

WORKING CONDITION OF WOMEN ARTISANS IN INDIA

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Abstract

Various research and studies have revealed that the condition of artisans is very poor and pathetic. In India large chunk of the workforce is involved in informal sector due to various reasons - there is an ease of entry, family ownership, small scale operations, indigenous resources, not much qualification is required. The artisan industry falls in informal sector, even being informal its production capacity is accountable for almost about 50 % of the whole economy. The concept of Informal sector was first propounded by “Hart”, later ILO dealt with that term and given a wider definition to this. The Indian economy can be divided into two parts (formal & Informal), where informal sector is a major contributor in the development of the economy but at the same time, it is also plagued by various issues such as no standard operating procedure, no wage rules etc. Another notable fact is, especially in artisan industry women participation is always more than men as it provides work from home facility to some extent, no education is required to perform the task. As many as 94% of total women workers are involved in an unorganized sector and face various challenges.

“Empowering Women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation when women are empowered society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation” - Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

This present paper aims to understand the current situation of the women workers and how socio-economic measures are taken for their betterment. We would also like to recommend fewer measures for the inclusive growth of the entire society by understanding their perspectives.

Keywords: Inclusive Growth, Socio-economic, Artisan, Empowerment, Informal sector, Development

Introduction

Rural artisans are basically responsible for taking handicraft industry to the next level especially in the context of Indian Handicraft industry. The contributions made by the rural artisans are nearly about 78 % of total handicraft produced in the country. Indian handicraft industry is especially known for its fine art, the selection of brilliant colours, designs, crafting, which have always been acknowledged and admired by the world.

Here, women have an important role to play as they account for 30-35% of the workforce in the informal economy, 118 million women workers are engaged in the unorganized sector, constituting 97% of the total women workers. Women have additional duties to take care of their off-springs and well being of the entire family they are overly burdened in comparison to men in our society, despite performing all this house chorus activity they struggle to get fair treatment both at workplace or home, they are not equally treated as men. Even though putting so much of effort they don't get enough to eat for themselves and for their dependents, they are not able to even fulfill all the basic necessities like - food, safety, water and shelter.

This paper is going to help understanding development of women artisans through policymakers and planners and also helps us to give an idea about the importance of building women's capacities to improve their socio-economical status, which can directly improve their skills, personality, self-concept, leadership, and income.

Data from the 66th round of the NSSO indicates that female work participation rate has decreased between 2004-05 to 2009-10. The participation share of women in normal status workers has reduced from 28.7% to 22.8%. In rural areas this has declined from 32.7% to 26.1% and in urban areas from 16.6% to 13.8%, according to XII 5 years plan.

Participation in the Labour Force

Indicators	Rural (%)			Urban (%)			Total Persons
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Labour Force Participation Rate	55.6	26.5	41.4	55.9	14.6	36.2	40.0
Work Participation Rate	54.7	26.1	40.8	54.3	13.8	35.0	39.2
Proportion	0.9	0.4	0.7	1.6	0.8	1.2	0.8

Unemployed							
Unemployment Rate	1.6	1.6	1.6	2.8	5.7	3.4	2.0

Source: NSSO 2009-10 (Usual Status (ps+ss))

Objective of the study

This paper establishes the fact that a small action can improve the working condition of woman artisans towards better and sustainable life by giving them better options. The small steps towards improvement of their workability might increase their personality, boost their confidence, improve their life skills, give them self respect etc. This paper helps us to understand that if the women are properly guided and motivated and given all sorts of support, then they can be a story changer and successful breadwinners, provided they have been given a right exposure.

Research Methodology

To develop a proper understanding of their workability a field survey was conducted over three months of time in the cities where maximum women are involved in artisan work especially in the context of Uttar Pradesh. For collecting such information women workers are contacted at their working sites, be it their workplace or home. For getting the better understanding of their home condition, their residential areas have been taken care of by visiting them personally.

Women workers are involved in various activities – household activity, weaving, shoe-making, clothes weaving, carpet weavers, wood crafting, Zari Workers, Chicken handicraft, Meenakari etc. Through semi structured questionnaire and the feedback provided by them, we are able to understand the following aspect of their profession:

- Their working condition, and social status
- Wages – fixed or variable
- Gender discrimination
- Basic information such as – age, education, family income etc.

A total of 150 women workers were interviewed which includes 40 home based workers, 30 cloth weavers, 20 shoe makers, 60 handicraft workers including (Chicken work, Zari Work, Meenakari workers) etc.

The mode of sample collection was theoretical, interview based and unstructured questionnaire, so it cannot be analyzed using statistical tool, therefore qualitative analysis has been performed to analyze the feedback received from the women artisans and accordingly the conclusion has been drawn.

Table 1. Portfolio of Women Workers in Artisans Industry

Areas / Reasons ↓	Wage / Salary	Gender Discrimination	Working condition	Reason to opt for this job
Shoe Makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bare minimum wage ➤ Commission based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Nothing was witnessed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Self dependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of other option available
Wooden Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not fixed salary ➤ Piece based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Men are preferred more than women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Self dependent ➤ Contractual basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Financial deficit ➤ No educational background required
Zari / Meenakari / Chicken work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negotiable ➤ Mostly work based ➤ Based on no. of pieces produced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Majority of women are involved comparatively to men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Based on demand ➤ Self employed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Financial freedom ➤ No land for farming ➤ Self dependent
Home based workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Totally based on No. of pieces produced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women participation is significantly more than men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No Actual information is available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Work from home option is available

Analysis and Discussion

The interview conducted for various women workers for different profiles are summarized and analyzed below:

Shoe Makers: The shoe-makers are the one who is facing economic-downturn, by means of this profession they are supporting their families by earning bare subsistence for their dependents. Here their payment is based on the no. of pieces produced and also depends on the market demand and supply. It also gives women financial independence and they feel a special sense of pride among others.

Wooden Craft: Crafting involves precision. The women workers who all are involved in this profile are not able to devote much of their time. As crafting involves patience and time, women have no. of responsibilities, so the preference is given to men over women, so here gender discrimination takes place. Since it does not demand an educational background so anyone can easily enter and exit. The payment to this job is piece basis which they usually call commission it varies from product to product.

Zari / Meenakari / Chicken Worker: The majority of women workers are involved as it does not require any rules or regulations or compel them to follow any command. They receive payment on the piece basis. Usually they work under some big manufacturer where they are given the choice of freedom to perform their work, and on the top of that it's a home-based work, so maximum no. of women participation have been witnessed, as getting involved in this kind of job doesn't hamper their family setup.

Home-Based Worker: it gives an opportunity to women workers to perform all sorts of job in their own dwellings. Women turn out to be home-based workers due to no. of reasons – they lack necessary qualifications, lack of formal training, no support from their families, economic compulsion etc. It also gives an opportunity to combine work with house chorus and flexibility to perform their task.

Review of Literature

Shrivsatava,(1978), according to her report it reveals the various aspect of life style changes when it comes it employment. If a woman is working, she is more liberal than any woman who is confined to her house. She has broad view in terms of understanding the things and wider social interaction. The couple where both man and woman are involved in employment they share equal domestic responsibilities and develop greater cooperation. Thus employment leads to various behavioural and social changes.

Gulati,(1983), in her research, she talks about the marriages, which takes place among the people who belongs to unorganized sector. Since the parents are already working in informal sector so they get their daughter married to a boy who is also from the same segment which invites many unsaid challenges in a girl's life, and stops her from various opportunities and stops their girls to do any better.

Preet Rutsagi,(1997), she has talked about women employment in informal sector and how the employment rate of women has risen due to economic pressure in unorganized sector. She has focused in the working condition of women and their exploitation in her article. Due to economic pressure women are taking up jobs in informal sector but due to lack on stringent law and polices they are underpaid and work under miserable condition, along with household chorus activity. The participation of women in employment is also helping to break various cultural and social taboos.

Nigar Fatima Abidi,(1996), her study is mainly based on Muslim Women worker, specifically in textile industry. She reveals that women are working almost 7-8 hrs. daily in weaving, along with other household chorus which includes – Taking care of kids, Gardening, Cleaning, cooking etc. they have no say in any decision in their family, they are just mere assistance to their spouse, where their contribution is huge in this particular industry. The matter of fact is that they are bread winner of their family, because their family survival depends on their subsistence.

Jasani,(1990), in her study she talks about the male dominance, she says even there is women empowerment and various measures are being taken to boost the employment rate of women, but still male dominance prevail in this industry. Labour market favors men over women. She talks

about the midwives; in the healthcare sector, there is also no equal pay for equal work done even for the urgent work. She also says that the bargaining power of women is also weak due to socio economic background.

According to Singh and Viltanan,(1985), one of the papers presented by them in a conference in Delhi, they have focused on women who are taking care of home based work. They say the home based work performed by the women always stays invisible; their work never comes in any of the statistics. Besides women have accepted the fact that the entire household stuff is only their whole sole responsibility not the men's and as a result home based work is just a peripheral. This paper also talks about the challenges of informal work setting when it comes to women; it says it has no. of flaws: erratic work schedule, unorganized work settings, low wages, lack of legality etc.

Jaya Kritika Ojha and Binod Mishra (2013), they have discussed in detail about women empowerment, successful capacity building and inclusions of women in embroidery industry with special reference to Rajasthan, THAR. Despite the odd and challenging life style, women of THAR have still successfully managed to accelerate their participation in artisan industry. They can talk against discrimination, their know about their right, they have say in decisions making process in the family etc. this paper also talks about the one of the non-governmental organization called "URMUL Seemant" this organization provide training, they work on quality improvement in terms of design, colours, new trends etc, they have create a platform of socio economic development of rural women and women who especially are involved in handicrafts.

Crafting the way Forward - Women in Artisan Industry

According to Frank Wilson the importance of hand has been mentioned in one of his book which states "The Hand – how its use shape the brain, language, and human culture". Here we are discussing about such industry which is mostly into hand operated known as handicraft. The life in handicraft begins with the birth of an individual in a family whose descendents are already working there from decades. This industry has potential to increase the employment rate and enhance the economic opportunity not just for men but for women too.

This sector sometimes also understood as a diverse one as at one point you will find skilled workforce and at other unskilled or practitioner. Some time there are people who are self employed and running their business successfully and some are daily wages worker. This industry has ample opportunity but the only problem lies with its regulation and formality. It has given opportunity to women workers who can earn their livelihood and bread for their family.

But the end result has shown some different picture, The Economic survey 2017-18 says that the employment of women worker has reduced from 36% to 24%. There are various reasons underneath, poor environment, sexual abuse, unsatisfactory condition of work, lack of awareness, discrimination between men and women, low literacy rate, lack of family support, women are doubly burdened as there is no childcare support etc. because of such things various agencies have come into picture to protect the laws of women worker, protect their right and provide them all sort of benefits and security paving the way for their betterment.

AIACA (The All India Artisans And Craft workers Welfare Association), which is mainly into craft sector and deals with issues pertaining to growth and benefits of people who are associated with this industry. Currently they have dealt with environmental issues, health and safety issues and paved the way for inclusive development of this sector. They assist in –

- Sales of the handicraft
- Production
- Providing Training
- Help Product design
- Strengthening back end production
- Etc.

They are helping women artisans on various fronts, such as creating wage parity, enabling work condition, helping them to start their own business etc. this way they are helping them to promote, though these issues requires pro active research, supportive policy, need to redesign the mechanics of work, and creating a sustainable model for inclusive growth.

Integrating Family and Work – Work Life Balance

Here to understand better the concept of working women, it is important to understand first and foremost the way the responsibilities have been encountered by both men and women, the problem which women encounters is way different than men, even in case of social taboos. Society generally perceives that women are economically or financially dependent on men and they should be confined to their house taking care of their kids and families and making no economic contribution at all and as a result they lag behind men. Women faces specific problem and issues so to deal with such situation even the process should be specific and unique.

In some cases if a women is taking an opportunity of employment they have to keep their relatives at home to take care of their children or some domestic help to do the same by taking care of their home and family, so that they can give 100% to their work effectively.

But now the trends are shifting gears for working women on various fronts, new techniques, experiments, initiatives are taking place an gradually people's perception towards working women is also changing. Women are more empowered than they were ever before. The 20th century was a period of tremendous change which diminished the trend of gender discrimination by brining into the picture of sex ratio by 1991 census, which was falling at higher speed and hence set the alarming situation for all.

Today women are independent and more empowered; they take the opportunity and are establishing herself as an equal by taking care of the entire responsibilities well. They get motivation; support and guidance from the family as well as the society since they have realized their capacity and power. Various active organization – Government and non government have taken initiatives to guide and empower those women who are deprived and have less access to the opportunities, by giving them platform and providing them equal opportunity as their counterpart gets.

Conclusion

Women Artisans mostly work in traditional and unorganized sector in which they are vulnerable to exploitation and low wages, sexual harassment, extreme working condition, erratic work schedule, which is very much difficult to manage their work life. Most of the times due to such

conditions they have to choose home over work and become financially dependent on their counterpart. But the time is taking a major shift and turning the table for working women.

On the basis of above study it can be clearly seen that handicraft and artisans industry have brought significant change in the lives of women artisans, they get fully support and timely payment, they are the successful bread winners of their families and have established themselves as change agents and leading a successful life. The poor women have realized their potential and have become self reliance. It is found that they are easily managing the work and their families.

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