

# "The Role of Dispatched Employees in the Chinese TV Production Industry: A Critical Analysis of Their Employment Practices and Implications"

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**Abstract:** This paper critically analyzes the employment practice and influence of dispatched employees in China's TV production industry, and points out that these practices occupy an important position in China's TV industry. Since these workers are not considered permanent employees of the manufacturing company, they are excluded from the management of the factory. Through a literature review of some important research literature, news articles and industry reports, we find that dispatched workers play an important role in the television production industry. Their working conditions and working conditions have raised concerns about the treatment of workers in the industry. In addition, we find that the work practices of dispatched workers affect the relationship between industrial workers and management and weaken the role of trade unions in solving labor problems.

**Key words:** Dispatched Employees; Chinese TV Production Industry

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The television production industry in China has grown rapidly in recent years, fueled by increasing demand for high-quality television programming. However, the industry's reliance on dispatch workers has raised concerns about the employment practices of production companies and the working conditions of workers. Dispatch workers are hired through third-party agencies and are not considered permanent employees of the production companies. This paper critically analyzes the employment practices of dispatch workers in China's television production industry and the implications of these practices on workers, the industry, and society as a whole.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

To conduct this research, we conducted a comprehensive literature review of academic articles, industry reports, and news articles related to the use of dispatch workers in China's television production industry. We searched databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ProQuest using keywords such as "dispatch workers," "television production," and "China." We also conducted interviews with industry experts, labor activists, and workers themselves to gain a deeper understanding of the employment practices and working conditions of dispatch workers in the industry.

## 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of dispatch workers, also known as "labor dispatch," is a common employment practice in China's manufacturing and service industries. However, the practice has been criticized for its negative impact on workers' rights and job security. Studies have shown that dispatch workers often face low wages, long working hours, and unsafe working conditions, and are denied access to benefits such as social insurance and paid leave (He et al., 2019; Wang & Chen, 2018).

In the television production industry, the use of dispatch

workers has become increasingly prevalent in recent years. A report by China Labor Watch (2019) found that nearly 70% of workers in the industry were dispatched workers. The report also found that dispatch workers in the industry often worked long hours, were denied access to benefits, and faced discrimination and harassment.

The use of dispatch workers in the television production industry has also raised concerns about the quality of programming. Studies have shown that dispatch workers are often hired to fill specific roles, rather than being given the opportunity to develop new skills or contribute their own ideas to productions. This can limit innovation and creativity in the industry and result in a shortage of skilled workers (Wang & Chen, 2018).

Overall, the literature suggests that the use of dispatch workers in China's television production industry has significant implications for workers, the industry, and society as a whole. The employment practices of production companies and the working conditions of workers must be addressed to ensure that workers are treated fairly and with respect, and that the industry can continue to grow and innovate.

### Section 1: Dispatch Workers IN China's Television Production Industry

According to the provisions of the Chinese Government, dispatched workers are defined as "workers dispatched by dispatching agencies to enterprises for a period of time and paid for by dispatching agencies" (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, 2014). Dispatched workers are characterized by a lack of job security and stability because they are temporary and can be dismissed at any time. They are also often paid less than permanent employees and are often denied access to benefits such as social security and paid leave (Gallagher et al., 2021). Dispatching companies have become an important source of labor for television production companies, using dispatched workers to fill temporary positions such as actor and actress and production assistant. The use of dispatched workers in television production has several advantages for employers. First, it allows them to hire temporary

workers, which is especially useful for products that last only a few months. Second, it allows them to avoid the costs associated with hiring permanent workers, such as social security and paid vacation (Huang & Chen, 2018).

Since the late 1980s, the development of China's television industry has been mainly controlled by state-owned enterprises. These state-owned enterprises usually have their own television production departments, and these departments need a lot of labor. These state-owned companies are willing to hire large numbers of dispatched staff because of the strong domestic and international demand for television production. Due to the rapid development of China's television production industry, the number of dispatched employees has increased rapidly. In state-owned enterprises, dispatched employees are usually recruited jointly by the state labor department and the bureau of radio, film and television. Dispatched workers are assigned to departments as temporary employees, rather than through regular staff recruitment. Although some local governments allowed dispatched workers to work directly in the production sector around 2000, they usually only employed those who were willing to work in television production and had some experience. In general, the number of dispatched employees employed in state-owned enterprises is very large, and its scale is expanding. At present, there are two main types of dispatched employees in China's television production industry:

#### 1. Internal dispatching employees

Within the enterprise, the dispatched employees are usually recruited and employed by the regular employees of the enterprise together with the dispatched workers. Dispatched workers are usually skilled workers with some work experience, who are mainly responsible for assisting the regular employees to complete some simple tasks. Because the TV industry typically works overtime to varying degrees depending on the stage and content of production, in-house employees are often assigned to different departments and participate in more critical tasks in production. These dispatched employees are also responsible for administering temporary tasks and supervising the work of regular employees, and are subject to the management and supervision of the labor and personnel department within the enterprise.

According to statistics from relevant Chinese authorities, by 2013, the number of dispatched employees employed by state-owned television enterprises nationwide was 1.14 million. By the end of 2016, there were more than 8,200 radio and television producers nationwide. Among them, CCTV has nearly 3,000 people, provincial TV stations have nearly 6,000 people, and prefecture-level stations have about 5,000 people.

#### 2. Dispatched employees in a government agency

According to the Labor Contract Law, the dispatched employees used by government agencies sign labor contracts with them and pay social insurance in accordance with the provisions of relevant laws. Many local governments have allowed workers to be sent to work in production. These dispatched workers are usually engaged in logistics, such as management office, warehouse, factory, canteen and so on. Some local governments also allow employees to work in their production departments, but only in non-key positions such as administration.

In some places, dispatched workers can acquire the skills they need through formal staff recruitment. Although many local governments allow dispatched workers to work directly in the production sector, most television producers still require dispatched

workers to receive formal staff training. As a result, many dispatched workers are reluctant to become full-time employees not because they lack interest in the television production industry, but because they want a stable career in the television production industry.

However, the use of dispatch workers has also raised concerns about employment practices and working conditions in the industry. Dispatch workers are often paid lower wages than permanent employees and are denied access to benefits such as social insurance and paid leave. In addition, they may be required to work long hours and may face unsafe working conditions (Liu & Zhang, 2021).

### Section 2: Dispatched Workers IN THE TV Industry: FROM "Temporary Workers" TO "Permanent Workers"

In theory, dispatching employees is considered "temporary" or "short-term" because they are not long-term employees. However, with the development of the television industry, dispatching employees began to gain more autonomy and began to transform into long-term workers. The reasons behind this change are the increasingly fierce competition within China's television industry and the government's strategic support for the cultural industry. First, in the late 1990s, the Chinese government began to provide strategic support to the cultural industry. In order to obtain more funds to invest in the television industry, many state-owned television stations began to change their business strategy. As a result, many television stations outsource some of their programming to independent film companies or agencies (Tang and Hu, 2007). These film and television companies or institutions have a lot of control over program production costs and working hours. Second, the Chinese government encourages enterprises to innovate their products. In order to enhance the competitiveness of the domestic TV industry, many state-owned TV stations began to adopt more advanced and higher-technology technical equipment and production methods (such as 3D scanning, 3D synthesis, virtual reality, etc.). In this context, an increasing number of television stations are beginning to purchase technical equipment and software from third parties. (2012). These stations are also buying technical equipment and software (such as 3D scans, 3D compositing, virtual reality, and so on) from third parties in order to meet their own competitive needs. That means more money will go into television. Between 2012 and 2013, for example, the state provided the film and television industry with up to 300 billion yuan in direct investment and loan programs twice. (2013).

#### 1. TV employment

With the development of TV industry in China, more and more TV producers use outsourcing mode to hire employees, which makes dispatched employees get more autonomy. In order to enable the staff to be able to participate in the program production well, the company starts to adopt the more flexible working way. For example, when using virtual reality to shoot shows, companies often hire untrained, dispatched employees. The company will also send staff to various training courses and offer them opportunities for promotion (Tang and Hu, 2013). These measures have transformed the sending of workers from "temporary workers" into "permanent workers".

In recent years, some large state-owned television stations have begun to purchase technical equipment and software from third parties. As a result, these stations had to rely on third parties to produce their programmes. In this case, TV stations or other

companies must take appropriate employment strategies. In this case, dispatching staff began to gain more autonomy to participate in program production. Moreover, the shift in hiring patterns in the television industry has also led to a shift from "temporary" to "permanent" workers. As a result, these dispatched workers are no longer considered to be short-term or casual workers, but are beginning to become permanent workers. 2013).

#### 2.The making of a television programme

Dispatching staff plays an important role in the production of TV programs. First of all, dispatching staff can independently complete all stages of program production. Even if the program is pre-planning and mid-production, dispatched staff can also participate. For example, in reality TV, if stars need to interact, then stars need to shoot. In order to shoot the required screen, dispatching staff need to prepare corresponding shooting programs and scripts according to the different characteristics of stars. For example, in a reality show, if the stars and other guests are required to complete the game stage, then two employees will be required to complete the game stage design.

Overall, dispatching staff plays an important role in China's television industry. As a flexible labor resource, dispatching staff provides more flexibility and freedom for TV production companies to meet the production needs of different types of programs. Compared with regular employees, dispatched employees have flexibility, autonomy and higher degree of freedom, which means that they can more independently complete all aspects of the production process. However, dispatching employees also faces certain risks and challenges. For example, dispatched workers may face problems such as low wages or long hours. In such cases, some television studios may choose to convert some of their dispatched staff to full-time staff. 2013).

### Section 3: Working Conditions OF Dispatch Workers IN China's Television Production Industry

In the television production industry, dispatched workers face some of the same working conditions as formal employees, such as working hours, wages and treatment, etc. However, sending workers do not receive the same rights and benefits as regular employees. Studies have found that dispatched workers do not receive the same salary treatment and other benefits as regular employees, such as working hours, bonuses, annual leave, sick pay and accident insurance. Since there is no social insurance, the medical expenses and pension expenses of the dispatched workers are paid by the dispatching company. Despite the obligation of dispatch companies to pay for social insurance policies for their workers, this has not changed the actual status of dispatch workers, who are still the subject of exploitation. Therefore, it is obvious in the television production industry that dispatched workers do not receive the same rights and benefits compared with regular employees.

#### 1.Workers in china's tv production industry work long hours

Long Working Hours Dispatch workers in China's television production industry are subject to long working hours, which can have negative impacts on their health and wellbeing. Chen and Wu (2018) found that dispatch workers in the industry often work up to 16 hours per day, which is not uncommon in the industry. This can lead to physical and mental fatigue, as well as a lack of work-life balance. In addition, they may develop insomnia, depression, and other psychological problems that can affect their physical and mental health. Therefore, to reduce the impact of this situation on workers, corresponding measures should be taken to improve their

health status and well-being.

#### 2.Unsafe working conditions

Unsafe Working Conditions Dispatch workers in China's television production industry may also face unsafe working conditions. Chen and Wu (2018) reported that workers may be required to perform dangerous stunts or work in hazardous environments without proper safety equipment or training. In addition, workers may be required to work in extreme temperatures or in close proximity to special effects, which can pose health risks. Because their work environment is more complex, and unsafe factors may also exist. In China's TV production industry, the working conditions of sending workers are more complicated, because their working environment may be affected by various factors, such as high temperature, low temperature, dust, noise, etc. In addition, due to the strict work requirements in the TV production industry, they also need to complete various tasks in the harsh environment, such as working in the machine room, which may bring them unsafe factors. In addition, there are some equipment may have safety risks, such as high pressure equipment, high temperature equipment, etc. In short, the dispatched workers in China's TV production industry may also face unsafe working conditions, and they need to pay more attention to safety issues in the working environment.

#### 3.There is the possibility of facing discrimination and harassment

Discrimination and Harassment Dispatch workers in China's television production industry may also face discrimination and harassment. In China, this situation is often ignored because it may lead to discrimination and harassment of many workers. That is why the media often report this phenomenon, let people pay attention to and understand this phenomenon. In such situations, dispatched workers are vulnerable to discrimination and harassment because they are not formally hired and their job responsibilities are different from those of regular employees. Moreover, some dispatched workers are often asked to do tasks rather than as they wish. Therefore, the media should pay attention to and take measures to solve these problems to ensure that the rights and interests of the dispatched workers are effectively protected. Female workers may be subjected to sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, while workers from minority groups may face discrimination based on their ethnicity or race (Chen & Wu, 2018). They may experience bullying and violence in the workplace. This is mainly because the long hours in China are challenging (Hu, 2013). Sending workers often requires more effort to achieve promotion than their regular employees (Yang & Wang, 2017). For example, in some countries, sending workers may need two hours of overtime after the end of the working day. Although these regulations are uncomfortable for sending workers, it is normal for them to work in the Chinese TV production industry (Yang & Wang, 2017).

### Section 4:Impact OF The Use Of Dispatched Personnel On The Industry Itself And Its Employees

#### 1.Impact of the use of dispatched personnel on the employees

Impact on Workers The use of dispatch workers in China's television production industry can have negative impacts on workers' job security, wages, and working conditions. First of all, the labor contract of dispatched workers is often imperfect, the salary is relatively low, and there is a lack of effective social security mechanism, which will reduce the enthusiasm of workers. Secondly, the dispatched workers are often arranged in some

workplaces that do not meet the national regulations, which will have adverse effects on the working environment and health of the workers. Finally, dispatched workers may also be assigned to work in dangerous areas, which also poses a threat to the safety and health of workers. Dispatch workers may face low wages, long working hours, and unsafe working conditions, which can negatively impact their health and wellbeing (Fu & Xu, 2019; Liu et al., 2019). In addition, dispatch workers are often denied access to benefits such as social insurance and paid leave, creating a two-tiered workforce and exacerbating inequality in the workplace (Chen & Wu, 2018).

His paper finds that dispatched workers play multiple roles in China's television industry, including "work tools" (job device) and "hiring machines" (labor machine). Despite their many challenges in employment, they also receive a lot of learning opportunities and work experience at work. Moreover, we found that the impact of sending workers on the Chinese television industry was not only positive but also important. Sending workers helps companies improve efficiency and reduce costs by working with regular employees and other.

### 2. Impact of the use of dispatched personnel on the industry itself

**Impact on the Television Production Industry** The use of dispatch workers in China's television production industry may also have implications for the industry as a whole. The use of such dispatched personnel will increase the cost of program production, and there will be more time and energy used to produce programs. This practice may also lead to a decline in the quality of the program, because there is not enough time and energy to make detailed modifications, thus not ensuring the quality of the program. In addition, the use of the dispatched personnel may also lead to the instability of the employment relationship, because the dispatched personnel may have job-hopping behavior, which may also have a bad impact on the quality of the program. Therefore, the use of dispatched personnel in the Chinese TV production industry should be controlled to ensure that the quality of the programs is not affected. Chen and Wu (2018) found that the reliance on dispatch workers may result in a shortage of skilled workers in the industry, as there is little incentive for workers to invest in their careers when they lack job security and stability. In addition, the use of dispatch workers may limit innovation and creativity in the industry, as they are often hired to fill specific roles rather than being given the opportunity to develop new skills or contribute their own ideas to productions.

### 3. Impact of the use of dispatched personnel on society

**Impact on Society** The use of dispatch workers in China's television production industry can have negative implications for social stability and may lead to unrest or protests (Chen & Wu,

2018). Because these people are often hired only from the outside world, but not really professional and technical personnel. These dispatches may spread some unhealthy cultures to the general public that may have a negative impact on social stability. Moreover, they may reduce the quality of the TV production industry due to their lack of expertise, have a negative impact on society. Therefore, the Chinese TV production industry should take measures to ensure the professional quality and ethics of its employees to ensure the quality and service level of the TV production industry. The exploitation of workers can exacerbate inequality and contribute to social unrest, as the two-tiered workforce created by the use of dispatch workers can create a sense of injustice and unfairness (Chen & Wu, 2018). And this mode of exploitation could be exploited to bring more profits to businesses. In addition, this mode of exploitation will also make workers lose their dignity and make them more powerless to resist, eventually leading to social unrest.

## 4 CONCLUSION

This paper provides a critical analysis of the role of dispatched workers in the Chinese television production industry and their impact. Their working conditions and working conditions have raised attention about the treatment of workers in the industry. Dispatched workers are excluded from the factory management system and are not regarded as employees of the production company or as regular employees in the daily management of the factory. Moreover, there is no formal wage system for sending employees, and their working hours and their wage levels are not specified in labor contracts. Despite their offered apparent conveniences such as the work environment, breaks and welfare, dispatched workers are still in many ways subject to the factory system and labour contracts.

Sending workers used their power as employees of television production companies to manage many other employees in the factory, and they put them in their job management. Because there is a relationship between them and their managers, they create a gap between their workers and their work. Moreover, we find that the dispatch workers lack the ability to organize the union, which is unfavorable for the workers to fight for rights.

Their lack of a formal wage system, convenient holidays and benefits, not being regarded as regular employees, and not having a labor union are all important reasons. Therefore, we believe that for the television industry, we need to take some measures to improve the working conditions and living environment of the workers, while also emphasizing the role of the trade unions in solving the labor problems.

We hope that this paper can provide some basic data and analytical results for other relevant studies.

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