

Informalization and Feminization of Labour Force in the Context of Globalization of Production: Case Study of Women Migrant Workers in Kinfra Apparel Park of India

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Abstract : In the current phase of globalization, the mobility of capital facilitates outsourcing and subcontracting of production processes to the developing economies for cheap and flexible labour force. In such process, the globalization of production networks operates at multi-locational points within the nation. Under the new quota regime in the globalization period, the Indian manufacturing exporters came under the influence of corporate buyers and large retailers from the importing countries. As part of such process, the garment manufacturing sector is expected to create huge employment opportunities and to expand the export market in the country. While following these, expectations, the apparel and garment industries mostly target to hire female migrant workers with a purpose of establishing more flexible industrial relations through the casual nature of employment contract. It leads to an increasing women's participation in the labour market as well as the rise in precarious forms of female paid employment. In the context, the main objective of the paper is to understand the wider dynamics of globalization of production and its link with informalization, feminization of labour force and internal migration process of the country. For this purpose, the study examines the changing labour relations in the KINFRA Apparel Park at Kerala's Special Economic Zone which operates under the scheme 'Apparel Parks for Export' (APE) of the Government of India. The present study was based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis. In the first, the secondary sources of data were collected from the source location (SEAM centre) and destination (KINFRA Park). The official figures and data were discussed and analyzed in order to find out the various dimensions of labour relations under globalization of production. In the second, the primary survey was conducted to make a comparative analysis of local and migrant female workers. The study is executed by taking 100 workers in total. The local workers comprised of 53% of the sample whereas the outside state workers were 47%. Even personal interviews with management staff, and workers were also made for collecting the information regarding the organisational structure, nature, and mode of recruitment, work environment, etc. The study shows the enormous presence of rural women migrant workers in KINFRA Apparel Park. A Public Private Partnership (PPP) arranged migration system is found as Skills for Employment in Apparel Manufacturing (SEAM) from where young women and girls are being sent to work in garment factories of Kerala's KINFRA International Apparel Park under the guise of an apprenticeship based recruitment. The study concludes that such arrangements try to avoid standard employment relationships and strengthen informalization, casualization and contractualization of work. In this process, the recruitment of women migrant workers is to be considered as best option for the employers of private industries which could be more easily hired and fired.

Keywords : female migration, globalization, informalization, KINFRA apparel park

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