

## **A Study on Psychological Trauma among the Women Workers of Garment Industry in Tirupur District, Tamilnadu, India**

Dr.S.Parvin Banu<sup>1</sup>Dr.G.Ravikumar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor in English, Chikkanna Government Arts College, Tirupur, Tamilnadu

<sup>2</sup>Professor in ECE, M.P.Nachimuthu N.Jaganathan Engineering College, Erode, Tamilnadu

### **ABSTRACT**

Stress, according to the Oxford dictionary is “a demand upon physical or mental energy”. Stress has a different meaning for different people under different situation. Stress in a person is a physical and emotional response to a particular event or situation in a life. Therefore a stressed woman’s responses to the situations either in family or in a work environment will definitely affect the overall growth of both the sectors. The scenario is even worse in the life of College girls who do multiple tasking of earning, studying and looking after home simultaneously. A questionnaire containing four parts under common headings such as personal details, work-life balance, work environment and stress management has been designed to extract the responses from the working women and the findings are discussed in the form of tabulations and figures. This paper tries to come out with the suggestions to improve the quality and standard of stress-prone working women.

**Key words :**Stress,women, textile industry, psychology

### **INTRODUCTION**

Tirupur District, one of the country’s fast growing textile and garment industrial hub, has several registered and unregistered garment units providing employment opportunity to millions of various sizeable sections of people including internal migrants from different districts of Tamilnadu and other Indian states. Besides providing job opportunities for many men, the industries are striving hard to employ young girls and women by pursuing various schemes like camp labour schemes, hostel schemes etc. With an attractive offer of paying high wages, the mills specifically target rural illiterate or semi-illiterate poor adolescent girls. Moreover, many teenage college-going girls do part time jobs to meet their requirements. Because of forced labour, compulsory overtime, late night shifts, excessive working hours without rest, sexual harassment at work place most of them suffer from both physical and mental ailments and

fatigue. They tend to lead materialistic life undergoing psychological trauma due to the stress they face both at workplace and home.

### **PRESENT STUDY**

The earlier researches and studies regarding the social status of teenage girls and women workers in Tirupur district have not sufficiently dealt with the psychological issues faced by the College going girls and other family women working in the industry and have not adequately discussed the contributing factors to the issues related to these problems. There is dire need to study on the physical and mental issues which the girls who study and do part time job face in the industry and the struggle faced by the family women after their comeback from the industry.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as a central issue in determining their status. Empowerment of women is one of the concepts that have developed in connection with improving their status. Empowerment includes higher literacy levels, education, better healthcare, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of rights and responsibilities, improved standards of living, self-esteem and self-confidence.

- Do the teenage girls in Tirupur district privileged with this kind of empowerment?
- Is she free to work, study and determine her own life?
- Is she capable of meeting the outside world's atrocities and her inner conflicts?

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To identify the specific conditions and practices prevailing in the working environment that has led to the present status of the women
- To develop, promote and disseminate knowledge about women's roles in society and economic trends which affect women's lives and status
- To bring awareness on women exploitation in society and work place thereby eradicate women being vulnerable to all kinds of exploitations
- To find out if women in Tirupur District are skillful to balance work, life and self-empowerment.
- To identify whether women employees in Tirupur District are privileged with all kinds of social, political and economic freedom to make decisions and act independently in all spheres of life.
- To suggest ways and means to improve the physical and mental status of women employees in and around the villages of Tirupur District.

## **METHODOLOGY**

- Data, in form of pre-designed questionnaire, have been collected from around 300 girl students of Chikkanna Govt. Arts College and LRG Govt. Arts college, working as part-time employees to find out how skillful enough they are to balance work, study and life.
- 5 random case studies of women entrepreneurs have been carried out to assess the mental stress in balancing their career and personal life.
- Data, in form of interview, are collected from Teenage girls around 18 to 25 working as part-time employees in Tirupur garment industries as singer, supervisor, helper etc.
- Data, in form of interview, are collected from married working women in Tirupur garment industries as singer, supervisor, helper etc.

## **SAMPLING DESIGN**

The information required for this study is very personal and therefore the respondents are approached separately if needed and at times in a group. Women working in garment industries are met after getting due permission from the Managing Director of the concerned company and they are interviewed both individually and in group. Most of the women are housewives cum working women struggling to balance both family and work-place. Information from the girl students, studying in various courses and working as part-time employees of both Chikkanna Govt. Arts College and LRG Govt. Arts College are collected in form of pre-designed Questionnaires. Data is also collected from 45 female Assistant Professors working in both the colleges.

The women are selected at random from different localities of Tirupur District working in different cadres in various offices and as entrepreneurs, social workers and interviewed. Altogether data is collected from 495 respondents. The collected data is presented in the form of tables and charts along with statistical analysis for easy interpretation.

## **LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

- It is difficult to obtain permission from the reputed garment industries to conduct survey with their women employees
- A few companies, with a condition that the name of their company should not be mentioned in any form throughout the report, gave permission to carry out the survey.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

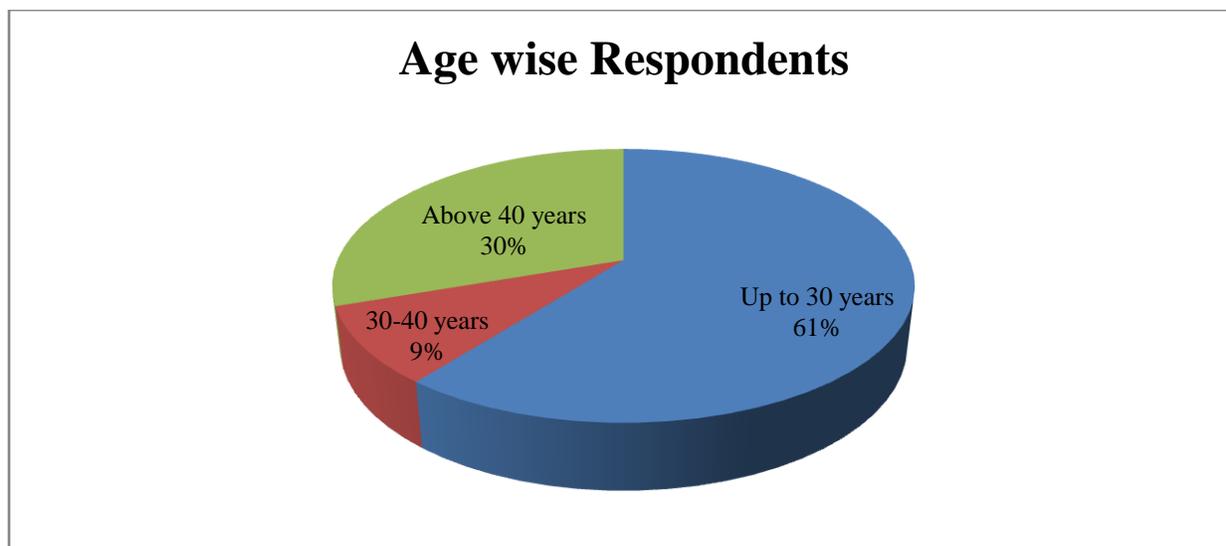
### **PERSONAL DETAILS**

Frequency tables 1 to 8 give clear picture of personal details of 495 respondents. From the table 1, one can easily identify information such as out of 495 respondents, 300 (60.6%) are in the age

group upto 30 years and they are mostly teenage girls from in and around Tirupur District who ply up and down daily towards Tirupur from various areas like Chengapalli, Avinashi, Vijayamangalam and even from nearby district like Erode. 45 respondents (9.1%) are in the age group between 30 to 40 years and that there are 150 respondents (30.3%) in the age group of above 40 years. These data is also represented in the form of pie chart in Fig1

Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Up to 30 years	300	60.6	60.6	60.6
	30-40 years	45	9.1	9.1	69.7
	above 40 years	150	30.3	30.3	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

**Table 1 Age wise Respondents**



**Figure 1 Age wise Respondents**

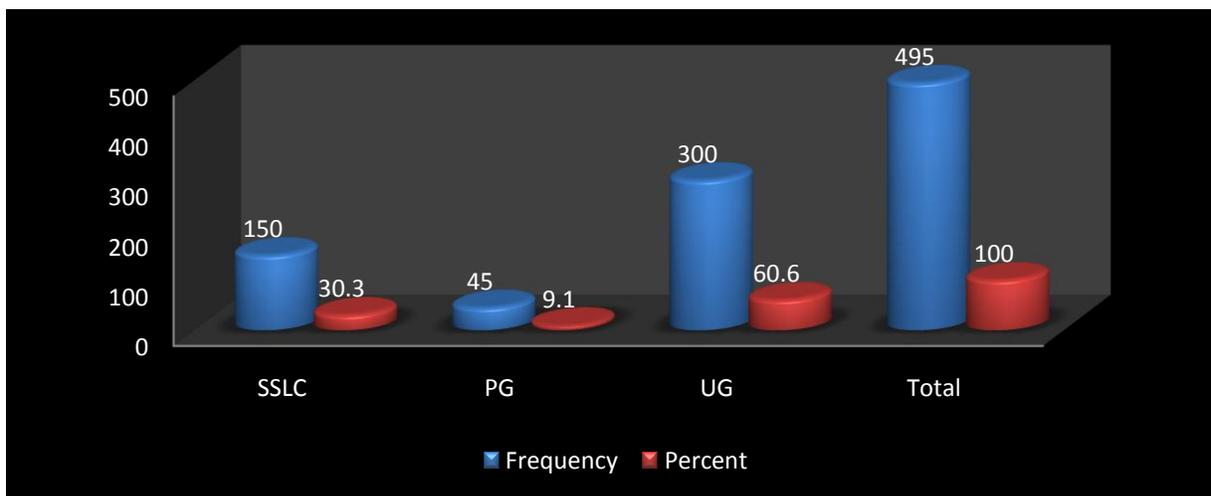
As far as education is concerned, 150 respondents (30.3%), who are women working in companies, have completed only SSLC, while 45 respondents (9.1%) which include both Assistant Professors and social workers have completed PG Degree. Major source of data has been collected from 300 respondents (60.6%) who are college girls pursuing UG Degree and working as part time employees and the same is represented in Frequency table 2 and Bar diagram Fig2. Out of 300 college girls, 50% of girls seek jobs out of their personal interest and to fulfill their requirements whereas another 50% seek job to support their family members. Thanks to the Tamilnadu Higher Education Board that has started two Government arts colleges

A Study on Psychological Trauma among the Women Workers of Garment Industry in Tirupur District, Tamilnadu, India

in Tirupur Main and two in nearby areas like Palladam and Avinashi that serves as an abode of learning for many young girls who aspire for higher education.

Education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SSLC	150	30.3	30.3	30.3
	PG	45	9.1	9.1	39.4
	UG	300	60.6	60.6	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

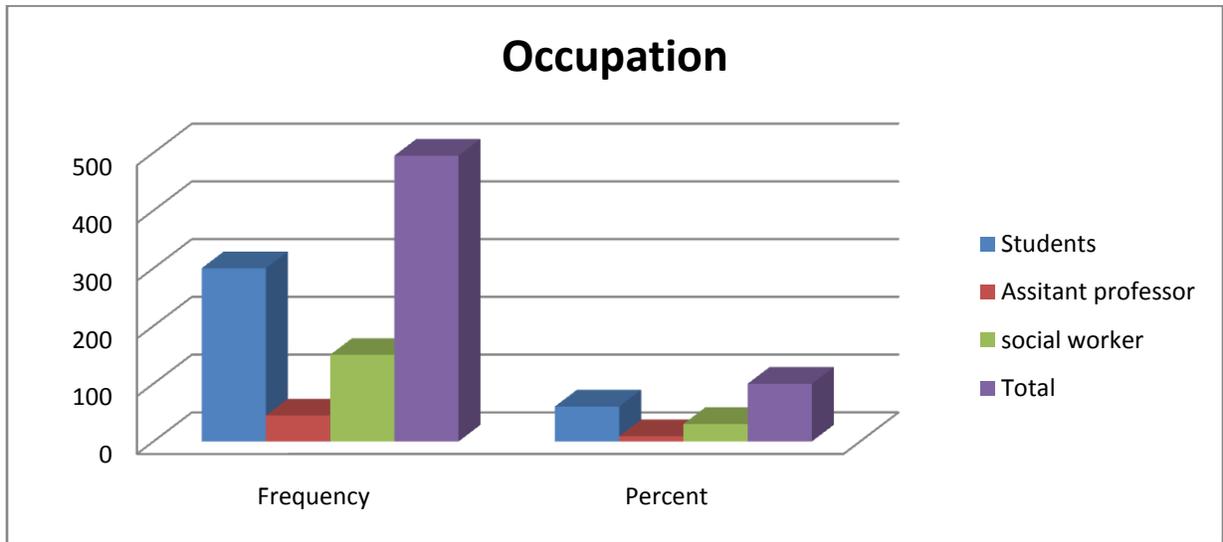
**Table 2 Analysis of Education of Respondents**



**Figure 2 Analysis of Education of Respondents**

Occupation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Students	300	60.6	60.6	60.6
	Assistant professor	45	9.1	9.1	69.7
	Social worker & Other Employees	150	30.3	30.3	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3 Analysis of Occupation of Respondents**

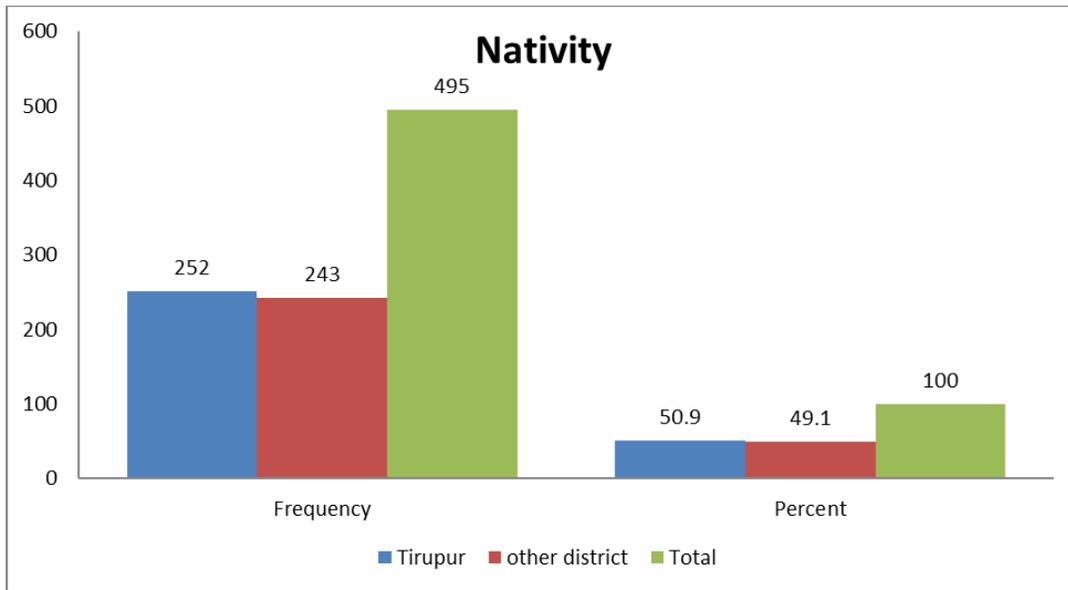


**Figure 3 Analysis of Occupation of Respondents**

Nativity					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Tirupur	252	50.9	50.9	50.9
	Other district	243	49.1	49.1	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4 Analysis of Nativity of Respondents**

A Study on Psychological Trauma among the Women Workers of Garment Industry in Tirupur District, Tamilnadu, India



**Figure 4 Analysis of Nativity of Respondents**

Table 4 and Fig 4 indicates vividly that around 50% of respondents are the natives of Tirupur District while the rest 50 % do not have Tirupur as native district and they ply every day from various other districts to seek employment.

<b>How many days in a week do you normally work</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 days	14	2.8	2.8	2.8
	5 days	81	16.4	16.4	19.2
	6 days	319	64.4	64.4	83.6
	7 days	81	16.4	16.4	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5 Analysis of Work load in a week of Respondents**

From the frequency table 5 one can easily interpret that majority of respondents i.e. 319 out of 495 have agreed that they work for 6 days in a week and only 14 respondents (2.8%) have come out with the opinion that they work for less than 5 days in a week. The most pathetic one to be looked at is that there are 81 respondents (16.4) who work for all the 7 days in a week.

<b>How many hours in a day do you normally work?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 hours	13	2.6	2.6	2.6

	5-6 hours	295	59.6	59.6	62.2
	6-7 hours	73	14.7	14.7	77.0
	7-8 hours	89	18.0	18.0	94.9
	More than 8 hours	25	5.1	5.1	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

**Table 6 Analysis of Daily working hours of Respondents**

From the data collected among 300 girl students of both Chikkanna and LRG Govt.Arts College, it is evident that most of the girls prefer to work after college hours in the day shift for around 5 to 6 hours per day in order to support their family members and find money for their own education purpose. Table 6 reveals that 295 respondents out of 495, who are mostly college girls, work for 5 to 6 hours after their college hours. The most important point to be mentioned is that after the college hours, there are girls who work for ever more than 8 hours which should be almost midnight for them to return home. 5.1% of respondents work more than 8 hours and this should be the serious matter to be looked at.

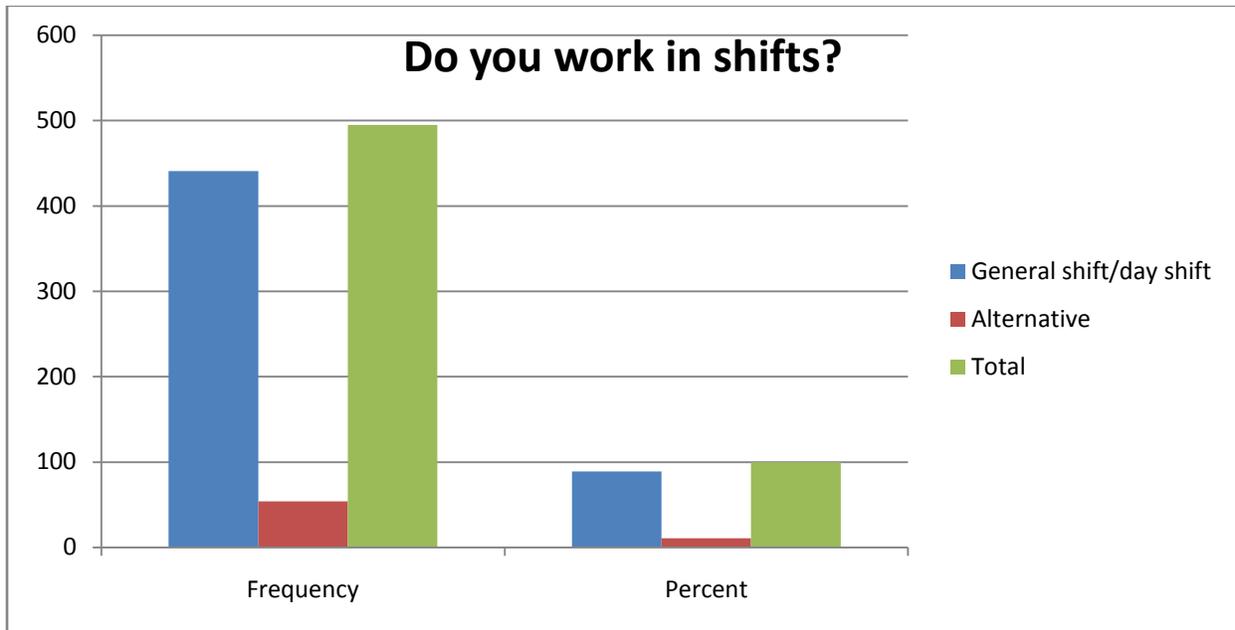
<b>How many hours a day do you spend traveling to work?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than half an hour	258	52.1	52.1	52.1
	Nearly one hour	148	29.9	29.9	82.0
	Nearly two hours	57	11.5	11.5	93.5
	More than two hours	32	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

**Table 7 Analysis of travelling hours of Respondents**

<b>Do you work in shifts?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	General shift/day shift	441	89.1	89.1	89.1
	Alternative	54	10.9	10.9	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

**Table 8 Analysis of working shift of Respondents**

A Study on Psychological Trauma among the Women Workers of Garment Industry in Tirupur District, Tamilnadu, India



**Figure 5 Analysis of Working shift of Respondents**

Table 8 reveals that 54 respondents (10.9%) work in Alternate shift which has to be taken care. Because working in both the shifts (day and night) is not safety for girls and women. Though 52% of girls and women prefer to travel less than half-an-hour to reach their working place, yet there are 6.5% (32 respondents) who travel more than two hours. The worst of this situation is that among the 32 respondents, who travel more than 2 hours, there are married girls and women too. Apart from family women, there are college girls who are married too. Therefore the stress level of college girls, who are married, should definitely be higher than unmarried girls as they have to balance family, study and work.

### **WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

The analysis status of Nativity as represented in table 4 reveals that 49% of respondents' families have migrated from different states of Tamilnadu to Tirupur and joined the garment companies as bread-winners of family. Therefore, parents of college going girls are not well-supported financially to meet the girl child's education. 70% of girl students say that though they find difficult to balance their studies and work, yet they manage to do so. Both work and study have become mandatory in life and they cannot compromise one for the other. In this situation, there is a chance for the companies to exploit the women workers by expecting them to "work more, less pay". Dhivya, a College Student, working in a garment industry says "Generally speaking, women are always paid low wages when compared to men. As far as promotions are concerned, women can enjoy the position, but for the same position, men are paid more than women".

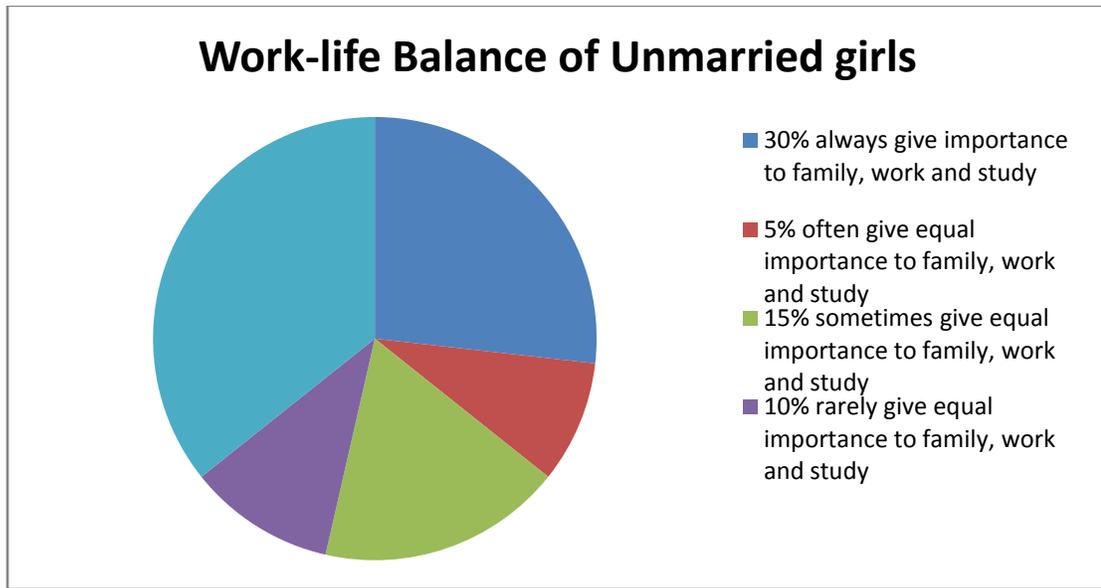
Among 495 respondents, major section of girl students find difficult to balance family, work and study. Even when they try to do so, they find life stressful and their health gets deteriorating. It is not possible for them to do physical exercises or yoga regularly and about 40% of them have given the feedback that only sometimes it is possible for them. “I am not able to concentrate in my health. I come by train to college and in the afternoon, I rush to the office by bus. I don’t get time to take food at proper time and I do both my official work and studies while travelling by train. Every now and then, I get headache due to overburden” says a respondent.

<b>I undergo physical exercise and yoga regularly</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	154	31.1	31.1	31.1
	Often	95	19.2	19.2	50.3
	Some times	200	40.4	40.4	90.7
	Rarely	46	9.3	9.3	100.0
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

**Table 9 Analysis of plan and schedule for physical exercise and yoga regularly of Respondents**

<b>I give equal importance to family, work and study</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	159	32.1	32.1	32.1
	Often	134	27.0	27.0	59.1
	Some times	153	30.9	30.9	90.0
	Rarely	49	9.9	9.9	100
	Total	495	100.0	100.0	

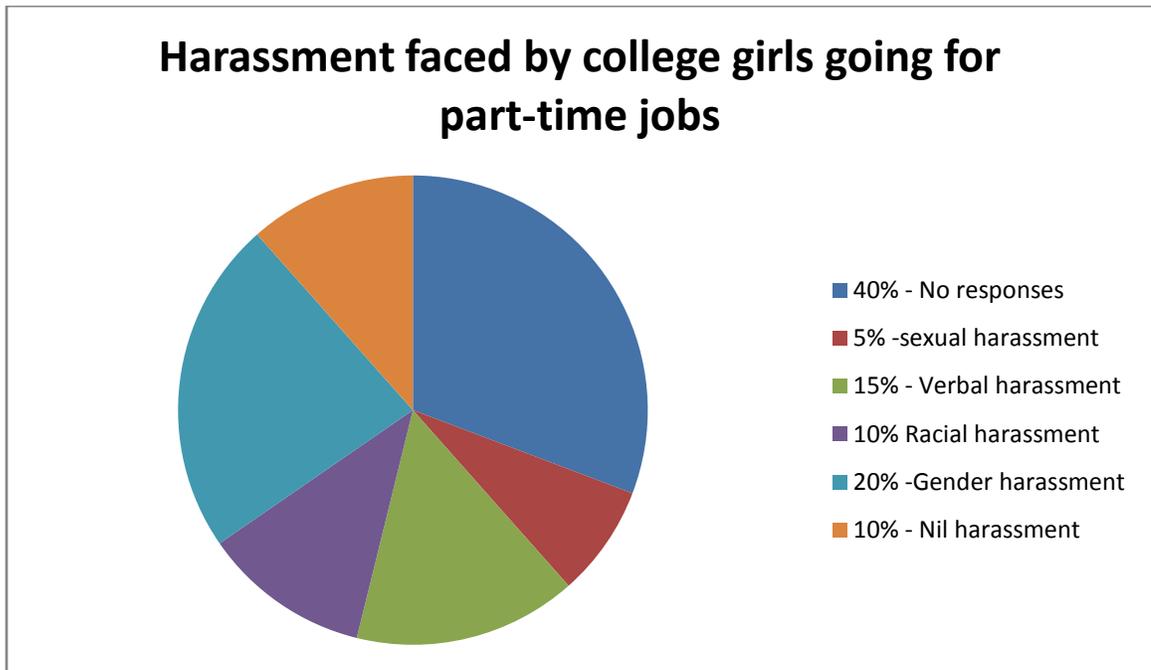
**Table 10 Analysis of equal importance to family, work and study of Respondents**



**Fig.6. Balancing family, work and study by college going girls in terms of percentage**

**Fig 6** clearly reveals that major section of girl students find difficult to balance family, work and study. Even when they try to do so, they find life stressful and their health getting deteriorating. It is not possible for them to do physical exercises or yoga regularly and about 90% of them have given the feedback that only sometimes it is possible for them. “I am not able to concentrate in my health. I come by train to college and in the afternoon, I rush to the office by bus. I don’t get time to take food at proper time and I do both my official work and studies while travelling by train. Every now and then, I get headache due to overburden” says a respondent.

The researcher is shocked to find that many respondents have not answered the particular question “Do women employees face any kind of harassment in the work place or anywhere?” Nearly 40% of the respondents have not answered this question. 20% have preferred Gender harassment, 15% have selected Verbal harassment, 10% have opted for Racial harassment, while only 5% are bold enough to give direct reply that women employees face sexual harassment. It is quite happy to learn that last 10% have given the feedback that there are no kind of harassment in any form for the women employees.



The fact that 40% have not replied this question has to be considered seriously. Are they not willing to express their views regarding this issue or do they indirectly mean to say that all the four kinds of harassment exist?

It is appreciable that garment industries are employing women workers more than men. Can it be called as women exploitation or women empowerment? It has an empowering effect as it provides job opportunities for women from poor background. Women, who come from a very poor background and an immigrant without any kind of support, are able to find a job and they are able to serve as the bread winners of the family. Liberal writers such as Leslie T. Chang, argue that the globalised garment industry has had this empowering effect as women from poor backgrounds are able to find work and earn a salary. But, at the same time women are exploited by paying fewer wages for more work. This is commented even by Emilie Schultze in her research Exploitation or Emancipation? Women workers in the Garment industry “by paying lower salaries, push for longer hours, and reducing work and environmental standards”.

### **FINDINGS**

The study of 495 respondents of Tirupur District has made the research to come out with the following findings.

- Almost 90% of working women do not concentrate in their health and these health issues have an impact on women empowerment.
- The stress level of women is more when compared to men and this is because of over workload in both the home environment and work environment.

A Study on Psychological Trauma among the Women Workers of Garment Industry in Tirupur District, Tamilnadu, India

- Due to higher level of stress, mothers are not able to give complete attention towards their child's growth.
- Though there are safety measures in some working environment, yet women are harassed in one way or other.
- There is unequal treatment between male and female employees and women are paid low wages in unregistered sectors.
- Balancing of family, work and study seems to be a challenging task for women.
- Social status, economic status and comfortable living are not much satisfactory among women workers.

**Possible suggestions for improving the status of women employees**

For women's rights to be respected, status to be improved and to eliminate gender inequality, their voices have to be heard. A recent International Labor Rights Forum report entitled *Our Voices; Our Safety* interviewed 70 workers in the Bangladesh garment industry. The report highlights threats against women workers who attempt to speak out about workplace abuses. It urges the Bangladeshi government and apparel brands to foster environments in which workers can voice their safety concerns, and help to develop solutions, including the right to freedom of association. It is not only for Bangladeshi Women workers, it should be common for all women workers including workers in Tirupur District.

**CONCLUSION**

Tirupur District deserves appreciation for providing employment for the marginalized sectors of women. It helps women folk to lead a decent life with all the basic necessities of life and women-friendly environment. But the question of women empowerment needs attention. The garment industries and other unregistered sectors should take this issue seriously and they should come forward to facilitate the issue of women empowerment. Women's skills have to be identified and opportunities are to be created to show-case her talents. The rehabilitation centres should help her identify and attain her dreams and reach heights. The industries should see that women employees are treated at par with the men to prove that equality between men and women is not a myth.

**Works Cited**

1. Balaji, R Work Life Balance of Women Employees International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology, Vol3, Issue 10, October 2014, ISSN 2319-8753. Print
2. Bambri et al., Rejection, Resilience and Well-being of Indian Working and Non-working Women, International Journal of Education and Management Studies, September
3. 2015. Web <<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-3883353021/rejection-resilience-and-well-being-of-indian-working>>

4. Barati, Azadeh et al. Challenges and Problems Faced by Women Workers in India, Chronicle
5. of the Neville Wadia Institute of Management Studies and Research
6. ISSN:2230-9667.Web< <http://www.nevillewadia.com/images/Cronicle2015/Azadeh-Barati15.pdf>>
7. Beauvoir, Simone de.The Second Sex Trans. H.M Parshley, Womenism and Marxism Archive.Web.<<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/index.htm>>
8. Hemanalini, Stress Management among Women Workers in Textile Industry-With reference to Knitwear Industry in Tirupur Indian Journal Of Applied Research, Vol.4, issue 3, March 2014, ISSN 2249-555X.Web.
9. Kamalaveni S and Suganya B, A Study of Work Life Balance of Women Employees with Reference to Garment Sectors in TirupurAsian Journal of management, Vol.8, 2017. Print.
10. Khanna, Dr.Girija and MariammaA Varghese, Indian Women TodayVikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, 1978. Print.Madeswaran A A Study on Woman Workers Exploitation in Garment Industries with Special Reference to Tirupur District, Tamilnadu. Web<<http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/handle/10603/56060>>
11. Saradha s. Stress of Women Entrepreneurs – A Comparative Study with Women in SelectedGroups in the District of Ernakulam, Dec28,2012. Web<[shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/5997](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/5997)>
12. Schultze, Emilie Exploitation or Emancipation? Women Workers in the Garment
13. Industry.web<<https://www.fashionrevolution.org/exploitation-or-emancipation-women-workers>>
14. NathiyaThangaraj et al., Women Employee Rights in Garment Industry, Tirupur IJSSM Vol-3, issue-2: 119-124.Web< <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301740453>>
15. Tripathi, Parul and Sandeep Bhattacharjee, A Study on Psychological Stress of Working
16. Women, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, vol.2 Issue 2, Feb.2012,
17. ISSN: 2231-5780.Web. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317558474>.<<https://hbr.org/2011/08/why-are-indias-women-so-stress>>
18. Veeramani,S. Exploitation at Export Employment: Case of Women Workers of TirupurGarment Industries (IJCHSSR), [S.I.], Vol.. 4, p. 6, Dec. 2017. ISSN 2456-7205.Web < [www.indiancommunities.org/journal/index.php/ijchssr/article/download/48/18](http://www.indiancommunities.org/journal/index.php/ijchssr/article/download/48/18)>