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Impact of Gender Prejudice on the Employment Status of Women in the Urban Unorganised Sector

By N. Prasanna and S. Jayanthi*

Women's participation in the process of economic development of a country is very significant. In recent times, participation of women in the workforce has increased around the world. Generally women workforces are being called upon more and more to find work in the unorganised sector in developing countries like India (Narasimha, 2006). In India, the women workforce in the organised sector and unorganised sector were 49.49 lakhs and 1.220 lakhs in 2001 respectively (Census, 2001). The employment of women has increased everywhere in the world, especially in the unorganised sector.

According to Employment-Unemployment Survey NSS 55th Round (1999-2000), 55.49 million workforce were engaged in the urban unorganised sector, out of which 45.13 million were male and 10.36 million were female. Most of the women workforce in the urban unorganised sector tends to be migrated workers from the rural areas. People who migrate from rural to urban areas in search of employment are ready to take up any sort of job rather than good jobs because they live below the poverty line. These women workers are more vulnerable because equal opportunities are denied through gender discrimination and thereby women

workers are exploited more in the urban unorganised sector (Haq 2001). The Socio-Economic status of women in the urban unorganised sector is very vulnerable due to existence of gender bias.

In recent times, participation of women in the workforce has increased around the world. Still differences between the situations and opportunities of men and women arise from unequal possibilities of access to employment, income and other economic resources. Gender prejudice is a major factor that prevents women from participating effectively in the labour market. This problem appears to be concentrated in the unorganised sector in India.

Objectives

The present paper is based on the following two objectives which are focused on gender bias among the urban unorganised workers: 1.To analyse the factors that determine gender prejudice among workers in the urban unorganised sector in Pudukkottai town and 2.To examine the wage discrimination between men and women workers in the urban unorganised sector.

Methodology

The present paper has chosen to study the impact of gender prejudice

on the employment status of women in the urban unorganised sector in Pudukkottai town, Pudukkottai District. Pudukkottai District was chosen because according to the 2001 Census Pudukkottai District possesses sex ratio in favour of women that is 1000:1015. This paper is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire employing and the purposive sampling is used for selecting the sample. The salesmen and saleswomen of the textile shops with less than 10 workers were chosen for this study. The category of workers in the unorganised sector was chosen to be persons employed in the textile shops as they employ both men and women in the same category. Shops with less than 10 workers were selected as such shops truly represent the unorganised sector. The total sample size was taken as 60, (30 men and 30 women).

Framework of Analysis

The present paper has employed different techniques to analyse different set of variables. Firstly Mean and Standard Deviation techniques have been applied to analyse factors such as age, work hours and wage. 'Z' test was used to test the statistical significance of Mean and Standard Deviation's results. The Chi Square test has been adopted to test the allocation of extra responsibility between salesmen and saleswomen.

The Karl Pearson's Correlation technique and the 't' test have been used to understand the relationship between income and experience of salesmen and saleswomen.

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Table - 1
Age, Work Hours and Wage

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Factors	Wage(in Rupees)		Work Hours		Age(in Years)	
Statistical Tools	Salesmen	Saleswomen	Salesmen	Saleswomen	Salesmen	Saleswomen
Max Value	4,500	2,000	15.00	12.00	48	31
Min Value	1,000	1,000	4.00	10.00	17	18
Mean	2,350	1,360	11.58	11.25	27	22
σ	844.8	307.2	1.92	0.63	8.3	3.62
Z _c Value	6.03*		0.89**		2.72*	
H ₀	Rejected		Accepted		Rejected	

Level of Significance * 1% & ** 5%

Table - 2
Relationship between Wage and Experience

Relationship between wage and Experience		
Factors	Wage and Experience	
Statistical Tools	Salesmen	Saleswomen
Correlation (r)	0.45	0.07
t Value	2.71**	0.07**
H ₀	Rejected	Accepted

Level of Significance ** 5%

Table - 3
Relationship between Allocation of Extra Responsibility

Factor	Extra Responsibility
Statistical Tools	Salesmen and Saleswomen
χ^2	24.716**
H ₀	Rejected

Source: Computed; Level of Significance ** 5%

Findings and Discussions

The problem of gender bias in the urban unorganised sector have been analysed and the findings and discussions have been classified under five heads, viz., Wage, Work hours, Age, Experience and Responsibility.

Wage: Seen from Table-1 that the average monthly wage of saleswomen is less than the average monthly wage of salesmen. Both saleswomen and salesmen work for equal hours and their levels of education is also similar, but still wage gap is present between salesmen and saleswomen in the

urban unorganised sector. There are two types of factors which could have been instrumental for this kind of situation, namely social factor and economic factor. The social discrimination towards women generated the unequal payment of wages between men and women. Secondly in India labour market there is presence of horizontal segregation in the case of women which leads to concentration of women in a small number of jobs or professions than men (for example domestic workers, aithal). Therefore, the supply of labour in a particular sector is more than the demand thereby the wage level of women workers is low.

Work Hours: From Table-1, it can be observed that there is no significant difference between the work hours of salesmen and saleswomen and hence, there is no gender discrimination in terms of work hour. The average working hours of salesmen and saleswomen in the present study in the urban unorganised sector is 11.41 hours which is much greater than the average work hours i.e., eight hours of the organised sector. Working women in the unorganised sector are subject to heavy workload both within the household and in the work place, which causes women to extreme mental and physical stress.

There is yet another problem of the less deviation in the work hours of saleswomen and salesmen. That is, salesmen get flexible hours whereas saleswomen do not get that kind of flexibility. Saleswomen in the urban unorganised sector are denied of flexibility of work hours which is available to their male counterparts. These aspects can be argued as sheer cases of gender bias.

Age: It can be seen from Table-1 that there is significant difference between the range of age of

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salesmen and saleswomen. The saleswomen's range of age (18-31) is shorter than that of salesmen (17-49). It shows that there is gender bias in terms of the range of age of salesmen and saleswomen. In textile shops young women are preferred as saleswomen than old women, because old women may be having greater responsibilities at home and hence not suitable to work as saleswomen.

At the same time, old men are preferred to work as salesmen in textile shops as they may possess much greater experience. Thus the gender preference of employers influences allocation of labour between men and women with respect to their age. Also, after marriage women's continuation of work depends on their husband's decision. The gender bias within the family and also the society in terms of age has made women's participation in the country's labour market less effective.

Experience and Monthly Wage:

The results of the analysis in Table-2 ascertain that there is no significant relationship between monthly wage and experience of saleswomen. So, there is gender bias in terms of determining the salary on the basis of experience of saleswomen. Since, the range of age of saleswomen is shorter, experience does not play a dominant role in determining their wage. Even if some women have more experience, it is not considered as factor for determining their wage because women's work is generally devalued by the socialization process which has been put forth by the devaluation theory. Experience is an important factor determining the salary of salesmen.

Responsibility: The result gathered from the analysis in Table-3 suggest that there is significant difference between extra respon-

sibility of salesmen and saleswomen. There is gender bias in terms of extra responsibility of salesmen and saleswomen. High-level responsibilities such as billing, maintaining accounts and depositing cash in banks are given to the salesmen whereas low-level responsibilities such as taking care of drinking water, sweeping the shop and washing the vessels are given to the saleswomen. As a result of gender role differences, women are assigned lower level responsibilities than men. So, women are forced to do the same kind of work which they tend to perform at the household level in spite of entering the labour market.

Suggestions

The findings and discussions of this paper provides that the problem of gender bias in the urban unorganised sector come out in the form of age discrimination, wage discrimination and allocation of responsibility discrimination. Here some appropriate suggestions have been given to mitigate and eradicate the problem of gender bias in the urban unorganised sector.

1. In Indian society and labour market, women are treated as subordinates to men, thereby women are not able to get equal opportunities in spite of having appropriate educational qualification and experience. The social practices do not allow women to take decision independently. These discriminations need to be eradicated from Indian society through the creation of awareness about gender equality and the importance of women's work in the society by way of introducing and implementing an action plan which targets the grass roots, i.e., the society's attitude building stage, i.e., from the childhood days of the upcoming generation.

2. Women in the unorganised sector work more than eight hours and do not enjoy any leave facilities such as maternity leave, medical leave, etc. This is very difficult for women, as they have to work both in the household and in the work place. Government should take action to regulate the working hours of women workers in the unorganised sector by enacting a law in this regard which may also ensures adequate rest for such women at the right time.

3. In India, the income variation between men and women in the unorganised sector is very high. The Social Security Act for the unorganised Sector Workers (2007) that has been introduced in India does not focus on equal remuneration to men and women workers. So, it is right time that the Social Security Act for the unorganised Sector Workers (2007) is amended to incorporate the element of equal wages for both men and women in the unorganised sector.

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