



FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TECHNICIANS AND JUNIOR ARTISTS ACCEPT LOW-PAID JOBS IN THE INDIAN FILM INDUSTRY - POLLACHI REGION

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ABSTRACT

The research attempts to uncover the exploitative practices, informal organizational structures, and socio-economic risks associated with the employment status of junior artistes and low-level technicians within the regional Indian film industry, with a specific emphasis on the Malabar Cinema Industry. Using recent investigations on the matter, especially those carried out by the Justice Hema Committee, this paper discusses how the very nature of the film production process, namely, being document-less and project-based, enables employers to bypass legal employment guidelines, thus leading to long working hours, late payments, and the lack of basic hygienic conditions at the workplace. Another important issue under discussion is the mental health aspect of media labor, particularly, how 'aspirational motivation' is used to rationalize the poor quality of employees' life and working conditions. In particular, the paper shows that the power structure and fear of blacklisting in the sector prevent junior employees from voicing their grievances. As a result, these workers are forced to engage in continuous economic marginalization and turn to unorganized labor. Hence, the research demonstrates that further academic attention needs to be paid to this area and HRM practices should be established in order to ensure workers' protection.

KEYWORDS: Precarity, Informal Labor, Junior Artistes, Tamil Cinema, Justice Hema Committee, Aspirational Labor, Media Economics, Structural Exploitation.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian film industry stands as a global titan, celebrated for its prolific output, cultural influence, and high-octane glamour. Behind the multi-crore spectacles and the stardom of lead actors lies a complex, sprawling ecosystem powered by a massive, largely invisible workforce of technicians and junior artists. These workers—ranging from light men, set assistants, and makeup helpers to background artists—form the structural backbone of every production. However, unlike the "above-the-line" talent who command premium fees, these "below-the-line" workers operate in a precarious environment characterized by informal contracts and significantly low wages. In regional filming hubs like Pollachi, which serves as a vital destination for Tamil, Malayalam, and even Hindi cinema due to its scenic landscapes, this labour force is particularly vulnerable. The transition of the industry into a more technology-driven, high-budget era has, ironically, not always translated into better economic security for these ground-level workers.

The nature of employment for technicians and junior artists in the Pollachi region closely mirrors the "gig economy" model observed in other service sectors. They are essentially gig workers who engage in flexible, short-term, and on-demand work rather than enjoying the stability of traditional full-time employment. While this model offers a degree of entry-level accessibility and the opportunity to work in a high-profile industry without formal qualifications, it carries the inherent risks of income instability and a total lack of social benefits like insurance, provident funds, or job security. In the context of Pollachi, workers are often local residents or seasonal migrants who balance film work with other rural occupations. Their acceptance of low-paid roles is not a simple choice but is driven by a multifaceted set of economic pressures, the lack of

alternative employment, and a psychological "passion tax"—the willingness to endure hardship for the sake of being part of the cinematic world. This study, therefore, aims to examine the socio-economic and psychological drivers that compel technicians and junior artists in the Pollachi region to accept low-paid work, providing a critical look at the human cost of regional cinema production.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sruthijith KK (2024) explained the exploitation of junior artistes in the Malayalam film industry. The study highlighted poor working conditions, lack of basic facilities, long working hours, and absence of overtime pay, which force workers to accept unfair treatment as normal.

Gireesh Babu (2024) discussed the findings of the Hema Committee, which revealed that junior artistes face delayed payments, unfair wages, and lack of dignity at work. Workers are often afraid to raise complaints due to fear of losing job opportunities.

Anuradha Raman (2019) examined the informal nature of employment for technicians and junior artistes. The absence of written contracts and legal accountability prevents workers from demanding fair wages and labour protection.

Sneha May Francis (2018) studied aspirational motivation among junior artistes. Many workers accept low-paid jobs because they believe film work may eventually lead to fame, recognition, and better opportunities.

Anandan S. (2019) explained how temporary and contract-less employment helps producers avoid labour regulations. The study also highlighted weak union systems, which reduce



workers' bargaining power regarding wages and working conditions.

RESEARCH GAP

The main gap in the existing research pertains to the limited empirical and micro-level evidence about the interaction among lack of contract, psychological "aspirational trap," and absence of local unionization that limit social mobility for the film workers regionally. Although there are many studies which highlight some symptoms, such as the absence of hygiene on-set or the overall outcome of the Justice Hema Committee Report, they do not take into account how the lack of HRM practices forces the daily-wage artistes to join the informal sector when they are not needed by the film producers.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyse the factors and economic pressures that motivate technicians and junior artists to continue working in the film industry despite receiving low wages and facing income instability.
- To study the influence of career aspirations, passion for cinema, and perceived flexibility on the acceptance of low-paid jobs among regional film workers.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Male	96	47%
Female	102	50%
Others	6	3%
Age 20–30	66	32%
Age 31–40	67	33%
Age 41–50	44	22%
Below 20	19	9%
Above 50	8	4%
Junior Artist	107	52%
Technician	97	48%
Undergraduate	85	42%
Diploma	43	21%

The data reveals that the majority of respondents belong to the 31–40 age group (33%), followed closely by the 20–30 age group (32%), indicating that young and middle-aged workers dominate the regional film workforce. Female respondents constitute 50% of the sample, while male respondents account for 47%, showing a nearly balanced gender distribution. Junior

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the factors that make technicians and junior artists accept low-paid jobs in the Indian film industry in the Pollachi region. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms and direct interaction from 204 respondents, including technicians and junior artists. The questionnaire contained multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions related to socio-economic conditions, career aspirations, passion for cinema, and wage-related issues. A convenience sampling technique was adopted due to the informal nature of the film workforce.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics and percentage analysis were used to summarize demographic details and respondent opinions. The Chi-Square Test was applied to identify relationships between selected variables such as income, job role, experience, and acceptance of low-paid jobs. These tools helped in interpreting the data and achieving the objectives of the study.

artists represent 52% of the respondents, slightly higher than technicians at 48%. In terms of education, most respondents are undergraduates (42%), followed by diploma holders (21%). These findings indicate that the regional film industry workforce mainly consists of educated young individuals working under informal employment conditions.

Table 2: Job Role and Passion for Cinema

Job Role	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Junior Artist	46	43	11	7	0	107
Technician	37	40	13	6	1	97
Total	83	83	24	13	1	204

Statistical Measure	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	1.8422
Degrees of Freedom (df)	4
p-value	0.7648
Result	Not Significant (Accept H_0)



The Chi-Square analysis shows that the p-value (0.7648) is greater than 0.05, indicating that there is no significant relationship between job role and passion for cinema. Both technicians and junior artists show similar levels of passion and emotional attachment toward the film industry. This suggests that passion for cinema acts as a common motivating factor influencing workers to continue in the industry despite low wages and unstable working conditions.

FINDINGS

The study reveals that technicians and junior artists in the Pollachi film industry continue to accept low-paid jobs mainly due to passion for cinema, career aspirations, and economic necessity. Most respondents reported facing income instability, delayed payments, lack of welfare benefits, and poor working conditions. Despite these challenges, many workers remain in the industry because they believe film work may provide future career growth and networking opportunities.

The findings also indicate that the informal structure of the film industry creates significant labour insecurity. The absence of formal contracts, social security, and standardized wages weakens workers' bargaining power. The Chi-Square analysis further showed that both technicians and junior artists share a similar passion for cinema, regardless of their job role, suggesting that emotional attachment to the industry strongly influences wage acceptance.

SUGGESTIONS

- A standardized minimum wage system should be introduced for technicians and junior artists.
- Production houses should provide formal written contracts and ensure timely wage payments.
- Government welfare schemes such as health insurance and accident compensation should be extended to film workers.
- Stronger unions and worker associations should be encouraged to improve collective bargaining power.
- Better workplace facilities, reasonable working hours, and safer working conditions should be maintained on film sets.
- Training and skill development programs should be organized to improve career opportunities for workers in the regional film industry.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that technicians and junior artists in the Pollachi region face several economic and structural challenges despite their important contribution to the film industry. Low wages, irregular work opportunities, delayed payments, and lack of welfare support continue to affect their financial stability. However, strong passion for cinema and hopes for future success motivate many workers to remain in the industry.

The research highlights the need for labour reforms, fair wage practices, welfare facilities, and stronger worker protection policies in the regional film sector. Implementing these measures can help create a more secure and sustainable working environment for technicians and junior artists in the Indian film industry.

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