JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURE & SOCIAL SCIENCES
1813–2235/2005/01–1–60–61
http://www.ijabjass.org

A Sociological Study of Working Women in Informal Sector of Readymade Garments Industry in Faisalabad (Pakistan)

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ABSTRACT

In this study, female labors are treated as women in the age group of 15 to 50 years, who are engaged in readymade garment industries. The women can play a vital role in every walk of life. Women encouragement is essential for the economic uplift. However, there is a need to provide proper education and vocational skills to engage them in productive employment. This will help to reduce poverty and improve family status.

Key Words: Working women; Informal sector; Garment industry; Wages

INTRODUCTION

Women in the developing countries are the neglected human resource. Pakistan, unfortunately, is one among such countries where low literacy and restrictions on economic activities of women have acted not only as a major constraint towards full utilization of human potential but also resulted in high population growth leading in turn to high dependency ratio. While constituting 52% of the total population of Pakistan, despite of limited education and gender biases, women have been using whatever skills they have at their disposal to create merchandise and alleviate economic poverty. The need to survive has been forcing women to come forward with strategies to help themselves and their families and more seriously to play their role in a more effective way.

Women in the informal sector have been and still are on the periphery of Pakistan's labor policy agenda. According to Government of Pakistan (2002-03), the female labour force participation is far less as compared to male participation rate and as such their participation in economic activities is also low.

This paper describes some socio-economic characteristics of the women working in readymade garment industry.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Faisalabad City. A total of 120 respondents were selected randomly and interviewed by using simple random technique. Distribution of the respondents according to their age, education, marital status and income is given in Table I. Data collected were used to identify the problems faced by the female workers in readymade garments industry by using different techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data showed that 3.3% respondents were engaged in clipping section, while 4.2% were in the final checking section. Majority of the respondents (55.8%) were engaged in sewing section and 36.7% in the packing section. Majority of the respondents (73.3%) were working to fulfill their economic needs, while 10% were working for preparing dowry and another 10% were working to improve the living standards. Only 6.7% of the respondents were working just to spend time. As majority of respondents was working to fulfill their economic needs, poverty is a major factor compelling the women to work in industries.

As far as income is concerned, majority (81.7%) of the respondents had monthly income between 2000 and 3000, while 13.3% received between Rs. 3001 and 4000. Only 5.0% of the respondents had monthly income of Rs. 4001-5000. Out of these 67.5% were satisfied to a great extent, while 27.5% to less extent and only 5.0% were not satisfied with their jobs and salaries. It was found that 2.5% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the amount of their salary and considered that it does not fulfill their needs at all. About 74.2% of the respondents were satisfied with their salaries to some and 23.3% said that their salaries were

Table I. Distribution of the respondents according to their age, education, marital status and income

Age group (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
12-16	10	8.3
17-21	45	37.6
22-26	27	22.6
27-31	21	17.4
32-36	14	11.6
37+	3	2.5
Total	120	100
Years of Schooling	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Illiterate	23	19.2
Primary	30	25.0
Middle	25	20.8
Matric+	42	35.0
Total	120	100
Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Married	54	45
Single	61	50.8
Divorced	4	3.3
Widow	1	.8
Total	120	100
Family Monthly Income	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1000-4000	8	6.6
4001-8000	85	70.8
8001-12000	22	18.4
12001+	5	4.1
Total	120	100

sufficient to meets their needs to a great extent. More than half (72.5%) of the respondents were doing jobs to support their families as to fulfill the needs of their family members. Only 2.5% of the respondents are engaged just to prepare dowry and 25.0% of the respondents spent on the education of children. Similar reasons for women employment were advanced in an earlier study (Rauf & Randhawa, 1982).

Data revealed that 18.29% of the respondents faced religious imposition by their family members, while 19.51% of them faced problems due to purdah. About 30.48% of the respondents felt insecurity among males, while 31.70% faced problems due to negative attitude of people around them; these people may be their family members or outsiders. Similar attitude of the society has also been reported previously (Shaheed & Mumtaz, 1981). Only 1.7% of the respondents considered the female status in society as superior to males, while majority of the respondents 98.3% answered that the status of females in the society was inferior to males. Data further showed that 40% of the respondents had to face a lot of problems in looking after their children due to their jobs, while 5.0% had no such problem. A majority of the respondents (55%) were either unmarried, widow or divorced.

The chi-square value shows a non-significant association between present salary of the respondents and their education. The gamma value shows a positive relationship between in these variables (Table II). About 31.6% of the respondents were from low level income category were matriculate and higher levels of education About 50% of the respondents from middle to high level of income category, respectively had matriculate and upper levels of education. So the hypothesis "higher the education of the respondents higher will be the income" is rejected.

In Table III, the chi-square value shows a non-significant association between present salary of the respondents and "What were the factors which motivated you to work in Ready made garments". The gamma value shows a positive relationship between in these variables.

CONCLUSIONS

Unmarried young women got preference for job in readymade garments industry. Majority of the females were working to support their families. Married working women told that they had to work because the occupations of their husbands were less prestigious and semi-skilled. So they had to work for the education of their children and to support the family. The major problem for married women was to look after their children. Most of the women had low salary but they were working in sufficient light and air. These findings further revealed that educated women were also working in readymade garments industry. Taking into account all the facts it can be concluded that the attitude of the people towards working women is changing. Now the males want that the females get education and do jobs but working in industries is still considered unreceptive.

Table II. Association between present salary of the respondents and their education

Present Salary (Rs.)	Education				Total
	Illiterate	Primary	Middle	Matric & above	
2000-3000	18	26	23	31	98
	18.4%	26.5%	23.5%	31.6%	81.7%
3001-4000	4	2	2	8	16
	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	50.0%	13.3%
4001-5000	1	2	-	3	6
	16.7%	33.3%	-	50.0%	5.0%
Total	23	30	25	42	120
	19.2%	25.0%	20.8%	35.0%	100.0%

Chi-square = 5.437 d.f. = 6 Significance = .489^{NS} Gamma = .134; NS = Non-Significant

Table III. Association between Present salary of the respondents and the factors which motivated to work in Readymade Garments

Present Salary (Rs.)	What were the factors, motivated you to work in Ready made garments				Total
	To fulfill economic necessity	To prepare dowry	To improve the living standard	To spend time	
2000-3000	75	9	7	7	98
	76.5%	9.2%	7.1%	7.1%	81.7%
3001-4000	9	2	4	1	16
	56.3%	12.5%	25.0%	6.3%	13.3%
4001-5000	4	1	1	-	6
	66.7%	16.7%	16.7%	-	5.0%
Total	88	12	12	8	120
	73.3%	10.0%	10.0%	6.7%	100.0%

Chi-square = 6.346 d.f. = 6 Significance = .386^{NS} Gamma = .297; NS = Non-Significant

SUGGESTIONS

1. Salaries should be higher and with less working hours.
2. Government should take necessary step for the betterment of readymade garments workers.
3. In case of illness, medical facilities should be free.
4. The males should change their attitude towards working ladies and there should be no harassment at the working places it is not only essential ethically but also according to the teachings of Islam.
5. Lady supervisors should supervise the female workers so that females may share their problems with lady supervisor.

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(Received 22 September 2004; Accepted 20 November 2004)