

# **Economic Success of Women Machinists: The Case Study of Garment Factories in Katunayake Free Trade Zone, Sri Lanka**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Sri Lanka has several Free Trade Zones (FTZ) which contain different manufacturing operations including garments. According to the World Bank, a FTZ is a "fenced-in industrial estate specializing in manufacturing for export and offering their resident firms free-trade conditions and a liberal regulatory environment" (World Bank, 1992).

The economy of Sri Lanka depends heavily on the garment manufacturing industry and mainly contributes to the national income, employability rate, foreign exchange, and direct investments, etc. Further as indirect sources, they contribute to maintaining the value of Rupee, Infrastructure which is developed through these Free Trade Zone. According to the Sri Lanka Export Development Board, in 2019 apparel exports value is at US\$2,098.28 million. The major markets are the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Netherland, Canada, India, France, and Australia. Sri Lanka exports garments such as casual wear, fashion wear, intimate wear, swim wear, sportswear, uniform, and workwear, and children's wear. Further in Sri Lanka there are mainly 3 FTZs named Katunayake, Biyagama, and Koggala. Beyond these, there are 3 other mini export processing zones in Mirigama, Malwatte, and Wathupitiwala.

## **Problem Statement**

In the garment industry sector, the bottom layer of the operational work comprises of a majority of women workers due to the easy management of working conditions required by the female workers, less impact from union actions, less wage rates compared to male workers, and other reasons. According to the Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters Association, in Sri Lanka, approximately 300000 women are working in the garment sector resulting in an inflow of over \$502 billion in revenue in 2018. Thus it is important to study whether the women workers who provide a major contribution to the Sri Lankan economy have social success in their lives.

## **Research Problem**

Have the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka achieved economic success in life?

## **Objectives**

To identify whether the life of a garment factory woman is a success or a failure.

## **Significance of the study**

In Sri Lankan society, there is a perception that the women in garment factories do not have economic success. Society has a mindset that the women in garment factories come from rural villages intending to achieve economic stability in their lives but end up with an unsuccessful economic situation.

Though the perception is that, it may be different from the real situation. So, the researcher intends to understand whether the women in the garment factories have a successful or unsuccessful life concerning economic factors.

Thus, the study will contribute to confirming or rejecting the social perception regarding the economic success of women machinists in garment factories in FTZ in Sri Lanka.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study explores the extent of success of women working in garment factories in Sri Lanka concerning the economic aspects of their life. The literature review covers the previous studies that had paid attention to garment workers and their lives.

### **Free Trade Zones**

As to Hakimian (2011), FTZs are initiated with the main objective of attracting Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and generating a diversified industrial base to promote manufactured exports and achieve long-term economic diversification and growth.

### **Katunayake FTZ**

Katunayake FTZ manufactures products with the exclusive intention of exporting with the investments of the foreign parties facilitating a range of free trade incentives namely tax holidays, use of subsidized land and buildings, reduced customs duties, and unrestricted duty-free import of machinery and raw materials (Hewamanne, 2008).

### **Preference for Women as Workers**

In the garment industry in Sri Lanka (70) % of the employees are women (Marcus). By referring to the views and finding one can get an idea of why the majority is women. (Barnes, Wendy D.; Kozar, Joy M.; 2018). Women can be hired at a lower amount of wage cost-effectively due to the lower level of educational qualifications. Women are often perceived to be more easily exploitable as compared to men, and it is precisely this segment of the female population receiving the most severe abuse and

discrimination in the apparel industry. (Ahmed (2004), viewed the favourable angle of these garments as follows. For those who came from poverty or were beset by a sudden catastrophe, the garment factory has increased their employment options. It is better than working as a domestic servant, prostitute, or home-based worker.

### **Personal Economic Success and Unsuccessfulness**

Satisfaction with economic and their perception of economic conditions is becoming the subject of evaluation of social behaviour. (Vykopalová, 2013). According to Vykopalová (2013), people explain their economic situation structurally while putting it to external influences (or state control of the economy) rather than their internal efforts (motivation, skills). A person who is economically unsuccessful may lead to a deterioration of mental state, increased anxiety, depression, decreased life satisfaction, and overall indifference. The way of satisfying the basic existential and social needs and of setting the standard of living corresponds again with behaviour and depends on the economic level of that individual. This means that a developed economy positively affects individual development and thus also performance and motivation. Also, Vykopalová (2013), mentioned negative economic situations bring along a series of social impacts such as unemployment, poverty, or deprivation which strengthens the incidence of crime, homelessness, and other negative social phenomena with social unsuccessfulness in lives.

### **Starting and Adaptation to Career Life**

Literature represents many ways as to how those women started their career life as garment women machinists in FTZ. The recruitment process is mainly through word of mouth. The use of formal ways of advertising in newspapers and posters is very little. Rather they pass the message to the existing workers and so they will inform their neighbours, friends, and sisters (Amin, Diamond, Newby, & Naved, 1998). After the recruitments, though they are new to the cities, they adapt to those cities very quickly and become stable even financially through working for long hours and overtime (Amin et al, 1998).

### **Managing of Women at Work**

Several scholars have referred to the term EPZ (Export Processing Zone) to represent FTZ. As O'Donnell & Williamson (2017), state, HR managers within EPZ garment factories reacted to these pressures by attempting to create labour force consensus. O'Donnell & Williamson (2017), also highlight the strategies that HR managers use to increase labour productivity within the EPZ garment factories. There are individual and group incentive schemes, reduced payments, provision of

sponsored meals, transport, accommodation, and access to a bonus payment upon completion of five years of service to encourage daily attendance.

### **Level of the Economic Situation**

According to Amin et al (1998), the wages for them are low since they are considered supplementary wage earners without much participation with labour organizations. Though they get a low wage for long hours, compared to most of the existing alternatives they get better wages, terms, and conditions. Those who are from villages manage their wage by minimizing non-essential expenses and sending their wages to their siblings for educational purposes and their parents.

There are reports that some workers use their half an hour lunch break to train for improved speed, which significantly improves output and job performance. Indeed, these workers can successfully bargain for improved wages because other garment factories are always willing to hire them at a higher wage. (Ahmed, 2004).

As to that, the women are eligible for becoming a success in economic aspects. They can reach for a good wage with their dedication and take care of their families.

### **Savings**

With the earnings they receive, the excess they use as savings. The saving methods they use are; money placed in a bank account, lent out for interest to friends, family, or co-workers, with a rotating savings group at the factory, or converted into gold jewellery (Amin et al 1998). Especially in Katunayake FTZ, most of the women are working to accumulate jewellery, furniture, and money to prepare their dowry by themselves. (Hewamanne, 2008).

However, Harrington (2004), observes that one of the most popular means of withholding money was from special holidays and overtime bonus pay at work. The withheld money was normally collected and then women purchase gold jewellery-a common method of saving in Bangladesh for their protection in a situation of the departure of the male breadwinner, a progressively common incidence.

Through the previous studies, this study explores the life of women in Katunayake FTZ to understand ‘whether the women machinists in garment factories have achieved success in their life economically’.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter intends to address the research design and the ultimate procedures adopted in understating whether the “the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka have achieved economic success in life”.

## **Research Design**

### **Philosophical Foundation**

This study investigates a qualitative approach that is associated with the philosophy of Interpretivism. Interpretivism is the philosophical assumption to be chosen, where the truth is believed to exist within the researcher in studying whether the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka have achieved economic success in life in the context of a Katunayake FTZ. Therefore, the social actors for this research project are the women machinists in Katunayake FTZ with different perceptions, attitudes, and values regarding their life. Hence the researcher plays the role of understanding the subjective reality of the social actors in identifying whether the life of a garment factory woman is a success or a failure.

### **Type of the Study**

This research project adopts a descriptive research design where different views, perceptions, and ideas of the social factors are taken into consideration in concluding understanding have the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka achieved economic success in life.

### **Research Approach**

The study adopts an inductive approach as the research approach. In this place, it analyses whether the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka have achieved economic success in life in the context of Katunayake FTZ.

### **Research Choice**

This research uses more descriptive, in-depth and unbiased data which have been collected adopting a qualitative approach to the research.

### **Research Strategy**

The adopted strategy for the research project is the case study method, in which it collects information about a specific object, event, or activity, such as a business unit or organization (Saunders et al., 2009). This research project is of particular interest to the researcher to attain a rich interpretation of the context on having the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka achieve economic success in life.

### **Research Setting**

This research study is conducted in a natural environment to identify whether the life of a garment factory woman is a success or a failure.

### **Time of the Study**

In this research, it was decided to collect data only once in a period. Therefore, it is combined with the cross-sectional study.

### **Population and sampling**

#### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis of the research is individual which collects data from the participants separately. Here, the Unit of analysis is an individual participant. Individual women machinists in garment factories are the focus of this research.

#### **Population**

Thus, the population of the research is all the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka. There are mainly 3 FTZ in Sri Lanka named Katunayake, Biyagama and Koggala and the study will be carried out in the Katunayake FTZ.

#### **Sampling Technique**

The sampling technique used in this research is Convenience sampling which comes under non-probability sampling where the sample is selected from the population which is convenient to the researcher. Those 12 women machinists will get selected from Katunayake FTZ.

#### **Collection of Data**

#### **Data Collection Methods**

In this research context, the researcher has selected the interview method to identify the ideas and views of the women machinist, to get feedback, to build confidence and faith with the garment women to succeed in the research. Along with that, it will also have benefited in building a rapport with the participant and also helps in getting real answers for the questions raised in the interview. As the study deals with knowing the ideas, perceptions, attitudes, and suggestions of the participants, building fewer formal relationships with garment women would be useful in collecting data.

Secondary data were collected through documentary analysis. As this topic was extensively discussed by different authors and researchers previously in the local context as well as international context, a worthy collection of data was gathered through research articles, journals, books, and other sources that were published on garment women's in zones.

### **Data Analysis and Synthesis**

The thematic analysis would be followed as the data analysis technique. This is comprehensively used in the qualitative approach to research in which it identifies and analyses themes and patterns within the collected data. This would be useful in the analysis of data because it enables the comparison and link between different concepts that will be revealed by the garment-women participants.

For the process of data analysis to explore whether the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka have achieved economic success in life, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, participant facial and body expression observations, and through documentary analysis. Under this section, the focus is drawn on discussing the interview process that is directed to collect reliable data and through those interviews, how the transcripts will have developed. Apart from the interview process, attention was also drawn to discussing how the details about nonverbal expressions will be documented.

### **Reflexivity**

The reflexivity statement declares the researcher's attempt to be as open as possible about the sources according to the view of the researcher who conducts the study. The researcher has conducted the research project on "Have the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka achieved economic success in life: In the context of s Free Trade Zones in Sri Lanka", by standing on the belief that the majority of the women in Katunayake FTZ does not have success their lives.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Make certain that the privacy of the participants will be protected and highly respect the confidentiality of the information they provide. Also, make certain that the information they share will only be used for academic purposes.

Participants have the right to decide whether they participate or not in the data collection. At the same time, the researcher is entitled to provide motives for conducting the research study.

### **Summary**

This section provides a brief sight by summarizing the methodology fragment in the study. The study is conducted as qualitative research using the collection of data by interview method. The interview

strategy has been adopted through an inductive approach in a natural setting using a sample of 12 respondents were selected from convenient sampling to represent the whole population.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Introduction

This chapter intends to present the data analysis of the issue on "Have the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka achieved economic success in life". Women machinists in the Katunayake FTZ is the sample. This chapter gives a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from women machinists working at the Katunayake FTZ. Relevant data to carry out the research project are collected through Semi-Structured interviews and examination of secondary data sources. In conducting interviews, a pre-prepared interview guide was used.

Thus, this chapter mainly covers the data analyzing process, under which the researcher will discuss the interview process and the process of developing transcripts, and the process of documentation of observations.

### The Interview Process and Development of Transcripts

*Table 1 - Details of the participants.*

	<b>RENUK A</b>	<b>MALKANT HI</b>	<b>DHEWIK A</b>	<b>SHANIK A</b>	<b>MEEN A</b>	<b>KANT HI</b>	<b>PRASA DI</b>
<b>FROM</b>	Kurunag al	Balangod a	Bandaraw el	Kaluthar a	Kilinoc hc	Kurunag al	Mathale
<b>AGE</b>	30	33	20	30	30	33	30
<b>NATIONAL IT Y</b>	Sinhala	Sinhala	Tamil	Sinhala	Tamil	Sinhala	Sinhala
<b>RELIGION</b>	Buddhist	Buddhist	Hindu	Buddhist	Hindu	Buddhist	Buddhis t
<b>DURATION OF SERVICE</b>	5 years	11 years	6 months	4 years	9 years	7 years	13 years

<b>MARRIED</b>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Divorce d	Yes
<b>EDUCATION UP TO</b>	Ol	Not mentioned d.	Grade 10	AL (3S)	OL	Grade 10	OL
<b>SIBLINGS</b>	Younger Sister, elder brother	Younger Sister, younger brother	Elder sister, younger sister	Younger brother	Younger brother, 3 elder brothers younger sister	Younger sister and	Elder sister, younger brother
<b>LIVE WITH BOARDING PLACE</b>	Alone	With younger sister	Alone	With husband	Alone	With daughter	With husband
<b>BASIC SALARY</b>	23 000	21010	20 000	21000	20 800	24000	22 000
<b>WORKING SHIFTS</b>	6.30 am 6.00 pm	6.00 am - 2 .00 pm 2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	6.00 am -2 .00 pm 2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	6.00 am - 2 0 pm 2.00 pm – 10.00 pm	7.30 am - 6.30 pm 6.30 pm -	7.45 am 5.30 pm	7.30am- 7.30pm

In the process of conducting interviews, the researcher visited their boarding places. Before the interviews, the researcher tried to build some sort of a rapport with the women machinists in these boarding places. This was done by politely talking with them highlighting that their privacy will not get damaged with the interviews. The researcher assured them that there is no considerable gap between them and the researcher as being an undergraduate and women machinists as young women.

The researcher rejected the chairs that were offered and went onto sit on their beds and discuss with them. It was also mentioned that the participant could persist anonymous for the interview if they have any reluctance in revealing their name and at any given time they could quit the interview. Further assurances about the confidentiality of data were given to the participant. At the same time, the consent to record the interview from all the participants was taken as it is not ethical to voice record their opinions without the consent of the participants. The interviews were conducted on the 10th of January, Sunday 2020, because on Sundays most of the women are available in boarding places.

Interviews from them were conducted in Sinhala which is their native and familiar language. Further, consent from all the participants was granted to voice record the interviews. Great support was given to the researcher by all the participants by sharing their ideas. An interview guide was prepared as all the questions were raised according to the sequence in the interview guide that was concentrated on research objectives. (Appendix 1) Additional questions were raised to gain further insights by probing and to continue the flow of the interview. Out of the interview guide, some questions were asked to cross-check the answers given by the participants. Once interviews were concluded, by listening back to the voice records and referring to the points noted down, transcripts were developed by the researcher in the Sinhala Language as all the interviews were conducted in Sinhala medium.

### **Use of Secondary Documents**

In this research project journals, research papers, and other online data sources were considered and used to ground theory the data.

### **Data Analysis Method**

For the research project, semi-structured interviews, participant facial and body expression observations, and secondary documentary analysis were used as the data collection methods. To analyze the data that have been gathered through these means, a thematic analysis was taken into concern.

As per Braun and Clake (2006), thematic analysis was conducted in Six-phases. As the first step, the researcher became familiar with data by listening to the voice records over and again and reading the transcripts developed. In this step, the researcher developed an initial idea of the overall data along with the nonverbal expressions that were noted down by the researcher. Then by going through the transcripts again, areas that are relevant to each research question were emphasized. As the interview guide was organized aligned with the research questions, segment-wise relevance to the research questions could be found. Those areas were emphasized separately to identify which segment is directed to which research question.

Then as the next step, the search for themes started. Under this, the researcher listed down the emphasized segments under each research question and then analyzed them to find out themes through identifying what factors are repeatedly stated and observed. The researcher also tried to find out the patterns within the data collected from the women machinists and the facts collected from observing participants' facial and body expressions.

After identifying the themes and patterns, a review of each research question was done by identifying the sub-themes. For some major themes identified, sub-themes could also be identified. In reviewing themes, some themes were removed from the lists as there was insufficient data to support the theme.

Then the themes were defined, and meaningful names were given to both main themes and sub-themes as the final step of identifying the themes and patterns within the data gathered through semi-structured interviews and participant's nonverbal expressions.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Themes were listed following the research objective and research questions by analyzing the data, which were collected through semi-structured interviews and nonverbal expressions gathered through observations. This section comprises an initial commentary on the findings and a detailed discussion concerning the literature combining the researcher's view on the themes that emerged.

Under this section, each of these emerged themes is discussed with the use of a quotation from the relevant research participants. Facts and ideas presented by them will be extracted to support the themes. According to the research objective, the economic situation before starting work as a women machinist, facilities provided by the garment factory, earnings for the service of women machinist, savings, investments, and economic achievements of women machinists, job alternatives for a women machinist as a garment woman and economic satisfaction gained by working as a woman machinist are the main discussion points.

### **Discussion**

#### **Economic Situation Before Starting Work as A Women Machinist**

Most of the women machinists have faced many difficulties with their families before they arrived at the FTZ. They faced economic difficulties at the most. Kanthi was a woman with the courage to win her life as she does not have her parents and even her husband has left her just one and half months after she got a baby.

*"I started garment after I got her. (Showing me her child). It is one month and 15 days when he went. Though I went to the garment before I married him, with my marriage I did not go to the garment factory. When she was 4 years, again I started to work. Till she became 4 years I worked in shops. I looked after her while*

*working in a shop. Also, some people look after babies. So I paid a monthly fee for looking after my baby.*

*(33-year-old Sinhala woman from Kurunegala with a 12-year-old daughter)*

### **Facilities Provided by the Garment Factory**

According to Hewamanne (2008), the management does not provide women machinists with adequate facilities which results in complaints of overcrowding, poor lighting, and problems with temperature and ventilation.

However, some scholars have highlighted the facilities which are provided by the garment factories for the employees. Several scholars have referred to the term EPZ (Export Processing Zone) to represent FTZ. As O'Donnell & Williamson (2017), state, HR managers within EPZ garment factories reacted to these pressures by attempting to create a labour force consensus through the provision of sponsored meals, transport, accommodation, and access to a bonus payment upon completion of five years of service.

Shanika discussed facilities she receive with satisfaction.

*“Transport is given. The hostel is there for the ones who are willing to stay in the hostel. Everything is given. Uniforms are given. Transport comes closer to the main road. In garments, everything is given. Hostel girls have every facility. Since I am married I can't be at a hostel. My friends are there.*

*So as I know there are 4 girls in one room. Free food are given in hostels.”*

*(30-year-old Sinhala woman from Kaluthara)*

According to Dhewika, beyond the above-mentioned facilities, the women machinists who are from rural villages are provided with transportation costs to travel homes located far from FTZ after completing 6 months of service.

In addition to these facilities, with the collaboration of line members, the women machinists are entitled to receive funds when they have funerals in their homes Prasadi discussed it as follows.

*“We lost our father 4 years ago. Holidays are given for funerals. They gave 20,000 to my hand. In addition to that, they gave sugar, tea leaves. 20000 is given by the factory. We do have a society called the death welfare society (maranadarasamithiya). In that, they collect a monthly amount. When someone has a funeral, they pay.” (30-year-old Sinhala woman from Mathale)*

Harrington (2004), has stated the health issues among machinists due to restricted toilet access, poor ventilation, headaches, back pain, deteriorating vision, and being yelled at, publicly humiliated, or slapped. However, Renuka spoke about the facilities provided in case of sickness for a women machinist in a garment factory and it is given below.

*"We have been looked after by the factory. Even if we stay in a boarding place they come and inquire about it. There are nurses inside the factory. If we are in a boarding place they will visit us. If we get a sickness inside the factory they will take us to hospitals. There is a separate Medicare within the factory. Factories pay for the expenses. Take care of us until we leave the hospital. They also bring us food for the 3 meals of the day while being in the hospital." (30-year old Sinhala woman from Kurunegala)*

According to O'Donnell & Williamson (2017), HR managers are used to implementing HR practices that enable suppliers to balance production pressures and the implementation of the Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.

Prasadi has commented on the annual events that are held within her factory as below.

*"We do have a sports meet at the factory. Every factory has a sports meet. There are no special facilities from the zone. But factory wise they provide facilities. Then, there is a party with a musical show." (30-year-old Sinhala woman from Mathale)*

In addition, to that, there are annual trips sponsored by factories taking women machinists to a hotel through a fully booked train. At the same time, some factories have Christmas and year-end parties. As such there are many annual events sponsored by the garment factories.

### **Earnings for the Service of Women Machinist**

All the participants receive a salary above Rs 20,000. For the basic salary women, machinists get additions named incentives, newly introduced bonuses, and overtime salary provisions. All the participants have mentioned the term targets with their responses. Kanthi has defined how the target is getting to the practices in working shifts.

*"Targets mean, (into a deep think). The hourly target is based on the daily target. There is an amount that needs to be completed within the day. So upon that an hourly number of pieces to complete is denied. (33-year-Old woman with a 12-year-old daughter)*

Hewamanne (2008), identifies from an interview she conducted with a woman that the middle-level managers and supervisors exploit these workers intending to get promotions for themselves, by

imposing tight targets. In contrast to that Meena commented that she can cope with the given targets and she receives the incentive.

*"The hourly target is 150. But we sew 200, 220, and 250. Now we have difficult days. You know it. If we don't have such difficulties, in those days we sew. If we have difficulties and pain in such days' target gets reduced. That's the scenario."  
(30-year-old Tamil woman from Kilinochchi)*

O'Donnell & Williamson (2017), also highlighted the strategies that HR managers use to increase labour productivity within the EPZ garment factories. HR managers control individual and group incentive schemes that depend on peer pressure among female production workers to encourage daily attendance. The above literature is supported by the comment of Renuka through her experience in the working shifts. As pointed by O'Donnell & Williamson they talk with each other and manage absenteeism and receive incentives.

*"For a line, they give several holidays. There are 7 holidays for a line. If someone takes more than these 7 holidays they do not receive incentives. If all 28 girls in the line have covered holidays by not taking more than 7, then all the 28 will receive incentives. That means everyone receives 7 days as holidays. That 7 days should be covered by all 28. If someone took beyond 7 days, then we will not receive the incentives. Not everyone needed these 7 days. (Showing the kitchen items on the nearby table) these heaters, jugs, and cups and saucers were received as gifts for all 28 women in the line." (30-year old Sinhala woman from Kurunegala)*

According to Shanika, factories provide considerable money allowances and other nonmonetary benefits when the employees introduce new girls to the factory as follows.

*"When introducing a new girl, it differs from time to time. In the recent past, they gave pendants. As there are many different things. Rs 5000 were also given. Again there are bags with goods. Sometimes half of the salary was given.*

*Likewise, so many different things were given." (30-year-old Sinhala woman from Kaluthara)*

### **Savings, Investments and Economic Achievements of Women Machinists**

With the earnings they receive, the excess they use as savings. The saving methods they use are; money placed in a bank account, lent out for interest to friends, family, or co-workers, with a rotating savings group at the factory, or converted into gold jewellery (Amin et al, 1998). The withheld money was normally collected and then women purchase gold jewellery-a common method of saving in

Bangladesh for their protection in a situation where the departure of the male breadwinner takes place, a progressively common incidence. (Amin et al, 1998).

Except for a single woman all the other participants are saving money in banks. Other than saving in banks they use an informal saving method called "seettu". Malkanthi has mentioned how she saves in seettu as follows.

*"Yes, I engage in a seettu. But have not done recently. Usually put salli (money) seettu, around one lack. (33-year-old Sinhala woman from Balangoda with a 13-year-old son)*

Shanika explained they do not engage with good seettu since it's difficult for them to save in goods seettu and shift those goods like furniture, chairs, and cupboards to their houses. Especially in Katunayake FTZ, most of the women are working to accumulate jewelry, furniture, and money to prepare their dowry by themselves. (Hewamanne, 2008). Agreeing with Hewamanne (2008), 2 participants have accumulated gold jewelry.

Most of the women in garments can at least put the foundation to a house with their savings. Prasadi also explains her investment as follows.

*"Most of the taken furniture's are shifted to the newly built house. All most all the works are over. Now it's only to put the concrete to the floor and to lay the tiles." (30-year-old Sinhala women from Mathale)*

In contrast to all the above statements, Meena provided a different viewpoint on her financial management. When I asked regarding her savings she relaxingly said that she has nothing.

*"Nothing. (In a very simple voice) If I take Rs 40 000 it remains only today. When tomorrow comes, the whole Rs 40 000 is not there. 3500 boarding fee has to be given. Then we have to eat and drink. And the other thing is we have to take creams. We have to have fun. Must send money to home. 20000 or 25000 will be sent home. Mother and father are there." (30-year-old Tamil woman from Kilinochchi)*

Since Meena is a Tamil girl, I asked her about the accumulation of gold jewellery. Usually, Tamil people tend to wear more gold jewellery. But she relaxingly laughed and explained a different viewpoint that I have never anticipated.

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<sup>1</sup> A savings method where nu of people save a monthly amount for a collective fund and allocated a sum of amount or goods for each person in rotate wise.

*"We are the gold jewellery. First of all, I came here to learn to speak Sinhala. Okay. Now my target is over. We came here after the end of the war<sup>2</sup>. We never knew how Sinhala people live. Whether they are good or bad. We don't know their words. So we came to see you. Never came to work."*

*(Laughing) (30-year-old Tamil woman from Kilinochchi)*

Meena is a relaxed girl who thinks very simply and she does not have a life burden with her. She sends her parents more than half of her salary and from the remaining amount, she spends her life without being a debtor to anyone.

### **Job Alternatives for a Women Machinist as A Garment Woman**

As to that Kasseeah&Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2018), even if women machinists lose their job they can move into self-employment. Agreeing with the above, many respondents stated their ideas about alternative options as follows.

"I have attended sewing classes and I have bought 2 sewing machines, from my earned money. So I can sew. There is more demand for that than this. The ones who do the best in sewing are very few in the village. Even now when I go home I sew. I engage with sewing little things for the villagers." (30-year-old Sinhala woman from Kurunagela) As to that most of the participants are ready to start sewing as self-employment.

### **Economic Satisfaction Gained by Working as a Woman Machinist**

Ahmed (2004), found that for those who came from poverty or were beset by a sudden catastrophe, the garment factory has increased their employment options. Within the evidence given above it is clear that after the recruitments, the women machinists become stable financially through work for long hours and overtime. One of the most popular means of withholding money was from special holidays and overtime bonus pay at work.

When focusing on how the women in garment factories feel about their earning, according to Amin et al (1998), they enjoy a quality life after they migrate to cities. They earn a better income compared to unmarried and married women in other sectors. This is because of the reason that they have many ways to increase their earnings as mentioned earlier.

## **CONCLUSION**

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<sup>2</sup> Sri Lanka had a civil war from 1983 to 2009. Beginning on 23 July 1983 led by the Velupillai Prabhakaran led Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam create an independent Tamil state ( Tamil Eelam ).

## **Introduction**

This chapter contains the conclusion on “Have the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka achieved economic success in life, with reference to the context of Katunayaka Free Trade Zone. Accordingly, this chapter begins with the research problem, research objectives, the findings, the theoretical contribution and limitations of the study, and areas for future research.

The interest was drawn in focusing on the economic situation before starting work as a woman machinist, facilities provided by the garment factory, earnings for the service of women machinist, savings, investments and economic achievements of women machinist., job alternatives for a women machinist as a garment woman and economic satisfaction gained by working as a woman machinist followed by research objective to identify whether the life of a garment factory woman is economically successful or unsuccessful.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at boarding places in Katunayake FTZ, and transcripts were developed. Further, a field notebook was maintained to take down notes on nonverbal expressions and important facts. All the gathered data were analyzed, were coded and a thematic analysis was carried out and through that several themes emerged and they were discussed with the use of relevant theoretical underpinnings in the context of the Katunayaka FTZ. Through the themes, multiple findings emerged as the output of the research study.

## **Research Questions and Major Findings**

Have the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka achieved economic success in life in the context of Katunayaka FTZ; in answering this question, the analysis brought forward the following major findings.

### **Economic Situation Before and After Starting Work as a Women Machinist**

Most of the women machinist's women have taken the breadwinner position of their families and selected this garment service. Apart from that, some women were not with financial difficulties as such, but they have come with their husbands to the FTZ intending to have an economically stable life together.

Apart from the woman who has lost her parents, all the rest send money to their parents. Most of the time this amount is more than half of the salary of the women. According to the findings of Kibria (1995), as a woman machinist is bearing her expenses, she has no obligation to provide for her family. Disagreeing with this view, all the women machinists send money to their parents. Some women send money to their siblings who are engaged in school education. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month, they receive their salary, and on the same day, they send money to their families.

### **Facilities Provided by the Garment Factory**

In garment factories, there are sewing lines in which women machinists sew. The number in a line can be members as 15,26,24,28, and 50. With the working hours, the line members are working together to achieve the targets and to earn the incentives. On some occasions, there are cases that line members have taken hostile actions, harm others to their advantage. Except for that situation, all the other time these women work together in a friendly manner.

Women machinists enjoy many facilities that are provided by the garment factories. According to O'Donnell & Williamson (2017), HR managers within FTZ garment factories reacted to these pressures by attempting to create labour force consensus through the provision of sponsored meals, transport, accommodation, and access to a bonus payment upon completion of the five years of service. Agreeing to the literature, women machinists have commented that they are given transportation, meals, hostel facilities, medical centre facilities, and gold coins on completing 5 years of service. In addition to this, there are factory-sponsored trips, annual parties, musical shows, January 1st celebrations and so on.

### **Earnings for the Service of Women Machinist**

All the participants receive a basic salary above Rs 20 000. That is in addition to the basic salary they get as daily attendance bonus, new member introduced bonus, productivity prizes, overtime payments, target covering, and incentives. Along with all these additions they are entitled to a monthly salary of around Rs 30 000. O'Donnell & Williamson (2017), highlight that HR managers are controlling individual and group incentive schemes through peer pressure among female production workers to encourage daily attendance. Agreeing with this literature, participants have confirmed that there are productivity prizes for all line members when they can manage the target and the holidays as a whole line.

### **Savings, Investments and Economic Achievements of Women Machinists**

With the earnings they receive, the excess they save. The saving methods they use are; deposits in a bank account, lending on interest to friends, family, or co-workers, with a rotating savings group at the factory, or converting into gold jewellery (Amin et al, 1998). Agreeing with the above findings most of the women save in a bank. In addition to that, they use gold accumulation to save money. Other than saving in banks, it's famous among them to use seettu as an informal saving method. Among the "salliseettu" and "goods seettu" they prefer "salliseettu" because when they go back to their villages it costs them to shift those goods from the boarding house to the faraway villages and hence they prefer salliseettu.

These women machinists have many investments. Especially in Katunayake FTZ, most of the women are working intending to accumulate jewellery, furniture and money to prepare their dowry by themselves. (Hewamanne, 2008). Agreeing with this literature, most of the women have collected

furniture from their savings. They have made gold jewellery using their own money. As becoming financially stable some women machinists have even built houses. Some machinists have purchased three-wheelers for their family and now their target is to buy a van. Accordingly, to these findings, women machinists have become economically successful.

### **Job Alternatives for a Woman Machinist as A Garment Woman**

As an alternative job option, most of them want to start small-scale garments on their own. Some of them have already purchased one to two sewing machines with their savings. Kasseeah&Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2018), have stated that in case of losing jobs women are capable of turning into self-employment. Agreeing with the literature, women machinists are intending to earn by their exiting knowledge on sewing if they lose their jobs. But few women wanted to do farming as self-employment. As to the findings, since they are familiar with sewing for a long time, when they have to resign they choose to open a small-scale garment factory in their villages to become economically stable. With the above findings, it can be concluded that women machinists in garment factories in the Katunayake FTZ in Sri Lanka have achieved economic success in life.

### **Economic Satisfaction Gained by Working as A Woman Machinist**

These women are with the capability of using technological banking methods as Automated Teller Machine and these money transactions take place through ATM cards. Success gained by women machinists is further proven by the above findings.

When focusing on how the women in garment factories feel about their economic capability, as to Amin et al (1998), they enjoy a quality of life after they migrate to cities. They earn a better income compared to the women in other sectors. This is because of the reason that they have many ways to increase their earnings as mentioned earlier. Agreeing with this statement all the participants are with satisfaction on the level of the economy through their service. They appreciate it since they are all able to look after their parents, siblings, and children with these earnings. In addition to that, they can be a strength to their husbands and families to become stable economically. Beyond that, some women machinists built houses on their own and look after their parents allowing them to live in those houses. Economic findings ensure that women machinists have achieved economic success.

### **Contribution to Existing Knowledge**

This study was conducted to discuss the economic success in the life of the women machinists in garment factories in Sri Lanka and this section discusses the contribution made by the study to the existing literature.

Standing (1999) has mentioned that the experience the women workers get through the career life gives them more independence and autonomy with their earning capacity. Through exposure to new

social networks and new lifestyles, women gain self-confidence and a sense of modernity. The researcher also found the same with respect to this study as well.

Kasseeah&Tandrayen-Ragoobur (2008) have stated that women become empowered when they turn to self-employment. Agreeing with the literature, the respective findings contribute to the existing literature because the participants have planned to establish small-scale garment factories within their homes on their retirement, to become economically stable.

Salzinger (1997) has mentioned in her literature that due to the supervisors' high-pressure practices for the workers, companies tend to conduct company-sponsored events to mitigate the adverse reactions from those workers. This respective study confirms the same and contributes to the existing literature as was depicted in the results, that there are company-sponsored sports meets, musical shows, annual trips sponsored by factories Christmas and year-end parties.

According to the findings of Kibria (1995) since a woman machinist is taking care of her expenses, she has no obligation to provide financial support to her family. In contrast, respective findings emphasize that all the participants send money to their parents for different purposes such as expenses of the family and even expenses for the education of their siblings. Further, they construct houses for their families. Thus this study theoretically contributes to the existing literature. According to the literature of Harrington (2004), it shows that even employees who are working in the garment factories work extra hours to boost their income in the other informal sectors. The incapability of other informal-sector jobs to fulfill women's requirements has resulted in the growth of the sex industry. However, none of the participants mentioned the women who are engaged with the sex industry in the zone as an income-earning source and it is another theoretical contribution.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This research study has several limitations. One such limitation is that, when conducting the interviews women, might have revealed only part of their stories. Another limitation is it has only 12 women machinists. Also, the time available for conducting the research was a limitation since the time was restricted to one academic semester which lasts for only 3 months. The researcher may not have found certain relevant literature and that too is a limitation of this present study.

### **Areas for Further Research Work**

This research intended to study the economic success of women in garment factories in Sri

Lankan FTZ's, the case study of Katunayake FTZ. Expanding the research to other FTZ's in Sri Lanka can be one of the future research. Also studying the lives of women in garment factories situation outside FTZ's is another possible study.

Further, the researcher suggests carrying out researches in an in-depth manner to understand the level of the economic success of women machinists in the garment industry in Sri Lanka.

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