

ASSESS THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

This article makes an attempt to evaluate the socio-economic situations as well as the working conditions of women who are employed in the unorganized manufacturing sector in the Ernakulam district based in the state of Kerala. There are a number of challenges that women workers encounter, including working long hours, receiving low salaries, receiving meager rates per piece, not having access to social security, and not having assistance from unions and organizations. Moreover, the working conditions and health conditions that they are subjected to are appalling. During the course of the survey, the present investigation utilized the descriptive research method as its methodology. In order to accomplish this goal, a questionnaire with a formal framework was first developed and then distributed to the target populations. The findings indicate that sixty-eight percent of the women who are employed are between the ages of twenty and forty years old. Among the women who are employed, forty percent are classified as temporary workers. The payment method that is most frequently used is the weekly payment. Forty-two percent of the female employees reported that they had been subjected to abuse at their place of employment. Nevertheless, in spite of these challenges, the unorganized manufacturing sector is the most appropriate path for the production of employment opportunities among women living in rural and urban areas.

Key words: socio-economic implications, women's employment

INTRODUCTION

Insecurity regarding food supplies has become a pressing concern all across the world. In the instance of India, more than half of the overall population has been unable to achieve a diet that is both nourishing and balanced; hence, undernourishment is prevalent. The Food and Agricultural Organization's definition of food security states that "people of a particular area are food secure when nutritious and safe food is available at all times and everyone has access to that by socio-economic and physical means." In addition to this, the food that is available should be according to the nutritional necessities and preferences of the people for a healthy and active life. As a result of this definition, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the availability of food is not an adequate criterion for ensuring food security; socio-economic access is also a significant factor.

Even though there is sufficient food available to feed everyone in the globe at the moment, there are still around 854 million people who are now suffering from undernourishment. The people who are living below the food poverty line make up one third of the overall population. This is because their intake is lower than their daily needs. They do not have the ability to fulfill their day-to-day food requirements. Villagers, which make up 35% of the overall population, are more likely to be food insecure than city dwellers, who make up 26% of the total.

This effect is largely dependent on the proportion of a household's income that is contributed by women. Women's income has a variety of effects on the amount of nutrition that is consumed by families. In households

where women contributed more than half of the household income, the nutritional level of those families was 0.8 higher than in households where females contributed less than 50% of the total domestic earnings. This is in contrast to households in which this percentage was less than 50%.

Assessment of the social and economic barriers that women face in terms of food security at the family level was the primary purpose of the research that was being conducted at the moment. The study also investigates the connection between these constraints and the demographic characteristics of the individuals who participated the survey. It was hoped that this research would contribute to bringing attention to the significance of the financial situation of women in relation to the maintenance of food security in households.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study assess the socio-economic implications.
2. To study women's employment in the food industry.

Female Work Participation Rate in India and Kerala: Evidence from Secondary Data

In spite of the fact that India has made significant progress in a variety of domains, the country is still a long way behind in terms of gender equality. The percentage of women who are actively seeking employment in our nation is really low. When it comes to women's engagement in the labor market, there is a significant amount of variation across developing countries and emerging economies on a far larger scale than there is for men. There are a wide variety of economic and social reasons that contribute to this diversity in India. Some of these aspects include economic growth, rising educational attainment, declining fertility rates, and societal standards. In addition, the gender gap in the labor market is more pronounced in developing countries, and the discrepancy is greatest in countries located in South Asia. It has been reported by Michael Debabrata Patra² that the percentage of working women in India is among the lowest in the world and is continuing to decrease. India does worse than even indias in this regard. Because of the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, the situation has got even worse. According to a report published by the World Bank, India has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates (LFPRs) in the world, with fewer than one third of women being employed.³ The female labor force participation rate in India was reported to be 19 percent in the year 2020, a decrease from around 26 percent in the year 2005. This figure is even lower than the rates in Bangladesh (35 percent) and Sri Lanka (31 percent) (Union Budget, 2022). In the agricultural sector, the percentage of women who were actively participating in the labor force dropped from 46% in 1987 to 33% in 2017, and it is projected to drop even lower to 23% in 2022. There has also been a minor decrease in the percentage of women who are participating in the workforce, down from 3.5% to 2.5% in the manufacturing sector. Exceptions include the construction and service industries, where it has increased by almost one to one and a half percent.

According to the Gender Statistics 5, during the 2011-12 fiscal year, approximately 57% of the entire population in Kerala was either economically active or a member of the labor force. On the other hand, the percentage of economically active women in the population was just 25%. According to the results of the Census conducted in 2016, Kerala has the lowest rate of females participating in the labor force among all of the major states in India. According to Economic Review 7, the gender gap in employment levels is also brought out by the female work participation rates (WPRs). While male WPRs show a slight upward trend or constancy, there is a declining trend in female WPRs. Kerala women have a higher work participation rate in urban areas compared to all India is concerned. This is a trend that has been observed in Kerala. When compared to the work participation rate of 15.4 percent in urban regions, the work involvement rate of female workers in rural areas was seen to be much higher, standing at 30.0 percent (Table 1). According to the Office

of the Registrar General of India⁸, the state of Himachal Pradesh had the greatest female WPR, which was recorded at 44.8%, while the state of Delhi had the lowest female WPR, which was reported at 10.6%. The data presented in the table demonstrates that according to the Census conducted in 2011, workers made up 39.8 percent of the total population. On the other hand, the proportion of female workers was 25.5 percent. Even if the percentage of women who are actively participating in the labor force has improved over time (25.5%), it is still significantly lower than the percentage of men who are doing so (53.3%).

Table 1: Work Participation* Rate by Sex in India (1971-2011)

Year	Total/Rural/ Urban	Persons	Males	Females
1971	Total	33.08 34.03	52.61	12.11
	Rural	29.34	53.62	13.42
	Urban		48.82	6.68
1981	Total	36.70 38.79	52.62	19.67
	Rural	29.99	53.77	23.06
	Urban		49.06	8.31
1991	Total	37.50 40.09	51.61	22.27
	Rural	30.16	52.58	6.79
	Urban		48.92	9.19
2001	Total	39.10	51.68	25.63
	Rural	41.75	52.11	30.79
	Urban	32.2	50.60	11.88
2011	Total	39.8 41.8	53.3	25.5 30.0
	Rural	35.3	53.0	15.4
	Urban		53.8	

Data obtained from the Office of the Registrar General of India: -! *The Workforce Participation Rate is the percentage of the working population in the economy that is between the ages of 16 and 64 years old and is either currently employed or actively looking for other employment opportunities.

Problems and Challenges faced by Women Workers at Workplace and the Evidence from Past Studies

In this section, we have made an effort to conduct a critical evaluation of a few of the more recent studies that have investigated the problems that women workers face in various manufacturing sectors in the context of India and Kerala.

The percentage of women who are employed in the unorganized sector is higher than the percentage of males who are active in the labor. The working conditions of these employees are absolutely deplorable, and the existing body of research indicates that there is a pressing requirement to revise the policy that governs the working conditions of women at the national level.

The abuse and exploitation of domestic women workers in India was the subject of a detailed study that was conducted by Sudesh and Dhanlakshmi. Human rights were taken into consideration throughout the research. There are many sorts of exploitation that domestic women's workers face, including the absence of weekly offs, the absence of specified work time, the absence of fair wages, sexual and physical abuses and harassment,

termination from employment, and other forms of exploitation. Domestic women's workers are regarded to be part-time workers. The International Labor Organization (ILO) played a significant part in this study, and the necessity of equal opportunities for women and men at various levels was emphasized.

In this study, an attempt has been made to comprehend the working and living situations of the workers who are employed in the unorganized sector, as well as to determine the differences that exist between the organized sector and the unorganized sector. Contractual work situations and seasonal employment are two characteristics that are characteristic of unorganized sectors. It has been determined by Kapur et al. that there are no social security and welfare legislations. Those who work in this industry are confronted with a variety of challenges, including inadequate and unequal wage structures, long working hours, inadequate housing facilities, a lack of safety measures, and inadequate education opportunities for the children of workers. In addition, the working conditions are substandard, and sexual harassment occurs in the workplace. The government ought to intervene in the policies that are in place and take the required steps in order to enhance the working conditions of those employed in this industry.

Methodology

The research approach that was used for this study is one that is both descriptive and quantitative in nature. The qualitative method is also incorporated into this investigation. Face-to-face interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted with five hundred female workers from various industrial units located in the Ernakulam district of Kerala. The research utilized a wide range of instruments and methods, including these aforementioned methods. To acquire the samples, a straightforward random sampling method was utilized. Participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions were also carried out in order to acquire qualitative data from the field where the research was carried out. After some time had passed, the data that had been gathered from primary and secondary sources were meticulously examined and transcribed prior to the beginning of the data tabulation process. The tabulation of the data was then analyzed using tables and percentages. Due to the fact that secondary data were not sufficient to adequately describe the issues that were encountered in the unorganized sector in Kerala, primary data were utilized for the majority of this study. With that being said, secondary data were utilized in order to prepare the context for the field survey and to gain a grasp of the various dimensions of the topic that was being investigated.

Result and Discussion

Socio-economic Profile of Women Workers in the Unorganized Manufacturing Sector

Population is the subject of the statistical study known as demography. Information pertaining to the respondents and women who are employed in the unorganized sector is included in this report. In the current study, data were collected on a variety of socio-economic indicators, including personal information, age, educational status, marital status, religion, caste, occupation, family background, educational levels, and economic situations of women workers, as well as other pertinent information.

Table 2: Socio-Economic Profile of Women Workers in Unorganized Manufacturing (N-500)

Sl. No.	Variables	Particulars	Frequency	(In per cent)
1	Marital Status	Married	400	80.1
		Unmarried	70	14.0
		Divorced	10	2.0

		Widowed	20	4.1
2	Age(in years)	Below 20	10	2.0
		20-40	340	68.0 12.1
		41-50	60	18.0
		Above 51	90	
3	Education	1-10 Std.	300	60.0 24.1
		11-12 Std.	120	16.1
		Bachelor's degree	80	
4	Religion	Hindu	250	50.0 20.0
		Christian	100	30.0
		Muslim	150	
5	Place of residence	Urban	350	70.0 10.1
		Rural	50	20.0
		Semi-urban	100	
6	Residential status of accommodation	Owned	120	24.1
		Rented	370	74.0
		Others	10	2.0
7	Type of house	Thatched	70	14.0 58.1
		Partially tiles	290	24.0
		Asbestos Sheet	120	4.0
		Concrete	20	
8	Suchimuri (Toilet)	Yes	350	70.0
		No	150	30.1
9	Type of family	Nuclear Family	450	90.0
		Joint Family	50	10.1
10	Family Members	2 Nos.	50	10.0 30.0
		3 Nos.	150	20.1 12.0
		4Nos.	100	40.0
		5Nos.	60	
		More than 6	200	

The age range of 20 to 40 years old accounts for the majority of working women, which accounts for 68% of the total (Table 2). Approximately twelve percent of them are middle-aged, which is defined as being between the ages of forty and fifty-one. In each of the regions, there is not a significant amount of variation that is worth mentioning. There are around twenty percent of Christians and thirty percent of Muslims among the working women. The Hindu religion is represented by fifty percent of the working women. A pattern that is almost identical may be seen in all of the regions. Eighty percent of the women who are employed in the area under study are married, whereas only fourteen percent of them are single when they are working. There were approximately two percent of people who were widowed, and four percent of people who were divorced. There

are ninety percent of people who come from nuclear families, while the remaining ten percent come from joint families. Based on the findings of the study, it was discovered that a sizeable amount, specifically forty percent, of families headed by women who are employed have six members or more, with the percentage being practically identical across regions. Seventy percent of the women who are employed have access to toilet facilities in their homes, while only thirty percent do not have such facilities because they have submitted an application to the local panchayat to be granted a "Suchimuri" .

5.2 Occupation and Income Profile of Women working in the Unorganized Manufacturing Sector

Women make up a bigger share of workers in "informal" and other precarious types of employment, which tend to fall outside the scope of labor legislation and inspection, and are therefore more likely to be exploited. This increases the likelihood that women will be exploited. It is estimated that between 65 and 90 percent of all part-time workers in industrialized countries are represented by women. The majority of women's employment is concentrated in a very small number of industries, particularly in the service sector, where it is simpler for them to find work but where earnings are frequently lower and job security is weak. Even within such industries, women make up a disproportionately small percentage of the workforce at lower levels.

Table 3: Occupation Profile of Women Workers in the Unorganized Sector

Sl. No.	Variables	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1	Type of job	Production Distribution Marketing Packing	250 150 50 50	50.1 30.0 10.0 10.0
2	Nature of job	Permanent Temporary Casual Contract basis	50 200 150 100	10.0 40.0 30.1 20.1
3	Years of experience	0-1 1-3 3-6 6-10 Above 10	50 150 100 75 50	10.0 30.1 20.0 15.0 10.0
4	Mode of payment	Monthly salary Weekly payment Daily wages Piece rate	50 250 100 100	10.1 50.0 20.0 20.1

5	Daily wage rate	0-500	300	60.1
		500-600	75	15.0
		600-800	25	5.0
		800-1000	20	4.1
		Above 1000	80	16.0

In the manufacturing industry, women are involved in practically every type of activity, including production, distribution, marketing, and packing, amongst others. A significant number of women are employed in this industry in a casual or temporary capacity. According to the findings of this study, approximately fifty percent of workforces consisting of women are employed in the production area (Table 3). Twenty percent of the remainder thirty percent are involved in distribution, ten percent are involved in marketing, and the remaining thirty percent are involved in the packing sector. There is a negative impact on the rates of female labor force participation that are caused by low income or wage, with participation rates being greater among households with low incomes, primarily due to the necessity of economic circumstances. The Indian economy is full of instances of wage discrimination, which is a prevalent problem. Women are concentrated in professions such as cleaning, stitching, embroidery, and finishing, as well as work involving tagging and packaging. This is because of the sexual division of labor. It is common practice to assign positions with lower compensation rates to women, whereas jobs with higher wage rates are typically assigned to men. For the same reason, women receive lower pay than men in this industry. From what we have seen, the pay of a female worker are one hundred rupees less per day than the wages of a man worker. Every day, the wages that are paid to female workers are Rs. 500, while the wages that are paid to male workers are Rs. 600. The wages that female workers receive in a manufacturing unit are lower than those that are paid to male workers, despite the fact that male and female unskilled workers perform essentially identical tasks. It has also been observed along the course of the research that there is a widening discrepancy between the LFPR of males and females. "Women's progress in the workforce over the past ten years has not meant a greater access to quality jobs, nor has it brought an end to discrimination," says Mary Chinery-Hesse, Deputy Director General of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and leader of the ILO delegation to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 4-15). Women earn an average of only two-thirds of what men earn, and they are frequently denied access to chances that lead to the top positions. This is despite the fact that there have been modest improvements in certain sectors. In metropolitan areas that are not organized for industry, these gender inequalities are very pronounced, reaching around 55 percentage points higher.

Working Conditions of Women Workers in Unorganized Manufacturing Sector

The status of women in society is one that is fraught with significant disadvantages. They have been subjected to a variety of forms of control and tyranny. The reason for this is that they are women, and the majority of the jobs that they have in the society are ones that tend to be exploitative. Despite the fact that there are numerous constitutional and legal protections that protect women in the workplace, women, particularly those working in the unorganized sector, continue to face a variety of disadvantages in their working life as well as in their homes. Mostly for the purpose of achieving economic autonomy, women are employed in the unorganized manufacturing sector. The majority of women, in general, only engage in "productive work" when they are forced to do so by economic pressure. Despite the fact that women have been confronted with a number of obstacles even before the arrival of globalization, the magnitude of these hurdles has multiplied significantly since the introduction of neoliberal policies that include globalization, deregulation, and privatization. As a

result of globalization, working women are more susceptible to harsh exploitation; they are put in situations where they are exposed to a greater number of hazards and are compelled to bear a greater amount of stress and strain, both physically and mentally speaking.

Table 4: Working Conditions of Women Workers in the Unorganized Manufacturing Sector

Sl. No.	Variables	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Risk to life	Have	400	80.0
		Do not have	100	20.1
2.	Abuse at the workplace	Faced	210	42.0
		Have not Faced	290	58.0
3.	Distance to workplace	5-10	100	20.1
		10-15	250	50.0
		20-25	150	30.1
		Above 25	0	0.0
4.	Access to clear drinking water	Get	220	44.1
		Do not get	280	56.0
5.	Toilet facilities at workplace	Have	200	40.0
		Do not have	300	60.1
6.	Relationships with friends and co-workers	Have	240	40.0
		Do not have	260	60.1
7.	Appreciation of work by Superiors	Appreciated	50	10.0
		Not appreciated	450	90.0
8.	Co-worker praise for the work they do	Yes	350	70.1
		No	150	30.0
9.	Sharing personal problems / issues with co-workers	Share	320	64.0
		Do not share	180	36.1
10.	Sharing of food with others in the workplace	Share	230	46.0
		Do not share	270	54.1

In the current study, the working conditions of women construction workers in a variety of age groups were investigated, and the results indicated the conditions that they face on a daily basis at their place of employment. On the other hand, twenty percent of respondents are of the opinion that there is a risk to their lives at their place of employment, which is contrary to the majority of respondents (80 percent) (Table 4). Fifty-eight percent of respondents stated that they had not experienced any form of abuse at their place of employment, while forty-two percent stated that they had been subjected to abuse at their place of employment. There was a minimum distance of 5 kilometers between the house and the place of employment, and the maximum distance was 25 kilometers. The majority of respondents (56 percent) stated that they do not have access to

clean drinking water at their place of employment, whereas 44 percent of respondents stated that they have access to such facilities within their unit. Regarding the availability of toilet facilities at their place of employment, the majority of them (60 percent) stated that there is no toilet facility accessible at their place of employment, whilst forty percent of them stated that there is a toilet facility available at their unit. Of those who responded, fifty-two percent claimed that they do not have a good relationship with their friends and coworkers, whereas forty-eight percent gave contradictory responses. Only ten percent of employees said that their supervisors appreciated the work that they had done. It was claimed that seventy percent of the female employees had received compliments from their coworkers for the work that they had done. Seventy percent of respondents said they would share personal concerns or troubles with their coworkers, while twenty-five percent said they would not disclose such information.

CONCLUSION

Women living in rural areas face significant challenges in terms of food security at the home level due to the socio-economic constraints that they endure. In rural areas, the majority of women have been experiencing economic difficulties, and as a result, they are providing their children with food that is less healthy due to their limited financial resources. When compared to households in which women are solely dependent on the income of their male partners, households in which women are economically active have found that their nutritional intake and overall health status are significantly better. As a result of the fact that the majority of women in rural Punjab are dependent on the income of men, it is common knowledge that they receive a very small amount of money to purchase food that allows them to satisfy their own physiological requirements, which are distinct from those of men. In addition, there is a significant amount of work that needs to be done in order to educate and increase awareness among women in Pakistan in order to raise awareness about the significance of maintaining a healthy and balanced dietary pattern. Additionally, women who are trying to earn money are receiving a lower compensation for the identical labor that men are performing. The problem is made even more difficult by the gender differences that exist. In order to improve the overall food security of households, it is strongly advised that certain substantial actions be taken, not only at the grassroots level but also at the policy-making level, to increase the economic position of women in rural areas. This would allow for higher levels of food security to be reached.

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