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## **The Relationship between Women's Job Satisfaction and their Problems at Home in Ahvaz City**

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### **Abstract**

In the social structure of any society, women, compared to men, face more limitations in the workplace and the family structure. They are forced to perform consciously or unconsciously all their duties in the family. The methodology which was used in this survey consisted of interview and questionnaires as the primary method of gathering data. The researcher interviewed working women who worked in governmental departments and offices in Ahvaz City. The results revealed that Islamic personal laws and traditions have made unequal social, political, economic, and cultural conditions for a woman compared to a man in Ahvaz city, while in Quran, no discrimination is put upon the two genders. The rights and responsibilities of a woman are equal to those of a man. Moreover, the results reveal that working women are forced to keep their jobs under any conditions. They accept all problems in the office and at home trying to accomplish all their duties.

**Keywords:** problems, working women, participation rate, job satisfaction.

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## **Introduction**

In the social structure of any society, women, compared to men, face more limitations in the workplace and the family structure. They are forced to perform consciously or unconsciously all their duties in the family.

In a patriarchal structure, a woman is subordinate to the male members, i.e. father, the husband, or the son, who are the head of the family, and she is always oppressed and exploited. Her job is to manage the house and rear the children (Urmila, 1988, p. 211). In traditional societies, women are economically dependent on their husbands who control most of the productive resources, income, tools, knowledge and skills. In most of the cases, women are not given any opportunities to have any access to goods and services, but are made to depend on income earned by their husbands and/or the other males in the family (Dak, 1988, pp. 9-10).

Undoubtedly, the work participation rate of women and men is strongly influenced by socio-economic and biological factors. It is argued that the biological characteristics of women set them apart from men, and awfully influence the nature, extent, duration, and intensity of their work and labor. Pregnancy, lactation, and carrying infants all adversely affect duration and efficiency of their work. It is also argued that women's work participation generally remains low due to the high fertility rate and resultant increase in domestic responsibilities (Dak, 1988, p. 11).

Recently, a number of economic, social, and other changes in the general fabric of the societies have necessitated metamorphoses in women's status, i.e. in their traditional role as a housewife. Socio-economic changes in general have been the main factors that have affected the lives of women. For example, the ever-rising prices are one of the dominant causes that have compelled women to come out of their homes, and to contribute to household's income. Traditionally, men are supposed to be the breadwinners for the family, but nowadays, it has become very difficult to maintain the family with earnings of the male head alone. However, women have been labeled as only the secondary earners and they only supplement the family income. Thus, the economic crisis has changed the attitude of society towards the married women taking up jobs outside their homes.

Furthermore, the higher costs of living in the cities have offered strong motivation for increased female work participation to supplement household income. But one should remember that all these types of problems are interwoven and interlinked with each other. They also differ from individual to individual. It is observed that there are differences between problems of the educated and uneducated women, the married and unmarried. (Urmila, 1988, p. 216)

This article tries to explore the problems of working women in Ahvaz city.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Iran and especially Ahvaz city is a male dominated society and this has influenced the harmony existing between couples. During all these periods, the consensus of the family was based on the equilibrium of traditional roles and status and upon the division of labor by sex. But, now the situation has changed at least more in the big cities than in small cities and rural areas. People continue to be very traditional and orthodox in the later.

The work participation rate is defined as the percentage of total worker (main and marginal) to the total population. This is often considered as a very crude measure since this does not take into account the age structure of the population.

According to 2006 census, in Iran sex ratio among population is 157; that is, a working population sex ratio of 157 working women per 1000 working males. Sex ratio of workers in Khuzestan province is 109, in Ahvaz City, 118 and in its rural and urban areas, 33, 139 respectively (Census of Iran-2006, 2008).

In general, with regard to the above data, there is a wide gap between the work participation rates of males and females. The results show a significant part of women are recorded as unskilled work sources in country.

Meanwhile, the low work participation rate among women is caused due to the following factors:

(a) The structure of family in Iran is not yet conducive to women's freedom. It keeps women indoors, not permitting them to mix freely with society, as the other women do.

(b) Early age at marriage is also very common among the society. This creates problems for the women to acquire education and jobs for themselves. After marriage, women are not allowed to move out without escort; as a result, they cannot continue their education and have to take up outside employment after marriage.

(c) Women are also conditioned with the idea of multiple responsibilities. They want to be efficient workers and try to work hard to fulfill their job-responsibilities given to them. At the same time, they are expected to be good wives, good mothers and better home managers. A woman's sincerity towards all the responsibilities is itself a cause of trouble. She is placed under much tension from the office authority and her own family authority. As a result, she is always unhappy, and gets disappointed and frustrated.

According to SafiaIpbal (1986, as cited in Arvind, 2006, pp. 178-179) the major problems of women in modern-day society are, at a glance, as follows:

- Ignoring the correct implementation of Islamic principles
- Illiteracy
- The joint family system and alien, un-Islamic customs
- Deprivation of women from their rightful place in the domestic order
- Exploitation and abuse of women
- Economic instability

The statistics above indicate that women have not been able to take full advantage in the society.

In this study, the researcher tried to explore the socio-economic status of working women, to study the problems of working women in their homes, to study the problems of working women in the workplaces, and to study the job satisfaction among working women in the government offices.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Human being learns the 'achieved' gender role that is ascribed by their sex status. They acquire the characteristics that in their society are culturally defined to be appropriate for each sex status.

While societies never differ in their opinions of who is male and who is female, they do differ in their beliefs about what is masculine and feminine. Margaret Mead's famous studies, conducted in the 1930, of three societies in New Guinea illustrate this point.

These three societies, then, define gender roles in very different ways. The Arapesh believe that both men and women should be 'feminine'. The Mundugumor see both sexes as 'masculine'. The Tchambuli ascribe 'masculine' characteristics to women and 'feminine' characteristics to men. Femininity and masculinity are defined by the culture, in that each generation teaches the next one what occupations women and men are expected to pursue and what personality traits are considered appropriate for each sex (Dressler & Willis, 1969, pp. 159-163). For example, in a patriarchal family, the male is the head of the family and possesses the inclusive power. The descent also is traced through the male line. The nomenclature also is in the male line; the children inherit father's property and have no rights over mothers (Dhar Sharma & Athapa, 2003, pp. 174-175).

Besides, Goldstein (1988) found that over seventy per cent of the educated women handed over more than half of their earnings to their families (Goldstein, 1988). Urmila Patel (1988) also supported this view and stated that in some cases they are not given the pocket allowance or the amount to buy things even for their personal use. They have to demand and are given some money as a grace granted to them (Urmila, 1988, p. 219). A working wife is expected to fulfill all her household duties, do a full time paid job and yet hand over her entire income to the husband or parent-in-law (Upreti & Upreti, 2000, p.15).

Upreti (2000, as cited in Upreti & Upreti, 2000, p.19) expressed three patterns of controls over salary emerge:

1. Whole salary is given to the husband /in-laws and in return required money is granted.
2. Salary is given in part and rest of the salary is kept with the working women , and
3. Whole salary is kept by the working women.

In addition, the researcher urges feminist movement to continue to resist it in Muslim communities because it can help Muslim environment to understand the issues affecting the status and roles of males and

females, and how Muslims especially Muslim women can solve their numerous contemporary problems. It can establish an identity and stability such that self-respect can be achieved and a healthier climate for both Muslim men and women can emerge. Differentiation of sex roles: Islamic tradition which affects the future of any feminist movement in an Islamic environment is that it specifies a differentiation of male and female roles and responsibilities in society. Feminism, as represented in Western society, has generally denied any such differentiation and has demanded a move toward a unisex society in order to achieve equal rights for women. By 'unisex society', it means one in which a single set of roles and concerns are given preference and esteem by both sexes and are pursued by all members of the society regardless of sex and age differentials. In the case of Western feminism, the preferred goals have been those traditionally fulfilled by the male members of society. The roles of providing financial support, of success in career, and of decision making have been given overwhelming respect and concern while those dealing with domestic matters, with child care, with aesthetic and psychological refreshment, with social interrelationships, were devalued and even despised. Both men and women have been forced into a single mold which is perhaps more restrictive, rigid and coercive than that which formerly assigned men to one type of role and women to another.

This might be regarded by the feminist as opening the door to discrimination, but as Muslims we regard Islamic traditions as standing clearly and unequivocally for the support of male-female equity. In the Quran, no difference whatever is made between the sexes in relation to God (Quran 2:195; 4:124; 9:71-72).

### **Empirical Work on Working Women**

There are three ways in which one can look at the issue of Equality: (1) Economic, (2) Political, and (3) Social. These are, then, some of the main issues, which form the central concern of the value on women and work in Indian society. Each contributor has tried to focus his/her attention on one or the other aspects outlined.

Bhoite (1988) has provided a sociological perspective stating that employed women are subjected to role conflict in the family which may be resolved only by introducing some changes both in the family and at

her work place. At the family front, the solution can be sought by such efforts as employing servants, introduction of modern labor saving and time-saving devices and obtaining help from the relatives and husbands.

Bradley (1989) has argued the culture of masculine deforms both men and women. As individuals we are all trapped and constrained by gender stereotypes. Because he has emphasized the way in which sex-typing of jobs has hushed women into inferior places in the hierarchy and into economic dependency, that doesn't mean that men, too, do not suffer from the pressures of having to live up to ideas of masculine behavior which may be alien to them as individuals. In interpersonal and emotional terms, sexual stereotypes have intervened between the sexes. We are still struggling to come to terms with the conflicts within marriage and within families that arise from differentials in male and female experience, expectations and power (Bradley, 1989, p. 239).

Oakley (1988) has observed a minority of husbands give the kind of help that assertions of equality in modern marriage imply. Fifteen per cent have a high level of participation in housework and twenty-five per cent in child-care. There is a tendency of men to take part in child-care than in housework (Oakley, 1988, p. 138). The study indicates a little positive change in the traditional gender role expectations of urban women. However, such a change is not substantial and it denotes only a slight improvement in the status and power of women in their gender roles.

Nikkholgh (1979) clearly stressed the important productive role of rural women. He said that there is a connection between economic need and polygamy. Polygamy was not practiced only for sexual reasons but economic ones were even more important in rural areas since women performed certain functions that were needed by the whole community (Touba, 1991, p. 3).

Ardalaan (1991) argued about leisure time roles of women. After the revolution, change in leisure activities occurred. First, many outside activities for the educated and youth of Tehran which took women out of the home such as going to the cinema, cabarets, restaurants, dancing recreational clubs, and sport activities have been eliminated as activities for women. It has been replaced by an increase of visiting and giving dinner parties. Different religious activities such as 'rozehkhani' (mourning ceremonies and recitals for the Imam) and the other traditional

activities have been strengthened for the middle and lower classes. A completely new leisure activity has been combined with political activity whereby women of the masses are participating in marches and demonstrations and participating in political organizations. These have replaced previous types of leisure activities mentioned by the widows studied such as going picnics, driving around in cars, watching television, etc. (Ardalan, 1991, p. 81).

Loghmanian (1998) in her survey on social aspects of women in Iranian culture tried to point out the social prestige of women in Iranian culture. She wanted to prove the existence of discrimination in Iran. At the end, the results specified that in spite of Islamic recommendations concerning, there is sexual discrimination and negative attitude to women. Although this trend is relevant to Iranian culture, but getting rid of these attitudes to improve women status requires continuous, comprehensive and long-term endeavors (Loghmanian, 1998).

### **Hypotheses**

- a) There is a significant difference between women's job satisfaction and their economic needs.
- b) There is a significant difference between women's job satisfaction and their husbands' co-operation in housework.

#### **Definition of Terms**

*Working Women:* In this study, 'working women' refers to those women who work in governmental offices/departments in Cities of Mysore and Ahvaz, and receive monthly salaries.

*Problems:* In this study, 'Problems' refers to only those common difficulties, which Muslim working women encounter at home and workplace.

*Work participation:* The term 'work participation' refers to someone who works out of home and earns money/salary.

*Job Satisfaction:* The job satisfaction is typically defined as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976).



### **Methodology**

To select the working women in governmental offices/departments in Ahvaz city in the present study, the researcher adopted a survey method of collecting and analyzing the data. The researcher gathered the data from both primary and secondary sources.

First, the researcher required the list of total number of women who worked in the governmental offices/departments in the selected city. But there were no records or data available of the target population in Ahvaz city. The investigator first listed all the governmental offices/departments in the selected city and then visited to collect the lists of working women with the permission of the concerned heads. Many heads of the offices/departments gave good co-operation, but some heads refused to give the list, saying that, this information was confidential.

Thus, the researcher collected the lists of working women in governmental offices/departments and only 1000 women were working in Ahvaz city. According to Krejcie and Morgan's Table, 278 women were selected as members of sample group in Ahvaz.

For the purpose of collecting data, a questionnaire was prepared. Moreover, in this study, interview was used as a method of data collection.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Content validity of the questionnaire was established with the help of 3 experts who have been involved in the field of sociology of women. The subject experts closely explored the items and suggested changes. Considering the unanimity of the experts' suggestion, changes were made accordingly. Some of the items were deleted. Meanwhile, reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.85 using Cronbach's Alpha method in Ahvaz.

The data were analyzed on computer by SPSS program. The collected data were analyzed using the statistical techniques like Descriptive statistics (Mean, Minimum, and Maximum) and Chi-Square.

### **Results**

The results revealed that the average age was 37 years old with a minimum of 19 years old and a maximum of 52. According to the above data, it could be concluded that age structure among Ahvazi women is

young. The results indicated that of all the women studied in Ahvaz, 74.6 per cent are married, 20.7 per cent unmarried, 2 per cent divorced, and 2.7 per cent widowed. The results indicated that 72 per cent of women are in teaching career, 24.7 per cent work as clerks, 1.3 per cent of them work in engineering, 1.3 per cent are as nurses and doctors, and only 0.7 per cent of women work as peon-servant attendants.

In general, the results showed that the percentage of women choosing teaching career among the respondents was high, because most females chose it as their most-wanted career thanks to the reasons such as high job security and acceptability of the job in the society and their families.

#### Duties of the working women at home and their problems

A basic form of division of labor that can be observed in almost every society is on the basis of gender. In this study, it was attempted to explore duties of the employed women within the family and also expressed problems in the family's structure. The presented data reveal that in Ahvaz (Iran) 79 per cent of the respondents do the household chores alone such as cooking and serving food, washing clothes, looking after the children, cleaning utensils and caring aged and sick persons. Furthermore, less than three per cent of them expressed that their husbands cooperate with them at home and the rest (17.9%) presented that their parents, children, or others help them in household chores.

In general, according to the data, a few of the men extend support and cooperation to their wives by sharing some of household duties, and this condition can enhance with the increasing trend of Muslim men's awareness in the family's structure.

Furthermore, they were asked how often they are unable to manage their household duties due to the job fatigue. The data showed that 6.7 per cent of respondents checked 'always', 79.3 per cent of them asserted 'occasionally' and 14 per cent of women expressed 'never'. They gave the following reasons:

-A considerable percentage (41.2%) of the married respondents felt that they were neglected because of their work by their husband and children.

-less than half (37%) of the respondents, except for the unmarried women, expressed that they felt excessively tired working both at home and at the workplace.

- Some of the respondents (10.9%), except for the unmarried women, presented that other members of their family never help them in their household chores.

- Less than one-fourth of the married women expressed that their husbands never assisted them in the household duties.

- A considerable percentage (72.3%) of the married women stated that their husband expected or demanded them to look after him and home on reaching home after work.

- Some of the respondents (17.8%), except for the unmarried women, stated that they cannot spend time with their children when they come back from the office because they are too tired and have no time.

- Some of the married respondents (29.5%) express that they felt their husband does not understand their difficulties.

In general, according to the results, working women face several problems in their homes, but they express that it should not be forgotten that life is for happiness and peace, and this point should be kept in mind that life is a matter of give-and-take and emotional give-and-take should be a pleasure for sides, home and workplace.

#### *The working conditions of the working women and their problems*

The comparison of the results of the occupational status of working women shows that the economic factors are more important among Ahvazi women (47.3%). The data indicate that a considerable percentage of the total respondent (74.7%) have permanent jobs and the rest temporary/contract. The results exhibit that a considerable percentage of the respondents (73.3%) have expressed that their working hours are suitable. The data reveal that less than one-third of respondents are satisfied with their salary/wage. Meanwhile, the results demonstrate that of the total number of women who were dissatisfied with their salary/wage, only less than thirty per cent bargained for its betterment.

In this study, the respondents were asked "Did you experience discrimination between men and women in your workplace?" The results exhibit that 44per cent of the respondents expressed women's abilities and knowledge were apt to be underestimated by men and their head of office.

Generally speaking, the results show that the efficiency of a working woman is always suspected. Even though other qualifications are equal, men are preferred. The authorities doubt whether she would be able to

handle many subordinates, take independent decisions, cope up with crises, and manage her duties. Even if she is given a chance, there is a remark that she is chosen because she is a woman!

The data show that most of the respondents do not have any problems with their male colleagues, and only few of them (12 %) have expressed that men do not accept women's abilities and working efficiency. As a result, men create problems for women at their workplace. The majority of the respondents said that their workplaces lack Medical, crèches and sports facilities. These percentages are 70.7per cent, 84per cent and 76.7per cent respectively.

#### *Job Satisfaction and Working Women*

Education works as the prime factor to motivate the women to work outside. But education serves as a discriminatory tool to limit work opportunities and wages for women. Men are better educated; they can use modern technology more efficiently than women. Sex-based division of work is expressed also in sex stereotyping of course curricula (i.e. Home Science for girls) and occupational placements (i.e. nursing or teaching) and it is reflected in the enrolment of men and women in different courses as in occupational choices. This has greatly restricted the areas of employment and work participation of women. (Dak, 1988, pp. 226-227)

The job satisfaction is typically defined as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976). Psychological and organizational researchers agree that the overall job satisfaction is an important mediating construct in the development of employee commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). In this study, it is attempted to analyze job satisfaction among women in government offices, and others factors that can increase their job satisfaction.

The respondents were asked about their opinion on job satisfaction at work places, and the issue of job satisfaction is explored from different dimensions because it would affect working women's efficacy and commitment directly.

Then, to explore the job satisfaction among the respondents, five questions were asked:

**The first question:** “What were you doing before joining the present job?”

**The second question:** “How did you know about this job?”

**The third question:** “Did you join this job because you could not get a job elsewhere?”

**The fourth question:** “Are you satisfied with your present job?”, and

**The fifth question:** “If you get a better job and more salary, would you like to shift?”

The data about the first question revealed that 61.3 per cent of the respondents were studying before joining their present job, less than 30 per cent were doing home management or unemployed and only 4.7 per cent had a job.

Moreover, the results about the second question showed that 48.7 per cent of the working women have found their present jobs alone, 21.4 per cent of the respondents parents and relatives introduced them to the place of work, and 30 percent of them have selected their jobs with the help of their friends and the others. This point shows a movement in relatives and parents’ opinions toward the occupation of girls and women out of home.

In the third question, the results depicted that less than one-third of the respondents joined the present job because they could not get a job elsewhere, and the rest expressed that they joined their job thanks to their interest. Meanwhile, the results of the fourth question show that 75.3 percent women are satisfied with their present job. Further, the results of the fifth question reveal that nearly half per cent of the respondents stated, “If they get a better job and more salary, they would like to shift elsewhere”, and the rest (54%) expressed that they would never change their jobs.

Meanwhile, the results depicted that there is not a significant difference between women’s Job Satisfaction and their husband’s cooperation in housework. Since the calculated  $X^2$  value (9.260) is less than the tabulated  $X^2$  value (9.488) for 4 df at 5% level, the Alternative hypothesis (H1) is rejected.

Moreover, the results revealed that there is significant difference between women’s job satisfaction and their economic needs.

Since the calculated  $X^2$  value (9.889) is more than the tabulated  $X^2$  value (9.488) for 4 df at 5% level, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

#### Conclusions

The results revealed that conditions of working women are bad. Still the lives of women are considerably governed by the traditional patriarchal values. As a result, women are socialized to accept their gender roles as the prime roles among all. However, women's employment encouraged husbands to share a little household work. In addition, the results indicated that these husbands share only activities related to children, shopping, and the like but in activities such as cooking, washing, cleaning, etc., their share is zero or very poor. In fact, husbands who participate in household, think this action is only a help and not as a duty.

On the other hands, the results show that most of the working women in have to do several domestic duties. They did not get help from their husbands both in household duties and in taking care of the children. Their husbands expect their wives to look after them and home along with their jobs. A considerable percentage of the married women have sufficient time to pay attention to all their household duties occasionally. A considerable percentage of the married respondents felt that they were neglected because of their work by their husbands and children.

In general, according to the foregoing analysis, it can be asserted that the respondents do not have high expectations of their workplaces, and they are forced to accept the existing status quo. Meanwhile, the results of the women's job satisfaction indicate that working women have high job satisfaction. They are happy with their jobs as unemployment is rising and they considered themselves as lucky to be employed. Some working women also expressed that their present job is better than sitting idle at home. Meanwhile, the respondents have stated that teacher's job is a suitable occupation for women because there is time to do household chores. Teaching jobs with flexi-timings would be more suitable among women.

Moreover, the results depict that there is not a relationship between women's job satisfaction and men's co-operation in doing home's duties.

In fact, the results revealed that though there are some problems at their work places, most of them are satisfied with their jobs because there are reasons, such as orthodoxies, negative attitudes of elderly persons and husbands toward women's employment in the society. Moreover they compare themselves to women especially housewives and also they pay greater attention to the social aspects to take up a job. As a result, they are forced to keep their jobs under any conditions. They accept all of problems in the office and home, and they try to continue to their activities.

The researcher urges feminist movement, therefore, to continue to resist it in Muslim communities because Islamic personal laws and traditions are seen today by many Muslims as the main source of cohesiveness to confront modernization and social development, which are particularly affected by women's status and role in Islamic society. It can help Muslim environment to understand the issues which can affect male and female status and roles, and how Muslims especially Muslim women can solve their numerous contemporary problems. Moreover, the society could be seen as an organic whole in which the welfare of each member or organ is necessary for the health and well being of every other part. It can establish an identity and stability that self-respect can be achieved and a healthier climate for both Muslim men and Muslim women will emerge.

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