

Short Communication

Awareness Among Working Women About Their Exploitation in Home-Based Industry of Faisalabad–Pakistan

YASMEEN NAZLY, ASMA SHAFIQUE, SADIA SALIM AND ASHFAQUE AHMED MANN
Department of Rural Sociology, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad–38040, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The present study was an attempt to find the association between the education of the working women and their awareness about their exploitation by the middleman in home-based industry. The respondents were selected from the five areas namely Bismillah Town, Khurrianwala, Hajvairy Town, Nishatabad and Bagewala located in District Faisalabad through purposive sampling technique. The total sample size was 150. The results showed that poverty was the main factor, which compel the women to work at home-based level. Majority of the respondents were illiterate but they were aware about their exploitation by the middleman. There was no association between the education of the working women and their awareness about their exploitation by the middleman.

Key Words: Working women; Women exploitation; Home-based industry; Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Women occupy an important role in economic development. In different countries and regions of the developing world women constitute a greater or lesser contribution to the economy, depending in some degree on the stages of economic development, but also a large extent on the cultural traditions in a particular country (Boserup, 1971). Pakistan, unfortunately, being one of such countries, where low literacy levels and restriction on economic activities of women have acted as major constraint towards full utilization of their human potential (Frey & Ghur, 1992). In the past, women were considered only a wife, a mother who work in houses. But now the changing conditions of societies have demanded new rolls for women. Economic crisis in the less developed countries enhanced the women sense of taking part along with men in income generating activities (Zia, 2000). Now women are equally participating in socio-economic field as men's receive but their contribution remains invisible. Most of the women are working in informal sector. Informal sector consisted upon the construction labour force, women's home-based labour, as well as vendors, hawkers, etc (Ahmad, 2000). In this study, home-based workers means women of age group between 15 to 50 years who work like embroidery, sewing, koroshia, envelop making, carpet weaving or any kind of labour within their homes. Home based workers can be classified into two types. 1) Those who buy all raw materials by themselves and earn by selling their finished goods, 2) Those who pay given the raw material by the middleman.

Home-based work provides more opportunities to female, because home is a convenient work-site for women

where they can combine their multiple domestic and economic duties, save time and avoid social sanction against going to work outside the home. However, the convenience of the work-site at home may work against the interests of the women workers. These women received low wages and irregular work from the middleman (Haider & Tahir, 2001).

Middleman plays the main role and he is the source of capital, information and access to the market. Middleman takes more advantage of the fact that these women work isolated in their homes without support from trade unions and access to market information making the latter wholly dependent on them for work (Ahmed, 1997). Middleman gives them less prices of their commodities and sale them at high rate in the market. In this way middleman gets more profit because women do not have the necessary information about the market rate or about the laws that are supposed to protect them. Nor is there any recourse to arbitration, when disputes about wages or conditions arise. Therefore, women are exploited (Mahbub-ul-Haq, 2000).

Islam provides many more rights to women than are actually available to her. The parents of a girl do not consider essential the education to her on the assumption that she is not required to seek employment. As the socially-prescribe the role of women is limited to raising a family, education is never a priority for girls (Mumtaz, 1981). Lack of education and skill forces women to concentrate in the informal sector of the labour force which has eventually resulted in increasing number of women working in segmental labour market (ADB, 2001).

The objectives of the present study were:

1. To investigate the education level of the home-based working women
2. To investigate how middleman exploits the

working women and to what extent the working women are aware about their exploitation

3. To see the association between education of the respondents and their awareness about the exploitation by the middleman

METHODOLOGY

One hundred and fifty respondents were selected from these five areas namely Bismillah Town, Khurrianwala, Nishatabad, Hajvairy Town and Bagewala through purposive sampling technique. These areas were selected because most of the home-based working women were living there. Data were collected through interviewing schedule. The responses were tabulated, and expressed in terms of percentages. The data were further analyzed statistically by using chi-square test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I reveals that more than half (58.7%) of the respondents were illiterate, while less than one third (24%) of the respondents had up to middle level of education, and 17.3% of the respondents had matric and above level of education. It can be concluded that more than half of the respondents were illiterate.

Table I. Distribution of the respondents according to their education

Education	Frequency	%age
Illiterate	88	58.7
Up to Middle	36	24.0
Matric+	26	17.3
Total	150	100.0

Table No II. Distribution of the respondents according to their awareness about exploitation by the middleman

Awareness	Frequency	%age
Not at all	15	10.0
To some extent	29	19.4
To great extent	106	70.6
Total	150	100.0

Table No III. Association between the education of the respondents and the awareness about the exploitation by the middleman

Awareness	Education			
	Illiterate	Upto middle	Matric +	Total
Not at all	6 (40.0)	5 (33.3)	4 (26.7)	15 (10.0)
To some extent	15 (151.7)	7 (24.1)	7 (24.1)	29 (19.3)
To great extent	67 (63.2)	24 (22.6)	15 (14.2)	106 (70.7)
Total	88 (58.7)	36 (24.0)	26 (17.3)	150 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 4.27$ d.f = 4; Non-significant

Table II reveals that 10% of the respondents were not aware about their exploitation; while 19.4 and 70.6% of the respondents were aware to some extent and to great extent, respectively that home-based workers were exploited by the middlemen. It means that majority of the respondents are aware about their exploitation by middle man.

The results of chi-square show non-significant association between the education of the respondent and the awareness about their exploitation by the middleman. It indicates that most of the respondents are illiterate but they have knowledge about their exploitation. So the hypothesis, is rejected, which indicates more the education of the respondents, more will be their awareness about exploitation.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded from the data that major cause of women labour was poverty. The vicious circle of poverty generates the social relations that force the women to accept the poor conditions of work. More than half of the respondents were illiterate, while (24%) of the respondents had up to middle level of education. A vast majority of the respondents were aware about their exploitation. There was no association between the education of the respondents and the awareness about the exploitation by the middleman. It indicates that most of the respondents were illiterate and they have knowledge about their exploitation.

REFERENCES

- Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2000. *Women in Pakistan—Country Briefing Paper* Islamabad—Pakistan
- Ahmad, A., 2000. *Report of Workshop on Women's Employment Concerns and Working Conditions*. Presented by Director Aurat Foundation, Lahore
- Ahmad, N., 1997. *Social Protection for Women Workers in the Informal Home-Based Sector in the Leather and Textile Industries*. p: 9 Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation, Lahore
- Boserup, E., 1971. *Develop Women Role in Economic Development*" A development digest prepared by National Planning Association U.S. Department of State Vol. 9, No.2.
- Frey and S. Ghyur, 1992. "*Women and Development*" Asynthesis report of an international conference held 18–21 Dec. 1990 was published in 1992 in Islamabad—Pakistan
- Haider, M. and M. Tahir, 2001. *Mapping of Home-Based Workers in the Province Punjab, Pakistan*. p: 2 Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation. Prepared for UNIFEM, SouthAsia
- Mahbub-ul-Haq, 2000. *Human Development in South Asia 2000*. The Gender Question. Printed in Pakistan. At Mass printers, Karachi Published by Ameen Saayidi, Oxford University, Press
- Mumtaz, K. and S. Farida, 1981. *Invisible Workers—Piece-Work Labour*. Amongst Women in Lahore, Women's Division, Islamabad—Pakistan
- Zia, Q., 2000. *Role of Rural Skilled and Unskilled Factory Working Women in the Rural-Economy*. *M.Sc Thesis*, Rural Sociology Department University of Agriculture Faisalabad

(Received 20 December 2003; Accepted 23 February 2004)