

Constraints and Optimization Paths of Female Migrant Workers' Employment

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Abstract: The employment of migrant workers has always been a hot topic, and it is a difficult problem that is should be urgently solved in China. Female farmers are one of the most special members of the migrant worker group. Due to the social concepts and their physiological characteristics, female migrant belongs to a vulnerable group in the job market. Under the predicament of unequal basic resources, difficulty in protecting the labor rights and interests, and multiple roles, the living and survival pressure of female migrant workers have become heavier. Therefore, the optimization of the employment of female migrant workers should be initiated. The paper, discusses the issues related to the female migrant worker's employment.

Keywords: Female migrant workers; Employment; Human capital

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1. Employment status of female migrant workers

According to the Monitoring Survey Report on migrant workers released by the National Bureau of Statistics, before the outbreak of the new crown epidemic, the total number of migrant workers showed a slow upward trend from the year 2010 to 2019, with total migrant workers was 290.77 million, an increase of 48.54 million in the year 2010. From the year 2015 to 2019, the proportion of female migrant workers, compared to the total number of migrant workers rose from 33.5% to 35.1%, an increase of 1.6%. The above changes are due to the main social contradiction in the country, which has been transformed into the contradiction between the people's growing needs for a better life, unbalanced and insufficient development. The rise in prices has led to the meager income obtained from the agricultural production is no longer sufficient to meet the requirements of the people. Due to the needs, economic pressure, and the pressure of life forces more farmers and more rural families to go out to work to meet the needs of their family life. Therefore, there has been a continuous increase in the number of migrant workers, especially an increase in the proportion of female migrant workers in recent years.

Under the dual pressure of the world's unprecedented changes and the epidemic of the century, stabilizing employment is a major task in China at present. As a key group of migrant workers who move between urban and rural areas, their employment status is often affected by the economic and social environment. They are the vulnerable group in the urban job market, while female peasant workers are the most unique part of the migrant worker group. Compared with male migrant workers, female migrant workers are objectively and physiological differences, thereby they suffer from multiple pressures, such as gender discrimination, therefore the female migrant workers in cities belong to a most vulnerable group among all other vulnerable groups ^[1]. At present, female migrant workers are facing many difficulties in

during their employment, therefore paying attention to the employment of female migrant workers could help in maintaining the social fairness and justice ^[2]. This paper takes the female group of migrant workers as the research object, studies the restrictive factors in their employment, and proposes few solutions.

2. Constraints on the employment of female migrant workers

2.1. Inequality of basic resources

The process of female migrant workers looking for a job can be regarded as the process of matching the human capital and external material capital of individual female migrant workers. A female migrant worker who has more knowledge and stronger abilities, will have the opportunity to find jobs with better wages, on the contrary, it will be difficult for them to find a job with a relaxed working environment and good treatment if they are lack of knowledge and abilities. Due to the financial difficulties of many rural families and the deep influence of traditional patriarchal ideology ^[3], more attention is given to the boys' education, compare to girls, especially for rural families with a large number of children and greater living pressure, where they generally choose to give priority to the education of boys, thereby ignore the education of girls ^[4]. Therefore, among the migrant workers, the number of male migrant workers and the average number of years of education are generally higher than those of female migrant workers ^[5]. In addition, due to a series of chain reactions caused by the dual urban-rural household registration system, migrant workers are treated unfairly compared with urban household registration workers in terms of enjoying employment guidance, skills training, and other opportunities ^[6]. Further, the service network has not yet been popularized in some towns and remote mountainous areas, and the government's work related to the employment services in remote rural areas has not been fully implemented. Therefore, female peasant workers are at the most vulnerable group among the disadvantaged groups. Moreover, compared with male peasant workers or urban household registration labor groups, female migrates worker often faces the dilemma of unequal access to basic resources, such as education and training. With the improvement of personal human capital, female migrant workers often only able to engage in low-skilled jobs with relatively poor wages ^[7].

2.2. Difficulty in protecting labor rights

As a profitable economic organization, the fundamental driving force for supporting the business activities of an enterprise is to pursue the maximization of economic benefits. Although the national law strictly stipulates that recruiting units must sign labor contracts with workers, female migrant workers often move in a pendulum-like manner between urban and rural areas due to their family and personal reasons, thereby mostly engage with informal employment, flexible employment, and poor employment stability, where there are great difficulties in term of labor relations. To reduce the costs, some enterprises tend to exploit the loopholes in the law, additionally, some enterprises who hired female migrant workers, often failed to sign labor contracts or sign unfair labor contracts, and try their best to avoid purchasing maternity insurance, medical insurance, pension insurance, and social insurance for the female migrant workers. Therefore, the legal rights and interests of female migrant workers cannot be effectively guaranteed. Further, the working conditions of some female migrant workers are extremely difficult and harsh, especially those female migrant workers who work for a long time in an environment that is harmful to their health, which may subsequently affect their future fertility, and the health of their offspring, in conjugation with this, female migrant workers' health damage caused by work is often reported in newspapers ^[8]. Additionally, the phenomenon of unequal pays for given work load, is also very prominent in female migrate workers, which is often caused by gender discrimination ^[9]. However, due to their low education level, female migrant workers have weak or low legal and rights protection awareness, further when their rights and interests are violated, they are in a state of ignorance or they know that the company has not fulfilled its responsibilities, however, they choose to turn a blind eye because afraid of losing their jobs or sources of income. Further

laissez-faire companies are allowed to evade their responsibilities.

2.3. Multiple roles are heavy

The main social contradiction in our country has been transformed into the contradiction between the people's growing needs for a better life, and unbalanced and insufficient development. The rise in prices has led to the meager income from agricultural production, which is no longer enough to meet the needs of the rural families. Therefore, the family's economic and living pressure have forced them to go out to work to full-fill the needs of family life, leading to increase in the burden on female migrant workers.

Since the ancient times, in China there has been the idea of males take charge of the outside work, while females take charge of the inside work. However, due to the increasing pressure of family life, rural women need to go out to work to share the family's economic pressure, at the same time need to take care of the family's internal affairs. Married female migrant workers have multiple roles such as laborers, mothers, and wives at the same time. The first task of female migrant workers is to shoulder the responsibilities of mothers and wives, and take care of husbands and children, further support the elderly and take care of family-related work. Female migrant workers often face special periods such as childbirth and breastfeeding when working, if necessary, they will choose to interrupt their current work to meet the needs of their families and children, that is why it is impossible for female migrant workers to be like male migrant workers. Working in the same job or staying in the same post, the dedication to choosing flexible employment and short-term employment for the family and children has subjectively contributed to the unstable work among the female migrant workers, and also led to many problems or hindering their job promotion. In short, the multiple roles and responsibilities played by women are the important reason why the female migrate worker unable to continue their work in the same job or place for a longer time. The contradiction between family and workplace has also become a major dilemma in the employment process of female migrant workers.

3. Path selection for ensuring employment of female migrant workers

3.1. Solving the “ideological baggage” of employment

For female migrant workers to be relieved from worries, and devote themselves to work, it is essential to solve the problem of their children's education and basic security. Firstly, when female migrant workers leave to work outside their hometowns, the relevant government departments should fulfill their corresponding responsibilities by guarantee the left-behind or the female migrant workers' children's right to receive the basic education, and take the initiative to perform a good job in educating the children of migrant workers. Secondly, for the female migrant workers who come to cities to work, government departments should solve the problem of basic living security for them, for example increase the number of public rental housing for migrant workers, appropriately broaden application conditions, and simplify the employment application procedures. Thirdly, due to the characteristics of flexible employment, and low employment stability of female migrant workers, the local government should establish a social assistance policy which is linked to the employment place, and provide basic living guarantees for the female migrant workers who are temporarily unemployed or encounter sudden difficulties, as much as possible to solve the psychological burden of their off-site employment.

3.2. Increase opportunities for self-improvement

Human capital is the key factor in the employment of female migrant workers. Education and training can enhance the human capital stock of female migrant workers, and increase their competitiveness in the labor market. Therefore, government departments should strive to change the old generation's concept of “useless reading,” “priority for sons,” and other ideas, in return increase the investment in educational resources in

rural areas^[10]. Firstly, it is essential to ensure the people in poor rural areas receive basic education through preferential policies and funds, additionally increase the publicity of the student loan policy, therefore the idea of “reading changes one’s destiny” can be deeply rooted in the body and mind, and further encourage more people to study even though family with the poor economic condition. Secondly, the government should increase the employment services and skills training, and develop targeted employment guidance and skills training according to the characteristics of the female migrant workers^[11]. Employers should also appropriately provide female migrant workers with re-learning opportunities to improve their professional skills and knowledge. Thirdly, it is important to moderately expand the vocational education of the female migrant workers. General education, such as special types of vocational education and training should be developed based on the knowledge, vocational skills, and corresponding work abilities which are required by the female migrant workers in their daily work. Additionally, enhance the ability of female migrant workers to adapt to the urban labor market.

3.3. Create an environment of fair employment

Due to the binary segmentation of the labor market, the female migrant workers faced discrimination in employment opportunities and treatment. Additionally, the female migrant workers also belong to the group of female laborers, therefore, face gender discrimination in the labor market. To optimize the employment status of female migrant workers, it is important to create a fair employment environment, eliminate gender discrimination in the job market, and promote employment equality. Firstly, in terms of legislation, it is necessary to effectively protect the rights and interests of the female migrant workers, and further improve the labor law and labor contract law to fill-in the legal loopholes. Secondly, one must be responsibility when implementing and supervising, further do a good job in the implementation and enforcement of the relevant provisions of the Employment Promotion Law to protect the rights and interests of female migrant workers, strengthen the supervision of employers, and eliminate gender discrimination in employment from the intermediate links itself. Thirdly, the female migrant workers themselves should try to reduce or prevent the possibilities of their rights and interests being violated. Through education, publicity, and other means, try to strengthen female migrant workers’ awareness of their rights, strengthen the legal concept of female migrant workers, and advocate female migrant workers to use legal means to protect their legitimate rights and from being violated.

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