

Working Conditions Of Women In Kashmir

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Abstract: The present study was aimed to examine the conditions of work at workplace of working women. The sample for the study was 400 working women who were randomly selected from various departments from four districts of Kashmir division viz. Srinagar, Anantnag, Ganderbal and Baramulla. Information regarding the working conditions at workplace was collected by a self devised questionnaire which included questions regarding nature of work, facilities available, benefits provided and occupational health safety for women at workplace. The data obtained through questionnaire was consolidated, analyzed and interpreted through SPSS-20 as per the requirement using specific statistical tools. Tables were made in order to make the results transparent. It was found that most of the respondents finished their official work on time and did not carry any pending work to their home and they were being provided by most of the necessary facilities at workplace but technically modern equipments, trainings or vocational programmes, child care centers at workplace were not yet available at maximum offices. They were also being provided with all the necessary employment benefits and they were not having any health problem associated with their working pattern. It indicates that in Kashmir division the overall conditions of work are favorable for working women.

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Key-words: **Work:** Activity which is carried outside the home and for which an individual is paid.

Women: Women who earns salary, wages, or other income through regular employment, outside the home.

Working Conditions: Conditions in and under which women perform work with respect to the nature, facilities, benefits and health safety at workplace.

Introduction

Until recent times, the mountain ranges around Kashmir have greatly isolated it from rest of the world. This isolation has at all times exercised a decisive influence, not only on the history and traditions of Kashmir but also on the people of Kashmir. They have started coming out of their cocoons, thus changing the orthodox traditions in Kashmir. Like in many parts of the world, the employment of women in Kashmir has undergone a sea change over the ages. Women have started to work in various positions in every field. There are evidences to show that the traditional view regarding the place and role of women is slowly losing ground in contemporary society. The process has been generated and aided by a variety of factors which are operating simultaneously. Increasing opportunities for modern education, greater geographical and occupational mobility, and the emergence of new economic patterns may be cited as a few possible factors for such a change.

Government of India has also started taking steps for the welfare of working women for which certain acts have been put forth in order to uplift the

status of working women. Work of an employee can be stress-free only when the working conditions are favorable. Working conditions are the conditions in and under which work is performed as regards the work environment and the time, place and organization of work. Nowadays, as perception of the concept moves towards the incorporation of additional factors and parameters which affect the employee psychosomatically, a broader definition of the term is coming to be accepted which also includes the economic dimension and its effects on living conditions (environmental problems connected with the work environment) and the social roles of employees (female employment).

Women's experiences at work are an important factor which relates her employment to her family roles. Working women's time of work, conditions at work, job autonomy levels, free time with children, stress of work etc affects her and her family both. A heavy workload is often associated with high levels of stress among working women. They often feel that their hours are too rigid and demands from work cause them to experience stress. Job performance is best when the environment neither under-stimulates

nor over-stimulates the employee. Designing a workplace that provides opportunities for the broadest potential workforce improves work efficiency, employee productivity, workplace safety and the quality of work. The law and workplace regulations state that employers must be provided with 'suitable and sufficient' welfare facilities for the well-being at work. Welfare facilities cover such areas as toilets, washing, somewhere clean to eat and drink during breaks and changing facilities.

Employees are regarded as one of the key factors on which the success of an institute lies. And when it comes to India, Indian employees are regarded as most efficient and brainy. To lure and sustain the workforce, many institutes offer a wide range of benefits so that they stick to the workplace. Employee benefits include various types of non-wage compensation provided to employees in addition to their normal wages or salaries. Examples of these benefits include: housing, insurance, daycare, tuition reimbursement, sick leave, vacation, social security, profit sharing, funding of education, and other specialized benefits. The purpose of employee benefits is to increase the economic security of staff members, and in doing so, improve worker retention across the organization.

Work is important for health. This includes our physical and mental health. Equally, health is important for work, for productive and successful businesses, thriving local communities and the sustainable economic development of the nation. In short, healthy people make healthy profits. However, the work activities we perform, the environmental conditions and substances we are exposed to, can cause long-term harm to our health. These risks to health can be managed and prevented, if every organization takes some simple steps to identify sources of harm and implement measures to manage them. There is a duty on employers to make sure that the workplace is safe and suitable for the tasks being carried out there, and that it does not present risks to employees and others. Healthier workforces are more productive, and being recognized as an employer that takes the health and wellbeing of employees seriously reflects positively on the reputation and culture of any organization.

Materials And Methods

1. Locale of the study:

The locale of the study was Kashmir division. The data was collected from four regions of the valley (southern, eastern, northern and central) covering district Anantnag, Ganderbal, Baramullah and Srinagar. The departments that were selected were health, education, banking and judiciary.

2. Sample size

A total of 400 working women were selected as sample, out of which 100 were selected from each district in order to arrive at dependable conclusion.

3. Sampling Technique

Purposive Sampling Technique was used to select various Departments/Institutions from where sample was obtained. Sample group was selected by Random Sampling Method.

4. Tool used

A self structured questionnaire was developed to assess the working conditions of women at workplace. The questionnaire included questions regarding questions regarding nature of work, facilities available, benefits provided and occupational health safety for women at workplace.

5. Data Analysis

The data obtained through questionnaire was consolidated, analyzed and interpreted through SPSS-20 as per the requirement using specific statistical tools.

Results & Discussion

The results of the present research, derived through the use of prescribed methodology and standard tools, have been presented in various tables. On the basis of arbitrary class intervals, the age of working women was highlighted (Table 1) and the data revealed that out of the total sample, majority (45%) were in the age group of 35-40 years which was quite close to the Jammu and Kashmir Census Survey of 2001 which stated that the average age of working women is 33.6 years. Since the most significant contribution for promoting a successful career is the educational background of women, therefore the educational level of working women was ascertained (Table 2). For majority of the working women, the highest level of education was graduation. Similar results were found by S. Rashid (2001), who found that majority i.e (48.3%) of working women are graduates. In case of working women, financial soundness is supposed to stimulate the proper growth and development of the family and especially their children so it was intended to enquire into the financial strength of working women (Table 3). For this purpose the monthly salary of the respondents was recorded with the help of Kuppuswamy's Manual of Socioeconomic Status, (2012). It was observed that in all the selected districts, the monthly salary of working women was between Rs.16020 and Rs.32049.

The information regarding the nature of work was gathered (Table 4). It was quite clear that majority (64%) of working women were fast in finishing their official work at their workplace, so did not carry any backlog work to their home. This helped them in performing their domestic roles

efficiently. Most of the women were not paid any conveyance as they had their workplace near their home and thus the physical strain which was caused by travelling was reduced. Although no extra money was paid for working few hours overtime but it did not cause any stress on working women as they did not consider few hours of extra work as overtime. The data regarding facilities for working women at workplace indicated that majority of the women had separate washrooms for females, provision of clean drinking water and proper heating or cooling facilities at workplace (Table 5). However, facilities like technically modern equipments, trainings or vocational programmes and child care centers at workplace were not yet available.

Keeping in mind the employment benefits in India, the benefits provided by various organizations

in Kashmir province was considered (Table 6). It was quite clear that working women were provided with all the necessary employment benefits. While taking a look at occupational health safety (Table 7), it was evident that working women had no idea of any committee like GSCASH at their workplace but they had an employees union in their organization. Also only a meager amount of the selected women had reported a case against sexual harassment. It could be because women tend to rely more on social barriers and because of their shy nature maximum cases of sexual harassment usually go unnoticed. However, most of the women revealed that they were not having any health problem associated with their work.

Table 1: Age of working women

Age Group(yrs)	District				Total	
	Srinagar	Anantnag	Ganderbal	Baramullah	N	%age
25-30	14	6	7	10	37	9.25
30-35	48	27	35	37	147	36.75
35-40	35	52	48	45	180	45
40-45	3	15	10	8	36	9
Total	100	100	100	100	400	100

Table 2: Educational level of working women

Educational level	District				Total	
	Srinagar	Anantnag	Ganderbal	Baramullah	N	%age
Upto Matric	0	3	2	1	6	1.5
Higher secondary	12	17	16	14	59	14.75
Graduate	45	46	46	47	185	46
Post-Graduate/Professional	43	34	36	38	151	37.75
Total	100	100	100	100	400	100

Table 3: Monthly income of working women

Monthly Income (in Rupees)	District				Total	
	Srinagar	Anantnag	Ganderbal	Baramullah	N	%age
≥32050	40	31	17	32	120	30.0
16020-32049	20	48	53	43	164	41.0
12020-16019	18	10	10	13	51	12.75
8010-12019	11	5	-	4	20	5.0
4810-8009	8	-	11	5	24	6.0
1601-4809	3	5	9	1	18	4.5
≤1600	-	1	-	2	3	0.75
Total	100	100	100	100	400	100

Source: Kuppuswamy B. (2012) *Manual of Socioeconomic Status*, Manasayan, Delhi.

Table 4: Working women's nature of work

Nature of work	District				Total (N=400)	
	Srinagar (N=100)	Anantnag (N=100)	Ganderbal (N=100)	Baramullah (N=100)	N	%age
Finished work on time	75	51	60	70	256	64
Carried pending work home	23	50	43	35	151	37.75
Paid extra for overtime	20	17	18	19	74	18.05
Work place far from home	55	35	40	49	179	44.75
Conveyance provided when working overtime	34	20	24	29	107	26.75
Stressed by official work	56	38	44	45	183	45.75

Table 5: Working women's facilities at work

Facilities at Work	District				Total (N=400)	
	Srinagar (N=100)	Anantnag (N=100)	Ganderbal (N=100)	Baramullah (N=100)	N	%age
Separate washrooms for females	73	51	62	58	244	61.0
Clean drinking water	69	60	65	61	255	63.8
Provision of heating/cooling	82	40	54	62	238	59.5
Use of technically modern gadgets	65	27	39	45	176	44.0
Capacity building programmes for women	51	39	43	46	179	44.8
Child care facilities/Crèches	36	26	28	31	121	30.3

Table 6: Working women's employment benefits

Benefits provided	District				Total (N=400)	
	Srinagar (N=100)	Anantnag (N=100)	Ganderbal (N=100)	Baramullah (N=100)	N	%age
Benefits as per service	56	51	50	50	207	51.7
Nature of work changed overtime	59	45	51	50	205	51.2
Insurance/Medical benefits	54	58	53	52	217	54.3
Housing/ Travel allowance	65	46	55	54	220	55.0
Maternity leave	83	86	82	82	333	83.3
Contribute to provident fund (G.P/ C.P)	62	80	67	66	275	68.8
Provision for gratuity	66	64	63	62	255	63.8

Table 7: Working women's occupational health safety

Occupational health safety	District				Total (N=400)	
	Srinagar (N=100)	Anantnag (N=100)	Ganderbal (N=100)	Baramullah (N=100)	N	%age
Gender Sensitization Committee against sexual harassment (GSCASH) at workplace	24	21	24	23	92	23.0
Employees Union at workplace	57	59	56	56	228	57.0
Reported case of sexual harassment	15	0	6	5	26	6.5
Mental & Emotional Harassment faced	26	3	14	13	56	14.0
Health problems associated with work	36	24	32	31	123	30.8
Pain in neck and shoulder related to work	47	41	46	46	180	45.0
Frequent headaches due to work load	60	39	48	47	194	48.5
Problem in eyesight due to work pattern	34	26	29	28	117	29.3

Conclusion

The present study was conducted on working women (sample 400) in four districts of Kashmir division. The study was completed by administering a self devised questionnaire on working conditions of women. The data collected was subjected to statistical treatment for enabling the investigator to arrive at certain conclusions. The study revealed that most of the working women who were selected for sampling were in the age group of 35-40 years and most of them were graduates. In Kashmir division, women were seen in every field of employment and were drawing enough salary to support their family. Most of the selected sample of women had their monthly salary between Rs. 16020 and Rs. 32049. The information regarding the nature of work showed that most of the working women finished their official work at their workplace and did not carry any pending work to their home. Most of the women were not paid any conveyance and were not paid for overtime but this did not cause any stress on working women. The facilities for working women at workplace were favorable for them as they had separate washrooms, provision of clean drinking water and proper heating or cooling facilities at workplace. However, facilities like technically modern equipments, trainings or vocational programmes and child care centers at workplace were not yet fully available. Working women were provided with all the necessary employment benefits but they had no idea of GSCASH at their workplace. However, most of the women revealed that they were

not having any health problem associated with their working pattern.

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