

LIFESTYLE OF WOMEN WORKERS IN STEEL UTENSIL INDUSTRIES AT NORTH CHENNAI

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INTRODUCTION

Women, of course, have always worked. Today, in addition to the traditional unpaid labour required for maintaining a household, which often involves growing food and securing water and fuel supplies, women increasingly take on paid work outside the home to augment personal and family income. The world over, these dual responsibilities respectively termed 'reproductive' and 'productive' by social scientists have always play vital role in human economic activity. Equally importance, the newly found economic independence of millions of woman has inevitably caused dramatic transformation of women's self image, their growing sense of independence as well as mounting responsibilities and expectations at home and in their communities. It is an open secret that women take up employment mainly due to economic necessity and to supplement their family income. However there are other factors like; to pass time, to meet professional obligations, to attain economic independence and to develop personality, desire to utilize the education, social role and personality and to get rid of the monotony of home .These are some of the factors identified by many authors. Hoffman (1974) views that the working mother provides a different role model than does the nonworking mother. Modern women aspire to utilize their education and mental abilities in a very useful way. It is natural that the increases in dual career families are inevitable (Porter and Angle, 1980).

WOMEN WORKERS

The concept of employment of women has assumed a dominant role in the economic structure of the world. Employment opportunities for women are expanding widely with the advent of industrialization in developed and developing countries alike. Traditionally women's occupational status has always been closely associated with the home and family. In recent times educational, political, economic and social changes have necessitated a change in women's status and their role, which was hitherto that of a house wife. Employment of all types contributed in several ways to women's status in society and this was reflected in many fields where custom and tradition had prescribed a subordinate role for women (Devi and Lalitha, 1982). A working woman enhances her status and gets an independent income. Many young women work before marriage and continue to hold the job thereafter. It has also been pointed out that they become an asset to middle class family. The employment status has impact on the life of women even if they work as unorganized labour.

The Steel Utensil industry is one of the important unorganized cottage industries. In the Chennai district, Steel Utensil industries are prevalent, especially in North Chennai areas. As this industry requires very little technical know-how, women are employed in considerable numbers. Many studies on the working and living conditions of organized labour is available in India. Labour laws in India cover organized industries. Unorganized labour has mostly been left out of their purview.

WOMEN WORKERS IN UNORGANIZED SECTOR

In India out of total population 48.6 percent is shared by female, in which 25.67 percent female are working (Census, 2011). A vast majority of women workers are employed in the unorganized sector.

Unorganized workers consist of those working in the unorganized enterprises or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits and the workers in the formal sector without any employment / social security benefits provided by the employers (NCEUS, 2004). Owing to this, several major problems affect the lives of these workers. They are outside the reach of protective labour laws and trade union organizations. Women workers have to recourse for any remedies owing to the invisible and unorganized nature of their work. Ravindran Nair (1998) in his article 'women workers demand a better deal' says that unorganized sector employs the vast majority of rural women. In his view this sector, while extracting the maximum contribution from them, has given them very little in return.

WOMEN WORKERS IN STEEL UTENSIL MAKING INDUSTRIES

In today's changing conditions it has become essential for women to work along with men. By being employed, the women are able to supplement their income and lead more comfortable lives. Economic compulsion is the common reason to join unorganized sector for all of them (Dave 2012). With this object in view many of the women of Chennai district are now offering themselves to work in Steel Utensil industries.

OBJECTIVES

- To know the Demographic details of the Women workers in Steel Utensil industries
- To analyze the Economic conditions of Women workers in Steel Utensil industries
- To reveal the Working conditions of Women workers in Steel Utensil industries

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted 'Descriptive design' for this study. The researcher personally visited and collected the data from the respondents. Multi-stage sampling method is used for sampling. The researcher collected the necessary data from the respondents with the help of an Interview schedule within the purview of the objectives of the present study. The total number of respondents covered by this study was 100. The data are analyzed and interpreted with a view to study this life style.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is observed that 52.3 percent of the respondents are between the age group of 18-24 years. It can be inferred that 43 percent of the respondents have completed their Middle School education only. Most of the respondents (61.6 Percent) are from Backward communities. Majority of the respondents (74.1 Percent) are Hindus. High number of respondents (68.2 Percent) are married. It can be inferred that 72.6 percent of the respondents are in nuclear family system. It is found that 54.3 percent of the respondent's family monthly income is in between rupees 3001-6000. It is seen that 38.4 percent of the respondents travel by the employer's vehicle from home to their office. The data indicates that 47.9 percent of the respondents leave from home for going job in between 7.30 AM to 8.30 AM and 70.8 percent of them are returning from the job after 5.30 PM.

Majority of the respondents (69.4 Percent) have got Rs 5000 to 8000 as advance amount from employers of Steel Utensil industries. It is clear that majority of the respondents are satisfied with the working condition (54.4 Percent), working environment with ventilation (67.4 Percent), wages (52.1 Percent) and Bonus (55.5 Percent) they get. More than half of the respondents (58.9 Percent) are satisfied with

welfare amenities (drinking water and toilet facilities). A vast majority of the respondents (75.4 Percent) said that leave facilities are available in their units. It is known from the data that for 53.5 percent of the respondents said that there is no first aid facility in their industries. Majority of the respondents (74.1 Percent) said that the employers always help to solve employee' personal problems. The data reveals that 62.4 percent of the respondents express that the employers are considering their grievances. Most of the respondents have own tiled houses (76.1 Percent); their house is not in good condition (53.5 Percent) and is not convenient (54.2 Percent) also.

Majority of the respondents (66.8 Percent) said that they have sufficient utensils for cooking, adequate dresses (67.2 Percent), and do not have adequate jewels (64.5 Percent). It is understood that 72.5 percent of the respondents use firewood as a fuel for cooking, and they get drinking water from roadside tap (78.9 Percent). Most of the respondents (81.3 Percent) purchase the household provisions daily, and they are not accustomed to hotel food (86.9 Percent). Most of the respondents (92.1 Percent) sleep on the floor. Majority of the respondents (84.8 Percent) are not having toilet facilities at their house. Most of the respondents (80.8 Percent) are using tooth powder for brushing tooth and they are not having separate soap individually (89.9 Percent) for bathing. Majority of the respondents (72.3 Percent) get treatment through Government hospital for their ill health. Majority of the respondents' are having Television (97.3 Percent), Bi-cycle (58.4 Percent), Cattle (56.7 Percent) and agriculture land (65.9 Percent). More than half of the respondents (56.5 Percent) get time to meet relatives.

It is understood from the study that 67.5 percent of the respondents object their husband who has the bad habit of smoking and drinking. It is seen that 69 percent of the respondents view that there is no inter-caste marriage among employees in Steel Utensil industries. Majority

of the respondents (55.1 Percent) said that there is recognition for women workers of Steel Utensil industries by village people. It was Lodhal and Kejner (1964) who pointed out that Job Involvement is the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work or importance of work in his total self-image. Patchen (1970) considered Job Involvement as a convenient label summarizing several characteristics that make the job more importance and potentially more satisfying to the individual. The person with Job Involvement is supposed to be highly motivated and feels a sense of pride in his work. In this research also majority (70.6 percent) of the respondents feel pleasure for working in Steel Utensil industries.

DISCUSSION

Now a day it has become compulsory to work even for survival. It is no longer possible to maintain a decent standard of life unless the husband and wife earn in a family. As far as India is concerned the number of women in the unorganized sector is greater than in the organized one. This is seen more in rural areas than in the urban areas. As most of the women belong to the unorganized sector education is not an important criterion for jobs. So the unorganized sector contributes a lot to women to supplement their family income. One of the chief industries of this unorganized sector is Steel Utensil industry in which women are employed more. This is more common with Chennai district. There are plenty of potentials for using women for employment in Steel Utensil industries. The nature of job in Steel Utensil industries is specially suited for women. This explains as how 90 percent of the workers are women. This is because the parents of the women workers find that it is better to send their daughters at an early age to work in Steel Utensil industries to support the family income.

An overview of the living conditions of women workers in Steel Utensil industries suggests that their families cannot reach the status of

not even the lower middle class. The economic status of these families is low even with the income earned by women. The marital status of women workers and women employment has contributed for nuclear family systems even though they are living in rural areas. The availability of employment for women and the poor family background have disturbed their educational status. Most of the women workers are dropouts at primary school level. The type of houses they live, the availability of drinking water facility, the usage of open space for toilet and the pattern of purchasing household provisions further expose their economic condition. On the whole their living condition suggests that their way of life is almost similar to “Culture of Poverty”.

The most conducive working condition for the women workers in Steel Utensil industries seems to be the attractive advance amount given to them by their employer. In fact this has become a work culture for Steel Utensil industries in Chennai district. Another similar attractive feature is the transport facility provided by the employers to women workers. Even though their working hours are long they are satisfied with the overall working conditions, salary and bonus. In a rural cottage industry environment, the expectations of women workers are very less and hence they are satisfied with working conditions. The employers make their working condition conducive by extending help to women workers personal problems and redressing their grievances frequently.

SUGGESTIONS

While the women workers give a variety of reasons for working, the reason given by the highest percent of them was less income earned by the husband. Majority of them are self-motivated to work and they are engaged in unorganised sector due to lack of any skill. These women workers are usually the wife of husbands who are either in unskilled work which is less paying or there may be few husbands who may not be employed. Seeing the unfulfilled demands of the family, the women

might be self-motivated to go out and work. As unorganised labours are inducted without training, the women workers might have been forced to join this particular sector only. Voluntary organizations, extension workers and social workers should organize some skill development training programmes for this class of workers.

The empowerment of women is an important necessity of the present day. The following steps can be taken for empowering such women workers:

- Voluntary organizations should make themselves popular among these women. Workers education can include Street plays, meetings in regional language either near the work sites or colonies of these women workers about government schemes.
- Women should be educated. When she is educated, she can manage here dual responsibility of home and work. So Adult education programmes may introduce among these workers through Voluntary organizations.
- Social action can be done for increasing of wages and for implementing minimum wages.
- Research related to the problems of women workers in Steel Utensil industries can be conducted.
- More seminars, conferences and workshops on women should be organized. They should be encouraged to participate in them for expressing their views.
- Counseling can be practiced among women workers. Women should change their attitude about themselves. They should be developed with self-confidence in their approach.

- Social awareness programmes, medical camps and eye camps can be organized by the social workers along with employers of Steel Utensil industries for the benefit of these workers in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

Women workers development should be viewed as an issue in social development but also are seen as an essential component in every dimension of development. The Steel Utensil industry is considered a vital one in many respects. It provides major employment opportunities to women in this district. The present study is a novel attempt to study the life style of women workers in Steel Utensil industries. The findings of the present study will be highly useful to the workers, Trade unions, State and Central Government and employer of the Steel Utensil industries in particular to improve the quality of life of women workers in Steel Utensil industries.

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