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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN HANOI, VIETNAM

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Abstract

Employment is one of the key drivers of migration. At the desired destination there are several factors that affect the lives and social security of migrants including employment issues. This study will analyze in depth the employment characteristics of vulnerable migrant women in Hanoi. The results show that the living and working conditions of migrant women in Hanoi are relatively low and depend on their studying and working qualifications.

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Introduction:-

Migration is a global issue and attracts the attention of many countries. The International Organization for Migration - IOM (2020) identifies six main drivers of international migration such as labor, family, education, unequal developments and equality between countries, armed conflicts and human rights, the changes in climate and the environment. These factors have diverse impacts on migration. In addition, the development of technology, especially the way in which information is shared, has also become a driving force of migration. Among these drivers, labor, employment and income are the main drivers of migration. IOM also points to the pursuit of better economic opportunities as the traditional cause of migration, as an indicator of migration trends among different groups of people around the world. In 2017, the number of migrant workers in the world was 164 million, accounting for 64% of all international migrants. The International Labor Organization - ILO (2021) shows that over two-thirds of workers migrate to high-income countries and the majority of them work in service industries, in which the proportion of female workers is higher than that of men.

In Vietnam, UNFPA (2015) surveyed 5000 people, up to 65% of respondents had reasons for internal migration related to work, of which 30% found a job in a new destination; 11.5% migrated for better jobs; 11.9% migrated to facilitate work and 12.6% migrated to improve living standards. The Red River Delta, the Midlands, the Northern Mountains and the Southeast are the regions most sought by migrants for the reason of "finding a job in a new place". In a 2020 analysis report on the population and housing census results, UNFPA (2020) showed that employment/labor remained the main reason for migration in Vietnam with a rate of 36.8%.

Studies by Le Bach Duong and Nguyen Thanh Liem (2011), Dang Nguyen Anh (2006) showed that the majority of migrants were not satisfied with their jobs and income at home and wanted to find better employment opportunities in the city. Rural areas have characteristics of lacking jobs, fragmented arable land which is increasingly unable to meet the income expectations of the people. In that context, the development of industrial parks and export processing zones leads to the development of service industries in cities, especially Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, becoming an important attraction force with great potential.

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Hanoi is the socio-economic center of Vietnam, with a high annual economic growth rate, therefore most of the migrants to Hanoi have the desire of finding better jobs and better incomes. However, when migrating to Hanoi, whether or not female migrants have better jobs and income is a big question. The Article based on survey results will focus on analyzing the employment and income status of migrant women in Hanoi.

Methodology:-

Document analysis

The study uses data from international and domestic studies, especially documents from the United Nations, IOM, ILO and many other domestic and international study experts to understand global and domestic migration contexts, theories and approaches. Through the documents, the author develops the research outline, theoretical framework and design research tools.

Group discussion

The study conducted 02 group discussions of migrant women. 16 women were divided into 02 groups: Migrant women working as workers in industrial zones (representing labor in the formal sector) and migrant women doing freelance work (representing workers in the informal sector). The study participants were introduced by the Communal Women's Union belonging to Hanoi City Women's Union. Information about the study and ethical commitment was explained to the participants prior to the group discussions.

In-depth interview

Since the object of the study is to assist in accessing basic social services for female migrant workers, in-depth interviews were conducted with female migrant workers in Hanoi, government officials, representatives of local agencies and organizations, relevant organizations, unions and NGOs, including:

- 12 in-depth interviews with female migrant workers. The list of female migrant workers interviewed was prepared by the Communal Women's Union, which met the criteria of age, marital status and occupation.

- 10 officials of the local government and mass organizations, with 04 officials from the labor, war invalids and social sectors, 04 officers from the Communal Women's Union, 02 officers of the Women's Union at district level, ensuring the balance between rural/ urban and in the sex of staff.

The list of female migrant workers interviewed was prepared by the Communal Women's Union, which met the criteria of age, marital status and occupation.

- 04 officials from NGOs related to supporting female migrant workers.

The in-depth interviews were all asked for permission before recording. During the tapes transcript, the principle of random re-checking was followed to ensure accuracy. All contents were processed using the NVIVO 14 software.

Questionnaire

The study uses the quota sampling method due to the difficult-to-access characteristics of female migrant workers, in which the total sample is 240 women. Since the study focuses on two specific groups - female migrant workers working in the informal sector and female migrant workers working in industrial zones. Survey was done on 120 women for each specific group. The first group of female workers was surveyed in Hoang Mai District, where many female migrant workers are self-employed in Hanoi and the second group was surveyed in Dong Anh District, an area with many industrial facilities and export processing zones. The obtained questionnaires were cleaned and statistically analyzed using the SPSS 22 software.

Findings

The quality of employment of female migrant workers coming from rural areas to Hanoi is relatively low. The reason is that they have not received vocational and skills training, therefore when they join the labor market, they can only do simple, freelance jobs or work as workers in stages that do not require expertise and high technology. When living and working in Hanoi, female migrant workers also face many economic risks when these simple jobs bring them low income compared to the common ground; their income is unstable and their rights are not protected by law in case a dispute happens.

Jobs that require a low level of expertise and are simple

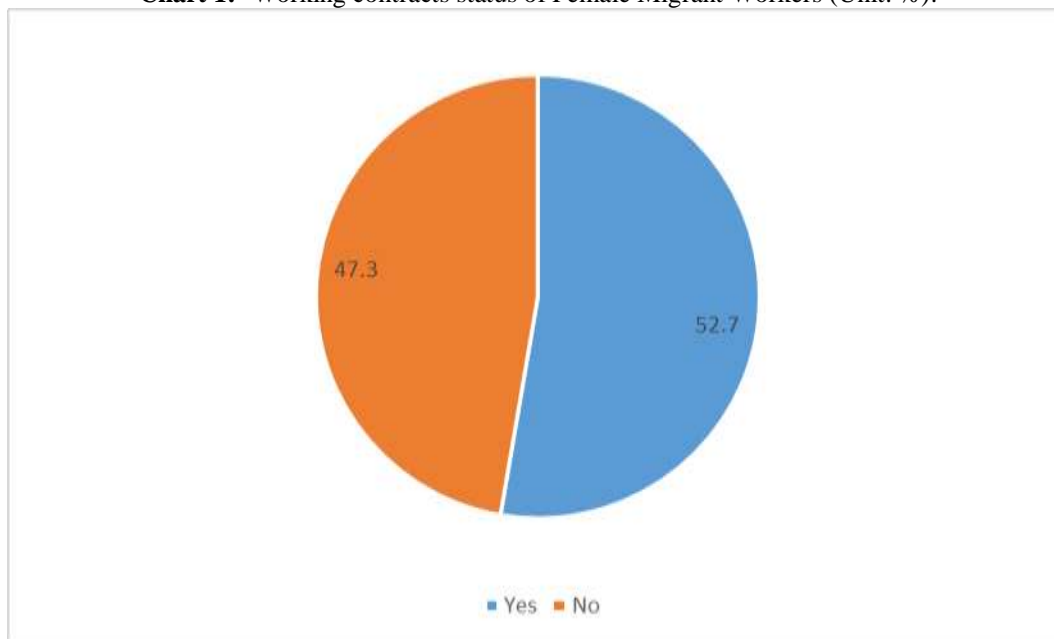
Through the survey, it was found that simple and freelance jobs accounted for the largest proportion with 32%, followed by jobs not requiring professional and technical expertise accounting for 22%. The 3rd group is the small services and sales jobs taking up 20%. In general, up to 74% of female migrants do simple and manual jobs that do not require qualifications or skills.

There is a similarity in education level with the level of high school and below accounting for over 65%, which means most of them have not received vocational training. Simple, freelance jobs with a high school degree or below account for 80.5%, workers and mechanics that do not require expertise represent 86.8% and service and sales staff are 66.7%. Notably, workers and mechanics who are not required to have high school education account for the highest percentage of 77.4%, showing the current trend that after finishing high school women choose to work as workers right away. However on the other hand, it is possible that they do not have access to vocational training programs, therefore, they choose to work. This is something that needs to be paid attention to because if this rate increases in the future, Vietnam in general will continue to be a cheap labor country and for female migrants in particular, these potential risks make their lives and work become more and more risky.

In order to get these jobs, 68.9% of female migrants had to find jobs for themselves. This shows that they currently do not have access to services and activities to support job placement, which is also a big barrier for them in the process of migrating for economic purposes. Notably, there is 1/5 (20.7%) migrant women seeking work through referrals from compatriots, friends and housemates because this is the available source of information and contact that they trust most when migrating. Migration to a new place is challenging, so most female migrant workers rely on their existing relationships, especially family, relatives and friends from the same hometown.

“My sister got married here, so I came here to work. After doing it for a long time, I felt good, and then I decided to stay. It’s been more than ten years now. Then I got married and live here until now” – In-depth interview, Female worker, 35 years old, Dong Anh

Chart 1:- Working contracts status of Female Migrant Workers (Unit: %).



Source: Survey results of Study.

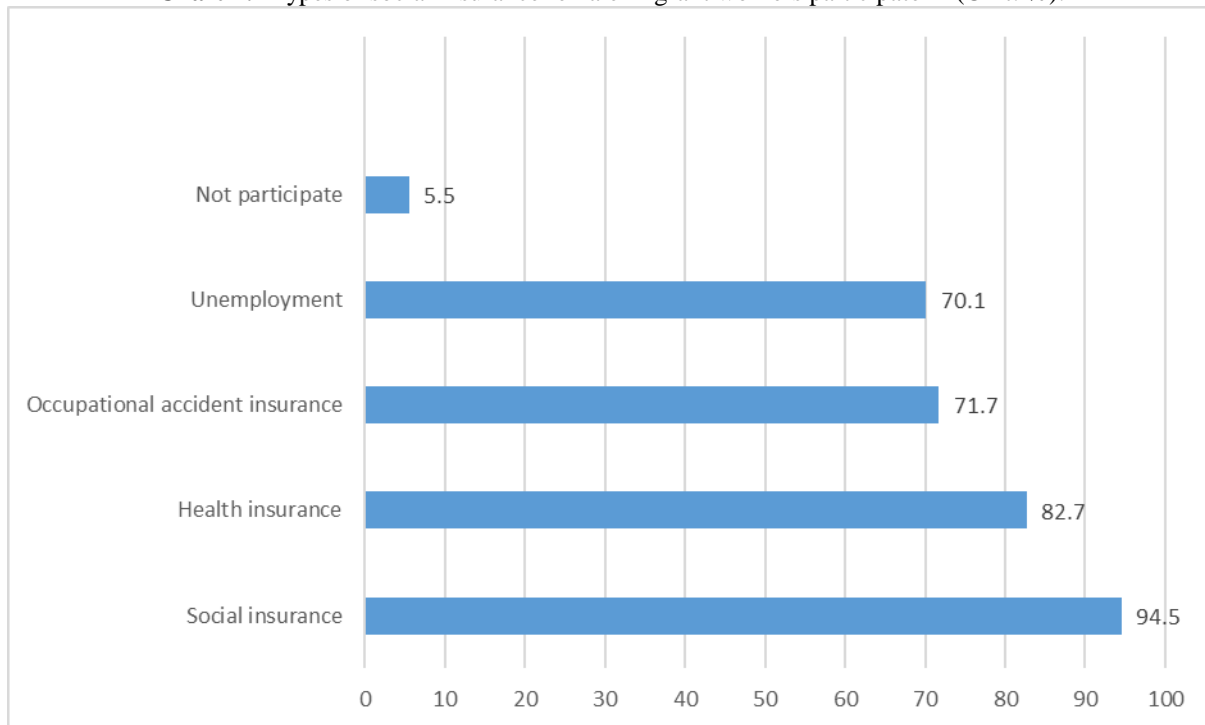
Among 47.3% female migrant workers without a labor contract, the rate in urban areas is 31.3% higher than in rural areas (61.1% compared to 29.9%) because in urban areas they do freelance jobs. Meanwhile, female migrant workers work as workers in industrial facilities and export processing zones in rural areas. There are contrasts between age groups; for the age group of 40 years and above the rate without labor contract accounts for more than 92% while the age group of 39 years and below does not exceed 36%, making the difference of 56%. This is understandable because the group of rural workers in the survey mainly work as workers in industrial zones, large enterprises and companies and must comply with the provisions of labor law; while the urban labor group concentrates on freelance jobs, working in households and small groups, so there are no contracts applied. In addition, the age group of 40 and older is currently not guaranteed with a job, they may face financial risks. Besides, this is the age at which they also start to face health problems.

"I don't have a contract, this is just a small shop, not a big system, so the owner and I only agreed to each other verbally, we didn't sign anything. Almost all of my wages were delayed, slower one week compared to the agreement. But salary is paid in full" – In-depth interview, female salesperson, 24 years old, Nam Tu Liem.

According to Decision 595/QĐ-BHXH and Decree 44/2017/NĐ-CP, when there is a definite-term or indefinite-term labor contract, the employer must pay full social insurance for the employee or in other words, participate in compulsory social insurance system. Figure 6 shows that social insurance is paid the most with the rate of 94.5%, followed by health insurance with the rate of 82.7%. Notably, 5.5% of employees are not covered by any kind of insurance. Overall, 40.2% of female migrants are not fully insured; of which migrant women currently living in urban areas do not have a higher rate of payment than in rural areas with the difference of 2.5% (41.7% vs 39.2%).

"In my place, people also say that if you work for them for a long time, they will also pay social insurance for you. But how can I trust the private sector when the private sector is not as clear as the company. I have worked here for 2 years and they have not yet paid social insurance for me. I don't know how long their endurance is." – In-depth interview, female garment worker, 42 years old, Linh Nam.

Chart 2:- Types of social insurance female migrant workers participate in (Unit: %).



Source: Survey results of Study.

The actual working hours of many female migrant workers is much longer than the state regulations

Table 1 shows that the average working hours per day of female migrant workers is about 9 hours, which is lower than the state maximum of no more than 10 hours per day. But it is worth noting that there are still people who have to work up to 15 hours a day. The average working hours per week of female migrant workers is now 57.94 hours, too close to 10 hours a week compared to the state regulation of 48 hours a week, especially some people who work up to 105 hours a week – 2.1 times more than prescribed. It shows that many of their labor rights are not guaranteed and they may be suffering many health effects, disadvantages and injuries in life. But this is also understandable when they have to work more to have a better income. For freelance migrant workers, working hours are usually not fixed but last all day. For workers, the basic salary is just over VND 4.3 million/month, forcing them to look for opportunities to work overtime to increase their income.

"Per month I work 28 job days with 2 days off, I get more than VND 7 million. If I work 2 more days, I get extra money, about VND 200,000/day. My working hours on average is 15 hours a day, from 7am to 10pm" - In-depth interview, female salesperson, 24 years old, Dong Anh.

"I go to work from 7 am to 7 pm and come back home for dinner, bathing and washing, then I wouldn't have time to do anything else. Even on Sundays we can't rest, we still have to go to work, if not we won't have enough money to support our 2 children." – In-depth interview, female garment worker, 52 years old, Linh Nam

Table 1:- Average working hour of Female Migrant Workers.

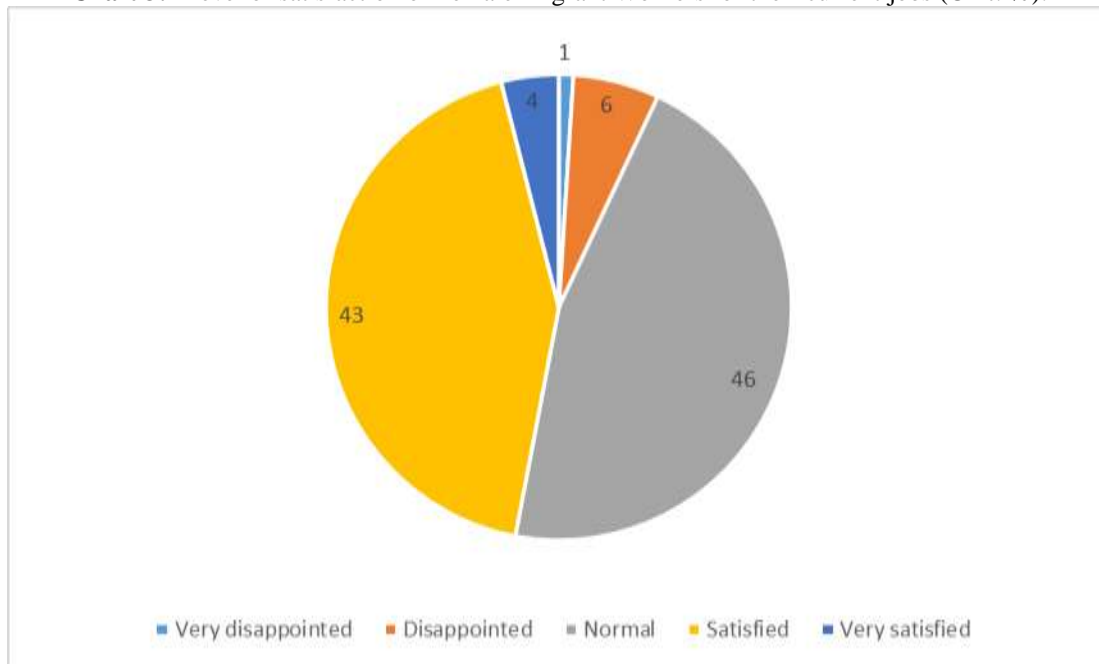
Working time	Average of one day (hour)	9,08
	Average of one week (hour)	57,94

Source: Survey results of Study

A positive signal is that the agreed salary and payment scheme are positively evaluated by the survey respondents, above 90% for both groups when the salary is 96.7% and the payment scheme is 91,7%.

With the above job characteristics, when asked about the level of satisfaction with the current job, the normal level was chosen the most by the surveyed people with the rate of 46%, and the satisfaction level also received quite high percentage with 43% (chart 3). The assessed mean score of 3.41 shows that the majority of female migrant workers feel normal with their current job. In terms of satisfaction, people currently living in rural areas have a higher level of satisfaction than those in urban areas by 5.9% (45.7% compared to 39.8%) and those with labor contracts have the satisfaction level higher than that of those without the contract with the rate of 9.3% (46.8% compared to 37.5%).

Chart 3:- Level of satisfaction of Female Migrant Workers for their current jobs (Unit: %).



Source: Survey results of Study.

In general, the majority of female migrant workers today do simple jobs, manual labor, etc. Jobs that do not require much training or skills. And currently they do not have access to employment support services and activities, most of the jobs are found by themselves, only a small part is introduced by acquaintances, relatives and friends. Notably, more than half of them do not have a labor contract, especially those in urban areas. At the same time, among those who have labor contracts, the percentage of those having social insurance is not high. Thereby, we see that female migrant workers are currently facing many disadvantages and risks in employment, especially in the informal sector with unstable jobs and incomes, long working hours, lack of protection when a dispute occurs. Choosing to work in

industrial zones with contracted jobs in stages that do not require high technology is the best choice for female migrant workers due to limited qualifications and skills. Therefore, when designing policies on migrant workers, it is necessary to pay attention to employment issues, especially the development of job placement services and activities so that female migrants can find secure and stable jobs.

Discussion:-

The research results share similarities with the results of Dinh Van Thong's study (2018) when emphasizing that the reason people migrate to Hanoi is the development of agriculture in the Red River Delta, which makes agricultural workers surplus in rural areas. At the same time, the economic development of Hanoi as the capital creates many job opportunities for people. Hanoi also has premises for educational services, health care, rich spiritual life, etc., which is also the attraction of workers and people to work and live. Migrants to Hanoi have a number of characteristics: The education level of permanent migrants is higher than that of local residents and seasonal migrants. The numbers of people who migrate to Hanoi are often unqualified and doing seasonal jobs... This is the group that needs attention in the designing support programs.

Due to the large proportion of working conditions in the informal sector, ensuring the social security of migrant women faces many challenges. This is also consistent with the findings of Hoang Ba Thinh (2011) in the study "Female migrant workers working in the informal sector and the level of access to social security" when pointing out the difficulties, barriers of female migrant workers in the informal sector in accessing social security in specific aspects: policy on social insurance, health insurance; education and medical services...

Therefore, policies to support access to decent work are an important factor to ensure social security for migrant women, leading towards sustainable development. UN Women (2020) in "Leaving no one behind: Access to social protection for all migrant women" affirmed that social security is a universal right and a key factor in the implementation of the sustainable development goals under the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Barriers to women's access to social security and public services are related to policy discrimination and enforcement. Migrant women often work in the informal sector such as domestic help or care services. These types of jobs often do not pay social insurance, so they are not entitled to benefits such as maternity or health care. Regulations on residence and working length can also create barriers for migrant women to access care services.

Conclusion:-

Through the research, in generally female migrant workers in Hanoi feel satisfied with their current jobs and income level since these jobs and income levels meet their migration economic target. However, jobs of female migrant workers are of relatively low quality, with the majority doing simple jobs. Many female workers do freelance work in the informal sector. In general, the salary, working conditions and working benefits under contracts are not high. In addition, the majority of female workers work beyond the hours prescribed by the state to earn higher incomes. Due to doing freelance work in the informal sector and working in simple steps in industrial chains, the working process of labor migration does not help improve skills for female migrant workers in Hanoi.

These characteristics will negatively affect the health and quality of life of female migrant workers as well as their families. In the long term, the lack of mechanism to ensure social security such as social insurance, health insurance or community support also affects the quality of life of female migrant workers, restricting their access to basic social services.

Therefore, the policy system should pay enough attention to the design of mechanisms for sharing employment information, vocational training, and job placement to support female migrant workers in finding high-quality jobs, contributing to their social security in the latter.

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