

IDENTIFICATION OF REASONS FOR OVER-WORKED AND UNDERPAID WOMEN LABOR IN LAHORE

Aisha Siddique* Niaz Hussain Malik* and Razia Sultana"

*Division of Education and Extension, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad,

In our society, women of low socio-economic levels are expected to work beyond their limits: to produce children, to look after their homes, to earn money and to do every thing that pleases their men because it is considered that in all this lies their betterment. A working woman has to work hard both in office and at home. People seldom realize the troubles suffered by working women. In order to bring forth the problems faced by working women and the factors, which force the women to take up jobs at low wages, this study was conducted in the "Katchi abadis" of Lahore near General Hospital. The analysis of the opinion of 300 married women revealed that poverty increases frequency of women labor. Illiteracy, lack of skills, low income and unemployment of husbands are the factors, which enforce them to take up the jobs at low wages.

Key words: Labor, job, wages, working women.

INTRODUCTION

Women today play a fundamental and indispensable role in the economic life of nations. In the industrially less developed nations like Pakistan, women's work is tied up primarily with domestic labor and assistance in farm operations particularly in poor and rural families. Such work is not considered as real work, as it does not earn wages. It is quite likely that if asked whether they work? The women will answer in negative even though their hours of work are long & labor arduous. Taking care of children & household jobs such as cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing & in case of rural women, farm tasks like planting, harvesting, taking care of animals carry enormous load of drudgery. Women constitute about 50 percent of the agriculture labor force and are the head of the quarter of all families in the rural areas of poor countries. But their contribution is not recognized. They are neither allowed to participate in decision-making nor expect any admiration from their male counterparts. To empower them, it is essential to give women opportunities to enter into the decision-making process (Anonymous, 2001).

Women work as hard as men, as assistants to their husbands, fathers or just as partners in the family business. Their wages are of course, less than men for the same type of work. Bett (1987) presented that paid employment for the women was the exception rather than the rule and those women who did work outside the home did so only as a preliminary to marriage and the rearing of children. A working woman has to work hard both in office and at home. The husband cannot be expected to help her to any extent.

Women enter in the labor force because of:

1. Severe economic pressures/ financial constraints.
2. Late marriages.
3. Divorce, widowhood and separations.

The question "who is working woman in Pakistan?" is answered by Sabeeha (1984) as below:

1. The widow who has to bring up her children.
2. The divorcee who has been stranded by her cruel husband.
3. The girl who has no brother to support the old and poor parents.
4. The wife whose husband is irresponsible or an addict.
5. The self-employed who work part time at their houses.
6. The self-employed in the villages that help their male family members in day-to-day work in the field of agriculture.
7. The girl who is awaiting a proper proposal for marriage.

In all ages, women have tended to be economically and legally subordinate to men & the degree & nature of that subordination show that women are treated as inferiors. Women suffer from a number of forms of discrimination by the state & other financial institutions purely on grounds of being women. They are very poorly represented in all positions of power & public life as said by Ali (1991) that discriminatory treatment of women & feminization of poverty goes hand in hand.

Productive work that women did in the home gradually extend to work outside the home in the form of domestic and other jobs such as textile and clerical work. Jeilani (1970) pointed out that society had motivated women to take part in working life but it had not adjusted to catch up with this development. Even now women are expected to bear complete responsibility for the home and children. Schorck (1983) pointed out that the focus for female aspirations were the three K's of an earlier generation-kinder, kuche, kirecher (children, kitchen and church) which have been replaced by three H's healing, helping and home management.

Poor women married or not have to work hard to make both hands meet. Their low wages and generally lower status jobs

reflect the fact that society thinks their pay as absolutely unimportant. Therefore, the majority of women who are responsible for maintaining the family find it hard to earn decent wages. So the women whose husbands are disabled or irresponsible are left at serious disadvantages. According to Mackey (1981) women's employment has continued to be concentrated in a smaller number of industries and confined to a range of jobs, which might be described as "women's work". Even where woman work alongside men, they usually hold positions of lower responsibility and performed tasks of less skilled nature.

Women suffer discrimination in many spheres but their responsibility is most universally experienced in the area of employment. The jobs, which are entrusted to women, are of low status, less paid and there are very few women in top class jobs in industry or other professions. As it is described by Nighat (1991), if the definition of women's role changes and women's competence and their capacity to assert themselves improve, then such discrimination will not be possible. People will get jobs according to their competence and not because of gender.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data for the present study were collected from "Katchi Abadis" located near the General Hospital, Lahore. Total sample of 300 married women were selected by the use of purposive sampling method and interviewed. Simple frequency and percentage methods were used to assess the results. The data obtained were analyzed and entered into the computer and presented in the form of tables. The main parameter of the study was to determine the socio-economic background and the working conditions of women employed at different jobs and to study the reasons for accepting to work at low wages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to their men's occupation.

OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	
Daily Wages	72	24
Office Workers	36	12
Factory Workers	12	4
Self Employed	36	12
Unemployed	84	28
Not alive/Divorced	60	20
Total	300	100

The data presented in table 1 shows that 28 percent men were unemployed. Whereas 24 percent were working on daily wages. Out of the remaining respondents, 12 percent

were office workers and 20 percent respondents' husbands were either not alive or had divorced them.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of occupation of the respondents.

OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Domestic Servants	156	52
Factory workers	48	16
Piece-rate workers	96	32
Total	300	100

The above table No. 2 indicates the different occupations of the respondents. It reveals that 52 percent respondents worked at houses and 32 percent women were piece-rate workers. Whereas 16 percent women worked in factories.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of labor hours of the respondents.

LABOR HOURS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Whole day	144	48
Eight hours	132	44
Four hours	24	8
Total	300	100

The above table No. 3 indicates the frequency and percentage of working hours of the respondents. It shows that 48 percent women worked for the whole day and 44 percent women worked for eight hours. Whereas only 8 percent women worked for only four hours.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of monthly income of the respondents.

MONTHLY INCOME	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
200 - 400	180	60
500 - 700	86	29
800 - 1000	34	11
Total	300	100

The above table No. 4 reveals the pay amount of the respondents. It shows that 60 percent of them got Rs 200 - 400 and 29 percent of them got between Rs 500 - 700 and 11 percent of them got between Rs 800 - 1000 per month.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of above discussion it can be concluded that poverty enforces women to take up jobs at low wages but illiteracy and lack of skills are other factors which force women to take up menial jobs. With these minimal wages, they are not able to fulfill their necessities. Although the unemployment of the husbands is a factor force women in

the labor market. yet the low income of the husbands is another major factor forcing women to take up low wages.

REFERENCES

- Ali, A. S. 1991 Feminization Of Poverty. "The Muslim" Daily, April 26. Islamabad.
- Anonymous. 2001 UNFPA, Annual Report - The state of the world population. New York, USA.
- Bett, E. N. 1987 Psychology Of Women. Academic press Inc. USA.
- Geile, J. 1970 Women and the Future. The Free press., New York. U.S.A.
- Khan, N. S. 1991 Feminism. (weekly Magazine). "The News" Daily, June 14-20.
- Mackey, L. 1981 Women At Work. Tavistock Publications Inc.,
- Sabeeha, S. 1984 Working Conditions And Welfare Facilities For Working Women. Proceedings ILO/PIACT/EFP (Seminar) Employers Federation Of Pakistan.
- Schorck. 1983 Women's Realities, Women's Choices - An Introduction To Women's Studies. Oxford University Press, Inc., London.