

Economic Contribution Changes the Decision Making of Working Women: A Case of Bhimber District-AJK

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Abstract: The present study aims at understanding the economic contribution and decision making of working women at household level at District Bhimber-AJK. Economic contribution changes the decision making of working women in different activities at household level. Mostly women are contributing in household economy by doing job, business and some other economic activities according to their capacities. For present study ten working women were sampled from Sherjang colony, Bhimber-AJK for elaborate research. The results mentioned below showed that women contributing in their household economy are also playing prominent role in decision making but still there is a need to enhance the overall decision making power of women in our society as an pledge for their better future.

Key words: Economic contribution % Work % Assets % Expenditures % Decision-making % Sherjang colony % Bhimber- AJK

INTRODUCTION

In most societies of the world, particularly in developing countries, household is the world of women; the public and politics are the world of men. These differences are indirectly due to biological difference in man and woman. Females give birth to children and are equipped to feed the newly born children. Gender roles are not uniform throughout the world, but still they have to play their productive role in the society. In underdeveloped world, the strength requiring activities, presumably a male trait, are not strictly apportioned to males. In fact, activities such as burden bearing and water carrying are done more by female than by males[1].

Males are physically strong and leave their offspring for extended periods and, therefore, are logically more likely to become engaged in activities such as hunting and fighting and other socio-economic activities [2]. In most underdeveloped countries of the world the women as a girl-child has a lower status and enjoys fewer rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood than the boy child. Women at a very young age experiences inequality and find it very difficult to overcome this inequality [3].

All over the world females are participating in the economic growth. They are providing their services in different sectors of the economies and economically supporting their families. In Pakistan females are also playing their role in the development of economy and to fulfill the needs of their families but this rate of participation is comparatively low because of the religious and cultural restrictions. According to the world development indicators, Pakistani females are participating 23% in the labor force of Pakistan in FY 2012-13 (The World Bank). Prominently they are providing services in agriculture, education, health, in professional and business. Labor force participation rate is the proportion of the population, ages 15 and older that is economically active and contributing in household expenditures.

The employment status of females in Pakistan is divided into following categories: Employers, employees, own account workers and contributing family workers. According to the recent publication of the, the percentage of the contributing family workers is highest among the all four categories [4].Female employment status in Pakistan is shown by the following figure 1.

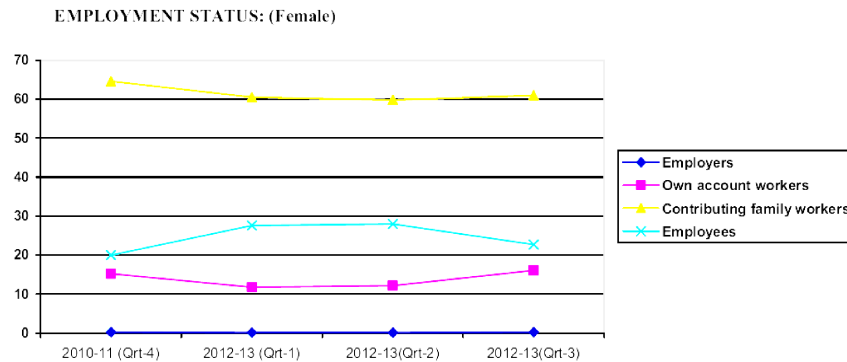


Fig. 1: Labor Force Survey 3rd Quarterly Report 2012-13 [4].

Traditional models of the family treat a married couple with children as a single decision-making agent with unitary preferences as household. Non-unitary models have allowed economists to investigate distribution within the household, including possible gender inequality and to conceptually track individual men and women along a life-cycle path that includes transitions between family types. From the earning of the job holder members of the family, the expenditures are done to the fulfillment of needs of a household. These expenditures are on food, on clothing, on education, on entertainment or to provide the luxuries of life.

Women in Pakistan are facing disadvantages from the time they are born. The birth of a girl is frequently met with disappointment, even anger and the blame is usually placed on the mother. As a rule, the girl child receives less food, less access to education and less health care than a male child. As a result girls are more likely to die of childhood diseases [5][6].

Women empowerment is understood as to give power to women for having not only the access to the resources and opportunities but also the ability to utilize these resources and opportunities for their personal and social change [7].

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right of every person to take part in the government of his or her country. Equal access of men and women to power, decision-making and leadership at all levels is a necessary precondition for the proper functioning of democracy. The global women's rights agenda inscribed in international standards and conventions such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the ICCPR and the ICESCR calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, for women's human rights and empowerment and for women's participation and rights across civil and political,

economic, social and cultural domains. Access to justice and involvement in judicial decision-making are key indicators of citizenship and equality.

Hierarchies based on gender and generations determine the course of household decision making in many societies. Women in Gujarat, a state located in western India, indicates a remarkable feeling of constraint regarding cash expenditure. About 50 percent of the women do not feel free to take a sick child to doctor without the approval of their husband or parent-in-law and about 70 percent do not make decisions regarding the purchase of their own or their children's clothing. Similar findings have been obtained for many other parts of the world.

It has often been argued that child health and investments in children are determined by intra-household resource allocation decisions, which are related to gender inequalities in the household. Families in which women play an important role in decision making, the proportion of family resources devoted to children is greater than in families in which women play a less decisive role [8][9]. This notion of "maternal altruism" assumes that power in the hands of women will lead to better child outcomes[10].Some articles of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) are following;

Article 3: "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the present Covenant" (ICESCR).

Article 6: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right". (UNHCR)

Objectives of the Study:

- C To explore the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.
- C To analyze the economic contribution and decision making of working women at household level at Bhimber District-AJK.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

For the present study ten working women were selected through snow-ball sampling technique because sampling frame was not available. Sample was selected from Sherjang colony, District Bhimber, Azad Jammu and Kashmir on the basis of the following characteristics like, Married working women; age between 25 to 59 years; residing at Sherjang colony of District Bhimber; and more importantly they were participating in household decision making. An interview guide was administered by the researchers which contained the following parts like a) socio-economic characteristics of the respondents; b) nature of work; c) assets entitlement; d) household expenditures; and e) household activities. Pre-testing was done from three selected respondents to check the workability and reliability of the measurement instrument to collect quality data from the respondents. Further, the thematic analysis was done and researchers drawn results and conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present research was to find out the economic contribution and decision making of women at household level in Bhimber District- AJK. Researchers were actually intended to highlight women's economic contribution that changes their decision making in household matters.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents: The age of the respondents was ranging from 28 to 37 years. All were married and belonged to nuclear and joint family structure. Their educational qualification was intermediate to master level while five respondents did B.Ed. and one had the diploma in Home Economics and average family size was 5.5 per family. All the respondents were enjoying with their family members.

Nature of Work: It was found that five respondents were teaching in private and government school while other respondents had their own beauty parlor and one had

tuition and stitching center at home. Respondents who were teachers, their job timings were ranged between 7:00am to 2:30pm. While the timing of other one, who had tuition and stitching center at homework from 9:00am to 3:00pm and then again from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. The beautician was not strictly time bounded but her parlor timing was 10:00am to 6:00pm. The continuous struggle of different movements at different times, which provided women with ample opportunities to ensure their participation in economic, political and other activities of the life, makes them stronger at household level. Such breakthrough in their lives enlightened the women to make independent decisions on important occasions and also to mitigate the magnitude of violence and discrimination against them [11].

Monthly Income: It has acquired that the monthly income of the respondents was ranging from 15,000 Rs. to 60,000 Rs. and per month family income was between 28,000 Rs. to 2, 00,000 Rs. Along with men, now women are participating in their household expenditures and also becoming the major part of the process of economic growth.

“When women are not (fully) involved in the workforce, only one part of the able workforce is being utilized and, thus, economic resources are wasted. Gender equality allows for an increase in women in the working sector, thereby leading to an expansion of the labor force and an increase in economic productivity”[12].

Assets Entitlement: It was founded that those women, who had only some gold jewelry, land as assets, had maximum 80 grams gold and maximum two plots as property gifted by their parents or husbands were more contributing in household decision making activities in their routine lives [13]. Women's fewer opportunities to acquire land, property, credit, education, skill and paid job hinder actually their status. Almost two billion people are considered poor in this world and two third of these poor are women [14]. Despite their hard work and contributions to world economy, women have only one percent of the total world assets in their names[15][16].

Other Business Activity: Five respondents used to teach at school level and after school timing they did household chores, which provide them no economic benefits at all. While the other respondent, a beautician, said that she sale the beauty products in her beauty parlor and get some economic benefits and the one who had tuition and stitching center enclosed that she also sale the dresses

which students stitch in stitching classes. It gave her some economic benefit also. So the women involved in business had further economic activities.

The working women are prominently involved in the household economic contribution, participating in their family budget to fulfill the family needs and to support their husbands but the fulfillment of their domestic duties does not provide them any economic benefit not even there is any kind of special appreciation for them and have to face the double burden [17].

Household Expenditure: The working women generally utilize their income in household expenditures and also on their-self. One of the respondents spent all of her income on her household expenditures and sacrifices her own desires just for the comfort of her family members. The women, though living in a joint family system but was satisfied as their in-laws does not interfere much in their matters and they were also independent in the decision making about their household expenditures but comparatively less than those living in nuclear families. Basically women empowerment is the capacity of women to obtain information and make decision about her private concern and those of her intimates [18].

The World Bank also explain empowerment as the process of increasing capacity of individual or groups to make choices and to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes[19], which is directly linked with their economic contribution after which they also become able to spend freely. Women's authority to make decisions and utilization of their material and intellectual resources for the betterment of their own and their intimates lives. Women's empowerment, women's autonomy, women's status and gender equality are related terms. Women's status means their position within home and within society, relative to men.

Children Matters: Generally the working women of that colony feel quite free and independent in making decisions about the matters of their children's health, education and entertainment especially those whose husbands were abroad.

Shopping of Household Goods: Working women feel free during shopping activities in case of having budget. They used to go for shopping in range of every week to once in a month, they go for shopping but take the prices and quality consciously and also do the shopping for their homes. Women have gained importance in decision

making because of their major role in economic contribution but the women living in nuclear families and those whom husbands were abroad were more independent as compared to living in joint families.

Women's empowerment is a process of giving ability to the neglected women to evolve the future strategy in their lives [20]. This ability ensures access to material and social resources; to agency where decision-making is processed; and achievements that are the well outcomes. There are four processes leading to women's empowerment: changes in women's mobility and social interaction, changes in women's labor patterns, changes in women's access to and control over resources; and changes in women's control over decision-making [21-24].

CONCLUSION

working women are prominently involved in the household economic contribution, participating in their family budget to fulfill the family needs and to support their husbands but the fulfillment of their domestic duties does not provide them any economic benefit not even there is any kind of special appreciation for them and have to face the double burden but at the same time working women have gained importance in decision making because of their major role in economic contribution and the women living in nuclear families and the homes where males are absent are more independent than those living in joint families and along with male members. The economic contribution of women has raised their status in the society. Their participation in the household expenditures has increased their participation in the decision making in household matters. Hence as the major findings of the study showed that women contributing in the household economy are also playing prominent role in decision making but still there is a need to enhance the overall decision making power of women in our society as a pledge for their better future.

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