

Problems faced by women workers employed in agro-based and allied industries

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is assess the problems faced by women workers employed in Agro-based and Allied industries. The sample of respondents for these studies consisted of 560 women workers employed in 59 Agro-based and 28 Allied sector based business units. A systematic sampling procedure was adopted to select the required number of the sample. A self-constructed questionnaire and interview schedule was prepared by the investigator in order to access the level of job satisfaction among the women workers who were employed in agro and allied industries. The results revealed that the problems faced by women workers at workplace show that issues like under paid, male dominance at workplace, cannot communicate physical and personal problems, working in unhealthy and unhygienic environment, physical exertion, respiratory/breathing problem, backache due to long working hours, wrong posture, mental tension due to insecure job position, professional jealousy among the co-workers/colleagues and no provision for paid leave are highly significant.

Keywords: Satisfaction, Women Workers, Employed, Agro-based, Allied Industries

1. Introduction

Women from poor background accept any economic work to assist their families under very inferior working conditions. They are mainly supplementary earners and their stay in labour force is of temporary nature which declines with the improvement in their economic conditions. A large percentage of women are also found to be engaged in agriculture because it is an occupation which provides work opportunities to women irrespective of their age, education, marital status etc. The industrial environment in the Kashmir is yet to grow up to optimum level though there is enormous potential and scope in both the sectors of Agro and Allied industries. The women participation in both the sectors is still low as men dominate most of the activities at the functional level. The involvement of women in decisions on social and economic matters needs improvement to enhance their participation, efficiency, confidence and overall social and economic empowerment in the backdrop of impact of employment.

In developing countries among the poor, rural women are the poorest and more vulnerable. Empirical evidence suggests that women in rural areas are more adversely affected by poverty than men. The incidence of poverty among rural women is on the rise in most of the developing countries. Strategies and programmes for development had largely overlooked the question of gender equity. Projects aiming to reduce poverty view the poor rural women as the recipient of benefits of development, instead of active participant and still poor rural women have the least access to basic needs such as food, health and education. The effects of the longer term cumulative process of discrimination against women have been accentuated by under development. Graphically, while women represent nearly 50% of the world's adult population and one-third of the total labour force, they labour nearly two-thirds of

the total working hours but receive only one-tenth of world income and own less than one per cent of property. The type of agricultural activities generally expected of women is highly labour-intensive and the rural women generally do not enjoy the benefits of new technology. Their wages are generally too less because it is assumed that the efficiency of women's labour is poor compared to that of men. Regarding ownership of land, women do not enjoy equal rights, particularly in the developing countries where most of the production, processing, storage and preparation of food are carried out by the women.

1.1 Selection of Industrial Units

Since the industrial sector in the valley of Kashmir is still in infancy so it was thought prudent to select the available industrial units from all below named Districts randomly. For the conduct of this study, physically the Valley of Kashmir is divided into three zones viz South Kashmir, Central Kashmir and North Kashmir and from all the three given zones, Ten (10) Districts have been chosen for this study because of the spread of Agro-based and Allied industrial units in these districts.

1.2 Selection of Respondents

The sample of respondents for these studies consisted of 560 women workers employed in 59 Agro-based and 28 Allied sector based business units. A systematic sampling procedure was adopted to select the required number of the sample. The owners of each such industrial unit were also interviewed to gather the background information of these units in order to study the future prospects of employment of women workers.

2. Results

Table 1: Problems faced by women workers at work place

Problems faced by women workers at work place (Agro-based)	Age					
	18-30 yrs		31-42 yrs		42 & above yrs	
	N	%age	N	%age	N	%age
Under paid						
Usually	117	42.1%	34	36.2%	2	8.7%
Occasionally	54	19.4%	12	12.8%	8	34.8%
Never	107	38.5%	48	51.1%	13	56.5%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Male dominance at work place						
Usually	114	41.0%	34	36.2%	6	26.1%
Occasionally	75	27.0%	12	12.8%	6	26.1%
Never	89	32.0%	48	51.1%	11	47.8%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Cannot communicate physical and personal problems						
Usually	158	56.8%	48	51.1%	7	30.4%
Occasionally	77	27.7%	37	39.4%	7	30.4%
Never	43	15.5%	9	9.6%	9	39.1%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Working in unhealthy and unhygienic work						
Usually	28	10.1%	24	25.5%	1	4.3%
Occasionally	45	16.2%	16	17.0%	5	21.7%
Never	205	73.7%	54	57.4%	17	73.9%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Physical exertion						
Usually	80	28.8%	1	1.1%	3	13.0%
Occasionally	87	31.3%	34	36.2%	8	34.8%
Never	111	39.9%	59	62.8%	12	52.2%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Lack of facilities						
Usually	69	24.8%	11	11.7%	1	4.3%
Occasionally	56	20.1%	23	24.5%	7	30.4%
Never	153	55.0%	60	63.8%	15	65.2%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Respiratory/breathing problems						
Usually	5	1.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	101	36.3%	12	12.8%	6	26.1%
Never	172	61.9%	82	87.2%	17	73.9%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Headache due to high noise levels						
Usually	18	6.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	50	18.0%	15	16.0%	6	26.1%
Never	210	75.5%	79	84.0%	17	73.9%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Backache due to long working hours						
Usually	41	14.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	117	42.1%	33	35.1%	11	47.8%
Never	120	43.2%	61	64.9%	12	52.2%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Wrong posture						
Usually	44	15.8%	7	7.4%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	110	39.6%	21	22.3%	9	39.1%
Never	124	44.6%	66	70.2%	14	60.9%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Mental tension due to insecure job position						
Usually	93	33.5%	11	11.7%	3	13.0%
Occasionally	68	24.5%	22	23.4%	8	34.8%
Never	117	42.1%	61	64.9%	12	52.2%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
No appreciation for performing good work						
Usually	20	7.2%	11	11.7%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	159	57.2%	41	43.6%	12	52.2%
Never	99	35.6%	42	44.7%	11	47.8%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Eve-teasing at work place						

Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	9	3.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Never	269	96.8%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Professional jealousy among the co-workers/colleagues						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	96	34.5%	47	50.0%	5	21.7%
Never	182	65.5%	47	50.0%	18	78.3%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Do not get salary in time						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	130	46.8%	29	30.9%	10	43.5%
Never	148	53.2%	65	69.1%	13	56.5%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
Overcrowding at work place						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	45	16.2%	12	12.8%	3	13.0%
Never	233	83.8%	82	87.2%	20	87.0%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%
No provision for paid leave						
Usually	70	25.2%	3	3.2%	4	17.4%
Occasionally	60	21.6%	26	27.7%	7	30.4%
Never	148	53.2%	65	69.1%	12	52.2%
Total	278	100.0%	94	100.0%	23	100.0%

Table 2: Problems faced by women workers at work place in Allied Sector

Problems faced by women workers at work place (Allied sector)	Age					
	18-30 yrs		31-42 yrs		42 & above yrs	
	N	%age	N	%age	N	%age
Under paid						
Usually	52	43.0%	7	23.3%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	18	14.9%	6	20.0%	1	7.1%
Never	51	42.1%	17	56.7%	13	92.9%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Male dominance at work place						
Usually	13	10.7%	2	6.7%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	41	33.9%	5	16.7%	0	0.0%
Never	67	55.4%	23	76.7%	14	100.0%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Cannot communicate physical and personal problems						
Usually	35	28.9%	3	10.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	40	33.1%	13	43.3%	1	7.1%
Never	46	38.0%	14	46.7%	13	92.9%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Working in unhealthy and unhygienic work						
Usually	3	2.5%	2	6.7%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Never	118	97.5%	28	93.3%	14	100.0%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Physical exertion						
Usually	12	9.9%	4	13.3%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	58	47.9%	14	46.7%	1	7.1%
Never	51	42.1%	12	40.0%	13	92.9%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Lack of facilities						
Usually	32	26.4%	4	13.3%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	37	30.6%	16	53.3%	2	14.3%
Never	52	43.0%	10	33.3%	12	85.7%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Respiratory/breathing problems						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	60	49.6%	7	23.3%	1	7.1%
Never	61	50.4%	23	76.7%	13	92.9%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Headache due to high noise levels						

Usually	20	16.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	36	29.8%	12	40.0%	0	0.0%
Never	65	53.7%	18	60.0%	14	100.0%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Backache due to long working hours						
Usually	0	0.0%	2	6.7%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	73	60.3%	15	50.0%	2	14.3%
Never	48	39.7%	13	43.3%	12	85.7%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Wrong posture						
Usually	21	17.4%	2	6.7%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	56	46.3%	10	33.3%	1	7.1%
Never	44	36.4%	18	60.0%	13	92.9%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Mental tension due to insecure job position						
Usually	10	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	75	62.0%	14	46.7%	1	7.1%
Never	36	29.8%	16	53.3%	13	92.9%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
No appreciation for performing good work						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	42	34.7%	10	33.3%	0	0.0%
Never	79	65.3%	20	66.7%	14	100.0%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Eve-teasing at work place						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	17	14.0%	3	10.0%	0	0.0%
Never	104	86.0%	27	90.0%	14	100.0%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Professional jealousy among the co-workers/colleagues						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	57	47.1%	13	43.3%	2	14.3%
Never	64	52.9%	17	56.7%	12	85.7%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Do not get salary in time						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	26	21.5%	6	20.0%	0	0.0%
Never	95	78.5%	24	80.0%	14	100.0%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
Overcrowding at work place						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	54	44.6%	12	40.0%	0	0.0%
Never	67	55.4%	18	60.0%	14	100.0%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%
No provision for paid leave						
Usually	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Occasionally	47	38.8%	4	13.3%	0	0.0%
Never	74	61.2%	26	86.7%	14	100.0%
Total	121	100.0%	30	100.0%	14	100.0%

3. Discussion of the results

3.1 Male Dominance at work place

The data received from both the sectors representing respondents of three main age group hold that there is male dominance at the work place. Usual and occasional response when clubbed together further corroborates this fact. However, 39 percent in Agro and 9.1 percent in Allied sector hold they usually have male dominance at the work place; 23 percent and 27 percent of the respondents in the same sectors respectively say that there is occasionally male dominance at the work place yet 37.5 percent and 63 percent in same sectors hold that there has been never male dominance at the work place.

Anonymous (2004) has reported similar finding in the studies conducted. The studies have revealed that women workers

constitute about 22.73 percent of work force against 51.6 percent for males. Work participation rates continues to be subsequently less for females then for males. According to such studies the female work participation rate in rural areas is 281 per thousand majority of whom are employed in rural sector. Similar observations have been made during our studies on the subject.

3.2 Cannot Communicate Physical and Personal Problems

The study revealed that 53.9 percent of respondents hold that there is barrier in communicating their physical and personnel problems to senior male members as compared to 23 percent in Allied sector having the same response. Again 30.6 percent in Agro and 32 percent in Allied sector hold that such barrier

exists occasionally when 15.4 percent and 44.2 percent in the same sectors respectively hold there is never such a hindrance among them while communicating their physical or personnel problems. It may be due to the nature of jobs performed by the respondents in two different sectors that response in mixed one. Since in Allied sector women have to work in teams in different environment for which their response in different to that of Agro sector but the fact remains as per the given data that the respondents cannot communicate their physical or personnel problems to the management as there is some kind of communication gap between them and the management due to male dominance.

Bajaj (1992) ^[4] in a conducted on the female labour participation in Ludhiana Punjab during which he was found 93.3% 90%, 70% and 63% of women workers from MEFA Needles, MEFA associates, Texla electronics and Vardhaman industries, respectively had to work under the supervision of men folk who sometimes treated them with disrespect and callous approach to ascertain the fineness and progress of work. Respondents from these companies had to face a lot of inconvenience to communicate their personnel and physical problems to their men supervisors who usually failed to listen to their problems. Similar observations have been made during these studies at hand.

3.3 Working in unhealthy and unhygienic work environment

The study shows that 97 percent in Allied sector and 69.9 percent of respondents in Agro sector hold that they never work in unhealthy and unhygienic work environment; 13.4 percent in Agro and 3 percent in Allied sector hold that they usually work in such type of environment as compared to their response against occasional option of 16.7 percent and Zero percent in the same sectors. Thus as per data a reasonable percentage of respondents in both the sectors are working in unhealthy and unhygienic work environment.

In a study conducted by Sandhu (2002) ^[20] on the problems faced by the female from labours in Punjab revealed that almost three fourth of the respondents revealed exploitation by men which had their work environment hostile for them. 65 percent of respondents felt that there was insufficient drinking water supply at the work place and 29.16 percent of respondent agreed that they lacked interest in the kind of farm operations for facing of varied problems. There problems had mean score of 2.00. Hence observation of our study is supported by the study cited above.

3.4 Physical Exertion

As per data given in table 4.4a.1a and 4.4a.1b, usually 21.3 percent in Agro and 9.7 percent in Allied have physical excretion while as 32 percent and 44.2 percent in both the sectors respectively have such exertion occasionally. Yet a good percentage of respondents, 46.1 percent in Agro and 46.1 percent in allied have never had such physical excretion. But the data indicates that in both the given sectors workers do live with physical excretion.

Bajaj (1992) ^[4] conducted a study on female labour participation in industries in Ludhiana city. The study inferred that there were 40, 23.33 and 10% respondents from Mefa needles, Mefa associates and Texla Elections respectively who reported mental as well as physical exertion due to hard work.

The findings of Bajaj therefore corroborate our observations regarding physical excretion.

3.5 Lack of Facilities

Usually 20.5 percent in Agro and 21.8 percent in Allied sector live with lack of facilities as per the data given; occasionally 21.8 percent in Agro and 33.3 percent in Allied sector live with lack of such facilities. However, surprisingly 57.7 percent in Agro and 44.8 percent in Allied sector hold that there is no lack of facility in their industrial units. The given data reflects that a handsome percentage in both the sector still work with the lack of facilities.

Similar observations have been reported by Srivastava (2001) conducted a study in subsequently large, female dominated, private sector of Delhi. The study revealed that there was lack of crèche facility, adequate water supply and light facilities at the work place.

3.6 Respiratory / Breathing Problems

The finding the of the study revealed that only 1.3 percent of respondents in Agro sector as per given data have usually no respiratory/breathing problems, 41.2 percent in Allied and 30.1 percent in Agro sector have occasionally such problems. But surprisingly 68.6 percent in Agro and 58.8 percent of respondents in Allied sector never had such kind of problems. Thus the data indicates that occasionally the respondents of all the three age groups had the breathing/respiratory problems at any given time.

This observation corroborates our reporting during the current studies on the given topic by Manimekalai and Sundari (1991) ^[16] in their studies conducted on the female workers of Mat industry of Amoor and Ayyampalayan villages of Tamilnadu also has revealed that 90% of respondents complained of severe cold and cough.

3.7 Headache due to High Level Noise

However, it was found that 77.5 percent of respondents in Agro sector and 58.5 percent in Allied sector had never such problem when usually 4.6 percent and 12.1 percent in the same sector respectively had such problems but 18 percent in Agro and 29.1 percent in Allied sector had to face such problems occasionally. Thus the given data reveals that workers experience headache due to high noise levels whether usually or occasionally during working hours.

3.8 Back Ache due to Long Working Hours

48 percent of respondents in Agro and 44 percent in Allied sector had no backache due to long working hours. But 40.8 percent and 54.5 percent in the same sectors respectively experienced backache occasionally when 10.4 percent and 1.2 percent again in same sectors respectively have experienced it usually. In light of given data half of the respondents in both the sectors have experienced backache due to long working hours at some stage of their working.

3.9 Wrong Posture

12.9 percent of respondents in Agro and 13.9 percent in Allied sector have usually experienced problems due to wrong posture, 40.6 percent and 35.4 percent in the same sectors respectively have experienced problems occasionally due to wrong posture, when 51.6 percent in Agro and 45.5 percent in Allied sector had never experienced such problems due to

wrong posture. The data thus reveals that half of the respondents in both the sectors adopt wrong posture due to the kind of job they perform.

3.10 Mental Tension due to Insecure Job Position

48.1 percent of respondents in Agro and 39.4 percent in Allied sector suffer no mental tension due to insecure Job position while as in the same sector respondents suffer mental tension occasionally in the ratio of 24.8% 54% respectively and usually in the ratio of 27.10%: 6.1% respectively in the same sector. Therefore the data given indicates that more than half of the respondents in both the sectors suffer mental tension due to insecure job position.

3.11 No Appreciation for good work

7.8 percent respondents in Agro usually get no appreciation for good work they perform 53.7 percent in Agro and 31.5 percent in Allied sector receive no such appreciation occasionally while as 38.5 percent and 68.5 percent in both the sectors respectively do not get appreciation for the good work they perform. Hence the data provided reflects that majority of women workers do not receive appreciation for the good work they perform. Both the sectors as such need to introduce new methods of appreciation of boost up the morale of female workers for their good work they perform.

3.12 Eve Teasing at Work Place

Eve teasing in the ratio of 97.7 percent and 87.9 percent in Agro and Allied sectors never takes place as per the response of respondents. However 2.3 percent in Agro and 12.1 percent in Allied sector are occasionally eve teased at work place. Thus the data reflects that the eve teasing at work places in both the sector is not missing but it does occur in low percentage.

3.13 Professional Jealousy among Co-Workers/ Colleagues

Occasionally professional Jealousy has been reported in both the Agro and Allied sectors in the ratio of 37.5%: 43.6%, respectively. But the professional jealousy has never been reported in both the sectors in the ratio of 62.5%:56.4%, respectively. Even then one can safely say that the professional Jealousy among the co-workers/Colleagues does exist which needs to be taken care off to avoid any serious harm to the workers on this account.

3.14 Do not get salary in time

Respondents in both the sectors get salary in time in the ratio of 80.6%: 57.2% respectively i.e. Agro sector: Allied sector. But occasionally they do not get salary in time in the ratio of 42.8% (Agro sector): 19.4% (Allied sector). Therefore a reasonable percentage in both the sectors does not get salary in time which can lower their morale and motivational level to the disadvantage of the concerned industrial unit.

3.15 Overcrowding at the work place

Overcrowding has never been reported by the respondents in the Agro and Allied sectors in the ratio of 84.8%: 60% respectively at the work places. However overcrowding has been reported occasionally in both the sectors in the ratio of 40% (Allied sector) 15.2% (Allied sector). Though percentage of overcrowding is less but a reasonable overcrowding is reported by the Allied sector as compared to Agro sector.

3.16 No Provision for Paid Leave

As per data provided no provision for leave has been reported in Agro and Allied sector in the ratio of 57%: 69.1% respectively. But occasional provision in both the sectors has been reported in the ratio of 23.5% (Agro sector): 30.9% (Allied sector) respectively. Hence maximum number of respondents representing both the sectors holds that there is no provision for paid leave in their respective fields.

4. Conclusion

The problems faced by women workers at workplace show that issues like under paid, male dominance at workplace, cannot communicate physical and personal problems, working in unhealthy and unhygienic environment, physical exertion, respiratory/breathing problem, backache due to long working hours, wrong posture, mental tension due to insecure job position, professional jealousy among the co-workers/colleagues and no provision for paid leave are highly significant in Agro based sector.

As compared to above in Allied sector the issues like under paid, male dominance at workplace, cannot communicate physical and personal problems, physical exertion, lack of facilities, respiratory/breathing problem, headache due to high noise levels, backache due to long working hours, wrong posture, mental tension due to insecure job position, overcrowding at workplace and no provision for paid leave are found highly significant.

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