**Working Conditions Of Women In Kashmir**

Sheema Mushtaq1, Nilofer Khan2, Mushtaq Ahmad Darzi3

**1** PhD Scholar, Institute of Home Science, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, 190006, India

[sheemamushtaq@gmail.com](mailto:sheemamushtaq@gmail.com)

2 Professor, Institute of Home Science, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, 190006, India

[profniloferku@gmail.com](mailto:profniloferku@gmail.com)

3 Professor, The Business School, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, 190006, India

[mushtaqad62@yahoo.co.in](mailto:mushtaqad62@yahoo.co.in)

**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:** Activitywhich 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Employee) in addition to their normal [wages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wage) or [salaries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salary). Examples of these benefits include: housing, insurance, [daycare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daycare), [tuition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuition) reimbursement, [sick leave](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sick_leave), [vacation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annual_leave), [social security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_security), [profit sharing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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.

1. **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.

1. **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.

1. **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.

1. **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 2001which 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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