research context, the researcher has chosen the interview method in order to identify the ideas and perspectives of the women machinists, obtain feedback, and build confidence and trust with the garment women so that the research can be successful. In addition, it will have benefited from establishing rapport with the participant and receiving authentic responses to the interview questions. As the research focuses on understanding the participants' ideas, perceptions, attitudes, and suggestions, fewer formal relationships with garment women would be useful for data collection. Through document analysis, secondary data was gathered. As this topic has been extensively discussed by previous authors and researchers in both local and international contexts, a substantial amount of data on garment women in zones was gathered from published research articles, journals, books, and other sources.

Interviews were conducted with female machinists at their boarding locations, speaking with them politely and emphasizing that their privacy would not be compromised. Participants were given additional assurances regarding the confidentiality of the data, and consent was obtained from all participants to record the interview. The interviews were done in their native and most comfortable language, Sinhala. All participants gave their permission to record the interviews. The interview guide was produced, and questions were asked in accordance with its order. To acquire new insights and keep the interview flow, more questions were asked. By re-listening to the voice recordings and referring to the notes taken, transcripts were constructed. The data acquired via semi-structured interviews, participant face and body expression

observations, and secondary document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis. The data acquired via semi-structured interviews, participant face and body expression observations, and secondary document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there were six phases of thematic analysis. The first step was to familiarize yourself with the data by repeatedly listening to the voice recordings and reading the transcripts. The second step was to search for themes by analyzing what factors were repeatedly mentioned and observed. The final stage was to discover patterns among the data acquired from the female machinists and the facts gained through analyzing the participants' faces and bodily responses. During the review, subthemes were identified for each research topic after the identification of themes and patterns. It is feasible to find subthemes for some of the recognized primary themes. Some topics were excluded from the lists because they lacked adequate proof throughout the assessment process. Finally, the themes were determined, and both the major themes and subthemes were given meaningful names. By evaluating data gathered via semi-structured interviews and observations of nonverbal expressions, the study aims and research questions were determined. The primary topics of discussion are the lives of women machinists prior to entering the garment industry, their roles as daughters, mothers, and siblings, their social views, and the social satisfaction they derive from working as women machinists.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher has summarized the 20 women machinist's details into a combined table and the following is the in-depth detailed table.

Table 1 - Details of the participants

	Renuka	Malkanthi	Dhewika	Shanika	Meena	Kanthi	Prasadi	Malithi	Hemanthi	Jayanthi
From	Kurunagala	Balangoda	Bandarawela	Kaluthara	Kilinochchi	Kurunagala	Mathale	Narammala	Ratnapura	Ampara
Age	30	33	20	30	30	33	30	35	37	28
Nationality	Sinhala	Sinhala	Tamil	Sinhala	Tamil	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala
Religion	Buddhist	Buddhist	Hindu	Buddhist	Hindu	Buddhist	Buddhist	Christianity	Buddhist	Buddhist
Duration of service	5 years	11 years	6 months	4 years	9 years	7 years	13 years	13 years	4 years	5 years
Married	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Divorced	Yes	Yes	Yes	Divorced
Education up to	OL	Not mentioned	Grade 10	AL (3S)	OL	Grade 10	OL	OL	OL	OL
Siblings	Younger Sister, elder brother	Younger Sister, younger brother	Elder sister, younger sister	Younger brother	Younger brother, 3 elder brothers, younger sister	Younger sister and Younger brother	Elder sister, younger brother	Younger brother	Elder sister, younger brother	2 younger sisters
Live with Boarding place	Alone	With younger sister	Alone	With husband	Alone	With daughter	With husband	With husband	Alone	Alone
Basic salary	23 000	21000	20 000	21 000	20 800	24 000	22 000	21 000	24000	23000
Working Shifts	6.30 am-6.00 pm	6.00 am -2 .00 pm	6.00 am - 2 .00 pm	6.00 am - 2 .00 pm	7.30 am - 6.30 pm	7.45 am- 5.30 pm	7.30am- 6.30pm	6.30 am- 6.00 pm	7.30 am - 6.30 pm	6.30 am- 6.00 pm
		2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	6.30 pm - 06.00 am				6.30 pm - 06.00 am	

	Uththara	Hansani	Jayani	Uthpala	Sujeewa	Dilshani	Asanka	Bagya	Ashanthi	Ayanthi
From	Mirigama	Kadawatha	Ahaliyagoda	Galewela	Kegalle	Galnawa	Halawatha	Waligama	Gampola	Puttalam
Age	31	34	40	39	22	33	38	36	25	27
Nationality	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala	Sinhala
Religion	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist
Duration of service	6 years	6 years	21 years	16 years	10 months	10 years	17 years	14 years	6 years	7 years
Married	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education up to	AL(3S)	OL	OL	Grade 10	Grade 10	OL	OL	OL	AL(1S)	OL
Siblings	Younger Sister	2 Younger brothers	3 elder sister	Younger Sister, elder brother	Younger brother	Elder sister	2 younger sister, Younger brother	Elder Sister	2 elder brother	Younger Sister, elder brother
Live with Boarding place	With husband	With husband	Alone	With husband	Alone	With husband	With husband	With husband and daughter	With husband	Alone
Basic salary	21000	23000	24000	23000	20000	21 000	23000	22 000	20000	21 000
Working Shifts	6.00 am -2 .00 pm	7.30 am - 6.30 pm	7.30 am - 6.30 pm	6.00 am - 2 .00 pm	7.30 am - 6.30 pm	6.00 am - 2 .00 pm	7.30 am - 6.30 pm	6.30 am- 6.00 pm	6.00 am -2 .00 pm	6.00 am - 2 .00 pm
	2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	6.30 pm - 06.00 am	6.30 pm - 06.00 am	2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	6.30 pm – 06.00 am	2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	6.30 pm - 06.00 am		2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	2.00 pm – 10.00 pm

The lives of the women machinists before they join the garment industry

The majority of participants are from semi-urban or rural regions in Sri Lanka, and regional areas often have less educational resources, economic prospects, and infrastructure than metropolitan locations (Samarakoon et al., 2022 as cited in Amarasuriya, 2010). Prior to entering the clothing sector, the majority of our participants and their family members were involved in small-scale agriculture. Due to the unreliable and inadequate income they obtained from farming, however, many chose to seek job in the garment sector. Uthpala, a participant from Galewela, mentioned that her father and mother have been farming for a long time. But with the old age of his parents, she is now taking care of them with her earnings. Through the interviews, I have learned that in addition to financial hardships, there are women who have experienced terrorism and have lost family members. The following is Meena's explanation of her life prior to her arrival in the Katunayake region. *"The death of one of our eldest brothers (chutte aiya) My maternal grandmother died. uncles passed away. Numerous people died. The era of terrorism has ended. Now it's satisfactory."* (Meena)

The replies of numerous participants from remote areas indicated how poverty and family issues led them to forego their schooling and seek employment in the garment sector in order to support their families. Through the interview with Dhewika, she was able to explain why she halted her education due to their financial difficulties, despite their willingness to continue their education. She had every intention of completing her education but was unable to do so because she supported her family at a younger age.

"We have so little. We encountered many obstacles. Even the mother and father are unable to provide assistance. This is why. I desired to complete the studies. I have searched for it multiple times. I eventually gave up. Otherwise, I intended to conduct OL's." (Dhewika)

There are countless instances in the literature of how these women started their careers as garment machine operators

in FTZs. Assuming that such training is a precondition for a successful marriage, rural women are educated from infancy on home tasks such as child care, cooking, washing, and sewing. Therefore, rural women are seen to be adept in manually dexterous work, and therefore, these talents have become a need for employment in the garment sector (Samarakoon et al., 2022 as cited in Elson & Pearson, 1981). The recruitment process relies heavily on word-of-mouth. The use of formal advertising methods such as newspapers and posters are extremely low. Instead, they relay the information to the current workforce, who will then inform their neighbors, friends, and sisters (Amin et al., 1998). Consequently, women have entered the FTZ with the assistance of their neighbors, and two women have arrived with their husbands. I have also observed that these women become aware of the zone in another way. Meena explains her ideas as follows:

"We arrived here with the assistance of the military." The factory's employees traveled to Kilinochchi. Personnel from the department of human resources were present. I worked in XY. "They came close to our Kilinochchi homes to select us." (Meena)

According to her, factory HR departments are visiting rural villages to recruit workers. Meena adds that, despite the large number of employees recruited, she was the only one to remain at the garment factory for nine years. Prior to their arrival in the industrial zone, most female machinists encountered numerous family-related obstacles. Some female machinists have lost their parents, while others have cared for their children on their own due to the absence of their husbands. In terms of education level, these women have completed the tenth grade and have ended their education due to financial hardships.

Caring for the family of a woman machinist as a daughter, mother, and sibling

Caring parents

Numerous academics have mentioned how female machinists care for their parents. In addition, it represents the fact that most of these women send a substantial

portion of their income to their families. According to the findings of Kibria (1995), since female machinists cover their own expenses, they have no obligation to financially support their families. In contrast some scholars, some women come solely to care for their families. Maduwanthi commented that, her parents are impoverished farmers whose primary source of income is farming. On the 10th of each month, when she receives her salary, she sends money to her parents. Five years of working in a garment factory allowed her to save enough money to build a house for her parents. Considering how frequently these participants visit their families, they prefer to return to the village on the tenth of each month, after receiving their pay.

"Both the younger and older sister are there in my village. Each were married. So I sent them money. 10th is the day we receive our salary. When I receive my salary, I go home. Saturday and Sunday are holidays during our pay week. My father works in agriculture. He is not well currently. Even my mother has had an eye operation. My parents reside in the home I constructed." (Renuka)

However, Ahmed (2004) introduced the subject of how machinists preserve familial bonds. According to him, young unmarried girls from impoverished rural households who had left their villages and gained more financial independence were no longer bound by the parent-child commitment characteristic of Bengali society. At the age of four, Kanthi's mother gave birth to her younger sister. Because of her father's later marriage to another woman, she experienced several adverse conditions. Her father died afterward. She has no communication with her brother and has entirely forgotten that they are related.

Caring for children

In the context of Sri Lanka, most women working in garment factories make a concerted effort to achieve personal and familial success, and these women strive to educate their children (Amin et al., 1998). In Sri Lanka, the differences in resources and facilities between urban and rural schools limit the opportunity for rural students to acquire the skills required by the present job market (Samarakoon et al., 2022 as cited in Alawattagama, 2020; Amarasuriya, 2010). Even though Sri Lanka has a free education system that is designed to give equal access to all students, educational achievement is mostly influenced by parents' capacity to pay for their children's education (Alawattagama, 2020; Herath, 2015). Students from low-income families are more likely to drop out of school in the midst of their elementary or secondary schooling. In this research, I have noticed that all the women with children wanted to make their children educated. Most of the machinists send their children to private tuition class spending money to make them educated. Malkanthi has stated that her 13-year-old son attends a good school in the village with her parents. They educate the son by enrolling him in classes for tuition. She intends to return to the village after resigning from her job when her son's G.C.E. Ordinary Level examinations approach. Kanthi is a single parent, as her husband abandoned her with their one and half-month-old child. Currently, she supports her daughter with her earnings. Due to her shift work, she misses her daughter. However, her 12-year-old daughter prepares her meals, goes to school, and returns home on her own. Kanthi provides the following clarification:

"She eats alone at mealtimes. Occasionally, if I wake up early in the morning, then I cook. Otherwise, she cooks for her. She

knows. When she returns home from school, she cooks and eats by herself."

She joined as machinists after her husband left her in order to look after her kid. Now she tries her best to give a better future to her daughter.

Caring for siblings

Machinists from rural regions manage their earnings by limiting non-essential costs and remitting monies to their siblings and parents for educational reasons (Amin et al., 1998). Maduwanthi has played a significant role by aiding her siblings in building a house and obtaining financial security.

"I assisted financially with her wedding expenses." I have assisted with most tasks, such as building her a house. I've assisted her in obtaining electricity, among other things." (Renuka)

Shanika has also cared for her siblings. Even the siblings of her husband are important to her, as she explains below.

"He has a younger sister and a younger brother. I also take care of them. One of the sisters is quite small. Attending school. So distribute school stationery. Therefore, I care for both parties." (Shanika)

Due to their poverty, obtaining commodities like as rice 10 allowed them fulfill their responsibility as mothers, sisters, or daughters to provide for the food and health needs of their family. Despite their subordinate status within the patriarchal family structure, this use of incentives seems to capitalize on the substantial contribution that these women are required to make to the everyday needs of the home (Elson & Pearson, 1981; Hancock et al., 2015; Jayaweera et al., 2007). Except for the woman who has lost her parents, everyone else sends money to her parents. Typically, this amount exceeds fifty percent of the woman's salary for her parents. All female machinists send money to their parents. Some women send money for their siblings' educational expenses. Thus, the data indicate that women machinists in garment manufacturers in Sri Lanka's Katunayake Free Trade Zone have attained family success, which complements to their societal success.

The social view of a woman machinist

Attitudes of villagers

According to Amin et al. (1998), they have a positive self-image and a higher quality of life compared to others in the villages because they have a higher income and can operate technologically sophisticated machines. Shanika also mentioned that the villagers welcomed her with open arms when she visited the village. The villagers approach her for conversation and have a favorable image toward her.

"We depart village after a long delay. Typically, we visit every two to three months. Therefore, when everyone sees it, they gather and ask, when will you return back to the zone? etc." (Shanika)

The female machinists have maintained positive relationships with the villagers in their towns. Amin et al. (1998) noted that within their society, they have a positive self-image and a higher quality of life compared to others in the villages due to their higher income and ability to operate technologically advanced machines. When visiting their relatives, the majority of female machinists agree with the researchers that they are warmly greeted by the peasants.

How girls get on the wrong path

The consensus within society is that female machinists behave poorly. There are instances in which women with irregular menstruation worry about becoming pregnant,

resulting in the creation of stories. This may be the result of women working alongside young men for extended periods of time without family supervision. (Hewamanne, 2008). Malkanthi has provided the following explanation for why these girls tend to take the wrong path while working in the zone:

"When it is stated that working in the garment industry is undesirable, society reacts negatively."

Since there are numerous incidents in the FTZ, the social view varies. Numerous young girls tend to engage in undesirable behavior. Many girls choose the incorrect path. Girls between the ages of 17 and 18 take the wrong path. Without knowledge, they engage in affairs with married men, including those with children. In the factory, numerous cases are occurring. (She enters a reflective state, waits a while in silence, and then resumes her low-spirited tone of voice.)

"Once entering the factory, they immediately find a boyfriend. Then everything become obvious, and the girl quits her factory job. Then we knew that the boy has been married before." (Malkanthi)

In the modern context, as it pertains to the participants, the social perspective on female machinists is positive, which contradicts the findings of the Hewamanne (2008). In addition, none of the participants mentioned women employed in the sex industry in the region as a source of income. These findings support the notion that women machinists enjoy a favorable social reputation and have achieved social success.

Educational sessions conducted for women machinists by feminist activists

From the interviews, I have learned that the factories sponsor educational sessions for newly recruited women to prevent them from taking the wrong path. According to Hewamanne (2008), she states that feminist activists hold workshops for female employees when they are free. Garment workers referred to them as "tharabaru ganu." Shanika considers these sessions to be productive based on the following:

"Indeed, there are numerous programs. I believe this is why there are fewer incorrect views in society and why girls are being protected from the misbehaviors of males. Now, ninety percent of the time, the situation is favorable. When new girls arrive at the factory, they conduct these programs and instruct on how society functions." (Renuka)

Prasadi, however, takes a more moderate stance, stating that, despite the existence of such programs, those who already followed to the wrong path cannot be stopped through these sessions, as follows:

"The company organizes awareness sessions. Time periods are not defined. Mostly there will be two sessions per year, and those who attend will listen. There are girls who take the advantage of those sessions. However, there will be girls who choose the wrong path though there are productive sessions." (Prasadi)

Social satisfaction gained by working as a woman machinist

According to Ahmed (2004), the garment industry has expanded employment opportunities for those who were born into poverty or were affected by a sudden disaster. Prasadi expressed a comparable viewpoint.

"When I arrived, I was in a relationship but not married. We are so poor. Our mother and father worked day-to-day jobs to feed us. Not only am I present, but so is my brother. I planned to improve their quality of life. I simultaneously

made gold jewelry and purchased furniture. And together with my husband, we constructed a house. Now I have extensive experience with sewing." (Prasadi)

She explains that the peculiar conditions the managers were under led to their pleasant and kind behaviors, which she took to be equal treatment for female shop floor workers. She considers these novel experiences in her working life. According to these analyses of various topics, some responses agree with the existing literature, while others disagree. Most participants were satisfied with their jobs. Some women believe that all jobs are equivalent and that all conditions and compensations are the same. The only difference between garment jobs and government jobs is that government jobs include a pension plan, while garment jobs include a fund. However, few employees are willing to switch jobs if they are offered a higher salary. Aside from that, they have no reason to switch jobs based on working conditions and are completely satisfied with their current position. In the context of Sri Lanka, most women who make these garments make a concerted effort to achieve a successful family life, and these women also strive to educate their children (Amin et al., 1998). According to the literature, female machinists make every effort to provide a quality education for their children. Sometimes these women are single mothers because their husbands have abandoned them, but they have the courage to improve their children's lives in order to better their own. Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that female machinists in Sri Lanka's Katunayake FTZ garment factories have achieved social success.

CONCLUSION

This study was directed to discuss the social success of women machinists in Sri Lankan garment factories, and this section discusses the study's contribution to the existing body of literature. According to the research of Amin et al. (1998), word-of-mouth is the most prevalent method of recruitment in garment factories. They relay the information to the current employees, who then inform their neighbors, friends, and sisters. The use of formal advertising methods such as newspapers and posters are extremely limited. With the interviews I discovered the fact that the factories' human resources departments are visiting rural villages to recruit workers. Amin et al. (1998) noted that women machinists have a positive self-image and a higher quality of life than others in the villages as a result of their higher income and their ability to operate technologically advanced, highly sophisticated machines. According to the findings, the women machinists' return home has been welcomed by the villagers, who share this opinion. Consistent with research findings, standing (1999) offers a positive assessment of this social interaction. Schlegel (1995) asserts that commencing a job as a garment worker is the first stage in the development of adolescence, which involves activities such as the social and personal control of sexuality, the impact of peers and social organizations, and the development of work skills. I found that, consistent with the literature, the participants swiftly acclimated to the new environment. According to the results of Horgan (2001), pregnant women are expected to work the same number of hours as non-pregnant women, including periods of obligatory overtime. In contrast, my study indicates that after seven months of pregnancy, women are not allocated hard work; they are not needed to sew, but must execute little jobs such as removing excess threads from completed

items. Thus, I bring an original discovery to the current body of research.

This research study is restricted in several ways. One of these limitations is that it is possible that women only revealed certain aspects of their stories when they were being interviewed. One of its other shortcomings is the presence of twenty female machinists. Additionally, there was a restriction placed on the amount of time that could be used for the research because it could only be completed over the course of two academic semesters.

This study will investigate the social success of women working in garment factories located in Free Trade Zones (FTZs) in Sri Lanka. The research will begin with a case study of the Katunayake FTZ, and it is possible that expanding the study to other FTZs in Sri Lanka will be one of the future projects. The lives of women working in garment factories that are located outside of FTZs could also be the subject of a study.

In addition, I recommend conducting research in order to gain a better understanding of the level of economic success enjoyed by female machinists working in the garment industry in Sri Lanka.

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