

Role of Skilled and Unskilled Factory Working Women in the Rural Economy of Punjab: A Case Study in Faisalabad

QAMAR ZIA, ZAHIRA BATOOL, SAIF-UR-REHMAN AND HAMMAD BADAR†

Departments of Rural Sociology and †Agricultural Marketing, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad-38040, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The role of skilled and unskilled factory working women in the rural economy of Punjab was investigated with special reference to Faisalabad district. The study was undertaken with the objectives to investigate the socio-economic characteristics of female workers, types of economic activity undertaken by female workers. The characteristics of respondents in their participation level and the problems faced by the rural factory working women in the project area. A random sample of 100 female workers was selected and interviewed through a pre-designed questionnaire. The study revealed that 29, 22% and 6% of the respondents were with middle, metric and intermediate level of education respectively whereas majority (34%) were educated up to primary level. Similarly more (54%) respondents were living in nuclear family. A vast majority had no decision making power while 80% of the respondents did not get any training before starting their job.

Key Words: Rural economy; Factory working women; Skilled and unskilled labor

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's current population is 140.5 million, about 2.3% of the world population making it the seventh most populous country in the world. Pakistan population would reach 222 million by the year of 2020. Such a growth rate coupled with country's weak socio-economic profile would render all efforts towards development futile. It would also contribute significantly to raising the proportion of the population below the poverty line. Pakistan GNP has increased from 2.6 billions in 1950 to 61.8 billions in 2000 yet per capita has not increased substantially with the result that 44 million people are living below the poverty level (Government of Pakistan, 2001).

The urban rural population break-up reveals that one in three person live in urban areas as the share of rural population has declined by 4.2% from 71.7% in 1981 to 67.5% in 1998. The share of urban population has accordingly increased from 28.3% in 1981 to 32.5% in 1998 (Government of Pakistan, 2001). The technical vocational training system is being completely reorganized under the education sector reforms. In order to encourage technical and vocational education enhancement study schemes would be modified, curriculum and teaching learning sources would be improved. Moreover, services of poly-technique institutions would be extended to females so that their students can initiate small scale self employed enterprises. Special focus on urban areas and lack of attention on rural development resulted in the shortage of employment opportunities in rural areas especially for female.

No society can progress unless women become an equal partner in almost all of national activities. In Pakistan, this natural resources of man power is rendered ineffective due to certain factors like traditional and cultural values,

prejudices against female. In Asia employment rate in all working age group of female is lower than males. They are discriminated and exploited both at home and on job (Commonwealth, 1998).

Low education, lack of employment opportunities in formal sector and socio-cultural taboos against working outside the home, especially in rural areas, combine to severely limit women participation in formal sector (Ahmed, 2000). The Government is trying to provide more skill formation opportunities so women can complete men in seeking employment. The technical vocational training system is being completely reorganized under the education sector reforms. In order to encourage technical and vocational education enhancement study schemes would be modified, curriculum and teaching learning sources would be improved. Moreover, services of ploy-technique institutions would be extended to females so that there students can initiate small scale self employed enterprises.

The pressure of increasing population has necessitated that both male and female within the family should work and contribute economically so that they may have reasonable living standards. As families grown in size, cash needs increase, hence, burden of family's survival falls on women. In our society, women, specially working women have to perform multiple roles. Explanations of the effect of family status on women's work outcome have focused primarily on individualistic factor, that is, married women's family responsibilities are assumed to interfere with their work and performance. Mostly women do work due to unemployment of husband.

Women working in factories form a negligible part of trade unions. At the same time there are no established mechanisms on the basis which home- based women can organize and fight for their rights. There is lake of cohesive and coherent women's movement in Pakistan, which has

adversely affected the ability of women workers.

The present study is an attempt to look in to various socio-economic activities in which women are involved their participation and satisfaction regarding their social and economic growth and their status in the changing economy.

OBJECTIVES

- To investigate into the socio-economic characteristics of income generating females.
- To find out the relationship between socio-economic characteristics of females respondents in their participation level.
- To calculate the level of satisfaction that rural women workers get out their factory jobs
- To investigate into the problems faced by rural factory working women.

METHODOLOGY

Faisalabad district was selected as a universe. Faisalabad tehsil was selected for sample selection. For this purpose textile garments manufacturing factories were selected randomly. From these textile garment manufacturing to textile garment manufacturing factories were selected at random i.e. Chenab Fabrics and Anjum Factory. The sample consisted of 100 females from each village and 50 females were selected randomly. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, interviewing schedule (questionnaire) was prepared and pre-tested. Thus the information collected was statistically tested. To test the significance of association between independent variable and dependent variable, Chi- square test was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I indicates that 9% of the respondents were illiterate, 34% of the respondents were Primary, 29% of the respondents were Middle, 22% of the respondents were Matric and only 6% of the respondents were F.A. and above.

Table I. Distribution of the respondents with regard to their education (year of schooling)

Education (years of schooling)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	9	9.0
Primary	34	34.0
Middle	29	29.0
Matric	22	22.0
F.A. & above	6	6.0
Total	100	100.0

The income of 21% of the respondents was less than 18,000, 49% of that respondents income was 18,000-30,000 while 30% of that respondents income was 30,001 and

above. The results of the chi-square (Table II) show non-significant relation, association between of the respondents and their attitude towards factory working women. So our hypothesis “Higher the education of the respondents unfavourable would be the attitude towards factory working women is rejected.”

Table II. Association between education of the respondents and their attitude towards factory working women

Education	Attitude towards factory working women		Total
	Favourable	Unfavourable	
Upto Primary	9 (100.0)	-	9 (9.0)
Upto Middle	33 (73.3)	12 (26.7)	45 (45.0)
Matric and above	33 (71.7)	13 (28.3)	46 (46.0)
Total	75 (75.0)	25 (25.0)	100 (100.0)

X² = 3.32754; D.F. = 2; Significance = 0.1894

There was a non-significant relation, association between age of the respondents and their attitude towards factory working women (Table III). So our hypothesis “Higher the age of the respondents infavourable would be the attitude towards factory working women”, is rejected.

Table III. Association between age of the respondents and their attitude towards factory working women

Age (Years)	Attitude towards factory working women		Total
	Favourable	Unfavourable	
15-20	17 (85.0)	3 (15.0)	20 (20.0)
20-25	40 (70.2)	17 (29.8)	57 (57.0)
25 and above	10 (70.3)	5 (21.7)	15 (15.0)
Total	75 (75.0)	25 (25.0)	100 (100.0)

X² = 1.90478; D.F. = 2; Significance = 0.3858

The results in Table IV show non-significant relation, association between income of the respondents and their attitude towards factory working women. So our hypothesis “Higher the income of the respondents the more favourable attitude towards factory working women” is rejected.

Table IV. Association between income of the respondents and their attitude towards factory working women

Income	Attitude towards factory working women		Total
	Favourable	Unfavourable	
Less than 18000	17 (65.4)	9 (34.6)	26 (26.0)
18001-30000	36 (80.0)	9 (20.0)	45 (45.0)
30001 and above	22 (75.0)	7 (24.1)	29 (29.0)
Total	75 (75.0)	25 (25.0)	100 (100.0)

X² = 1.89355; D.F. = 2; Significance = 0.3880

The salient findings of the study are:

1. A vast majority of the respondents i.e. 75% were quite young i.e. (20-29 years). The specific reason for this, that

single or quite young women get preference for job in factories. As regards educational attainments, 51% of the respondents were with middle and matric education while 34% of the respondents were educated at primary level and only 6% were F.A and above

2. A large majority of the workers i.e. 96% were unmarried, only 4% of the respondents were married. It was due to the reason that married women had additional responsibilities to look after their children and serve in-laws etc.

3. Annual income of a large proportion of the respondents i.e. 49% was 18000-30000 and 30% of the respondent's income was 30001 and above, while 21% of the respondent's income was less than 18000.

4. Sewing, cutting, threading, overlooking, buttoning, pressing, packing of the garments and checking were the major assignments of the respondents.

5. A majority of the respondents i.e. 80% were satisfied with their working conditions and wages. But a little ratio of the respondents (20%) were unsatisfied. The reason of unsatisfaction was lack of technical training.

6. Majority of the respondents (53%) had to face the problems during the job such as domestic clashes, sense of insecurity, lack of transportation etc.

7. A vast majority of the respondents i.e. 80% did not get any training before starting their job.

Low family income, low education, lack of alternative job opportunities compelled the rural working women to seek job in factories. Female workers were unskilled and not aware of their rights so they did not articulate demands in exchange for their contribution to industry. No doubt the attitude of community members and employer towards female workers is changing but still significant improvement is needed to encourage rural women to spend their spare time for income generation. This will not only

raise family income but also reduce the rural poverty.

SUGGESTIONS

1. According to the findings 75% female workers have attributed towards working in the factories so it is suggested that government should established vocational training institution in the rural areas at union council level.

2. Private sector is offering very little economic activities to the rural working women in case of motivation encouragement and credit. So it is suggested that government should start micro credit scheme both for agricultural non agricultural female workers at rural level.

3. Government should strictly observed labor act in case of working homes in government department general and private factories particularly through labor department effectively.

4. Government and NGO should arrange seminars, symposia to promote attitude of female workers in different departments.

5. Jurisdiction social security should be extended up to the factories level in the remote areas of Faisalabad.

6. To up lift the income generating activities at rural level for women class, government should start resource transfer scheme through government and NGO action program.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, N., 2000. *Gender Perspective on Population and Development in Pakistan*. Pakistan's Population Issues in 21st Century, Population Association of Pakistan, Islamabad.
- Commonwealth, 1998. *Gender and Development. Commonwealth Youth Programme*. Commonwealth Secretariat, London, U.K.
- Government of Pakistan, 2001. *Economic Survey*. Economic Advisor's Wing, Finance Division, Islamabad.

(Received 12 December 2002; Accepted 14 February 2002)