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Constraints in Employment of Women

by

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## CONSTRAINTS IN EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

### INTRODUCTION

The year 1975 organized by the U.N. was observed as International Women Year. It provided the opportunity to Women all over the world to get together and voice their demands for achieving equal rights in the political, economic, social, civil and educational fields.

The International Seminar was held in June/July 1975 in Mexico city. Women from all over the world took full advantage of the opportunity and observed International Women Year with great fervour and enthusiasm. Pakistan's Women too were not far behind. They participated actively in all programmes of International Women Year. They held seminars, conferences and symposia, discussed problems they face and expressed their views on various aspects of women's present position. A number of resolutions were passed on the need to raise the status of women for involving them in national development and to take steps to eliminate the discrimination against women. Various representatives of women organizations hailed the theme, Equality, Development and Peace adopted for International Women Year and demanded equal opportunities at legal, social and economic levels. One of the gravest discriminations operative in many societies against Women

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is the restraint against their gainful employment, resulting in economic dependence upon men. Such economic dependence affects their conception about themselves and confines them at home which becomes the main centre of their role playing as housewives and mothers.

In Pakistan the women are generally confined to activities within the household. According 1961 Census [6] 14% Women of age 15-49 were in labour force. A latter survey [7] shows the participation rate at 23%. Both estimates indicate a very low level of participation of women in labour force. Women in Pakistan are secluded as sheltered persons with men as their protectors [8, P.519]. A particular kind of division of labour has developed wherein women work with other women in and around the home as housekeeper and men work with other men in occupations outside the home [8, P.520]. It is for this reason that in 1961, 3.1 percent of the total female population over age 12 was engaged in occupations outside home in urban communities [6]. The proportion of women in labour force for Pakistan is one of the lowest in the world.

## II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

It is generally recognized that removal of the economic dependence is essential for raising the status

of women. Financial independence is expected (i) to reduce their confinement at home (ii) to undermine various other inequalities they suffer at social level and (iii) to enhance their participation in development of the country. For this purpose gainful employment of women in different occupations must take place.

The current values of the society and the attitude of the males towards female employment are some of the obstacles in their gainful employment. In specific terms, the main constraints usually faced by Pakistani women in their employment are:

- i) Discouragement by near relatives other than the male patriarch.
- ii) Attitudes of male co-workers with whom women have to share work premises.
- iii) Objection on the part of women themselves to work in offices where men are predominantly employed.
- iv) Perception by women of male superiority.
- v) Adherence to traditional values on the part of women.
- vi) Perception of main role of women as working within the household.

In this study an attempt is made to find out the extent to which these constraints are operative. Variation in the impact of these constraints could be effected

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by three background characteristics of the women and their families:

- a) Educational level of the male patriarch.
- b) Total monthly family income.
- c) Marital status of the women.

III. METHODOLOGY:

Data from a random sample of 200 Career Women and 225 domestic women belonging to various occupations and social strata within the Karachi Metropolitan Area were collected in 1974. The full detail of the design of the sample is given in an earlier published report of the author [1, P.1-70]. The earlier study focussed on the changes in the status and roles of women and as such a large portion of the sample consisted of gainfully employed women. Among the employed women 40.5% had an education upto the graduate level or more. This simply indicates that more of the highly educated women in cities were seeking full time jobs than less educated women. The data related to constraints in employment of women used for the present study formed part of the author's earlier survey. The distinction between domestic and career women has been eliminated by mixing the two groups together with the underlying assumption that the constraints would be effecting both categories of women equally.

## IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS:

In an attempt to find the justification for selection of the six constraints as listed above and to determine the extent to which they are actually operative in Pakistani society, various constraints reported by women of both the categories (domestic and career) are presented in Table 1, 2 and 3. Table 1 gives the percentages of respondents reporting various constraints in employment of women by the educational status of the head household. Almost all (98%) of the women reported "adherence to traditional values" as a constraint. Although the majority of women in this study are relatively highly educated and belongs to a comparatively advanced and secular urban sector of the society, yet the proportion of those holding traditional values is very high.

Table 1 further shows that of all the illiterate women 85% reported that they thought that there were some constraints in their employment. The corresponding percentages for 'low education' and 'high education' women who reported such constraints were 81% and 66% respectively. The finding shows that with the increase in educational level of household head there was a decrease in reporting of various constraint on women's employment.

Generally the trend in three constraints namely "Objection to work in offices where males are largely employed", "Conception of male superiority" and "main

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role of women at home" was found to be negative. That is the increase in educational level of head of the household was associated with an apparent decrease in the reporting of the above mentioned constraints in women's employment.

Total family monthly income is another variable which might have a salutary effect on constraints in employment of women. Table 2 shows percentage reported by respondents according to various constraints in employment by their family monthly income. It can be seen that 81% of the total respondents having low income, 76% of those having middle income and 69% of those having high income reported various kinds of constraints regarding women's employment. This negative trend means that with the increase in income there was a decrease in 'felt' constraints.

The largest number of respondents (98%) reported "Adherence to traditional Values" as a major constraint in their employment. This was consistently true for all income levels.

A marked variation can be seen in the constraints "Objection to work in offices where males are largely employed" and "Main role of women at home", when income was controlled for. Higher family income appears to have reduced the perception of constraints in employment. For the remaining constraints, there is no marked variation on account of income.

Marital status of the respondents is another characteristic that was analysed in order to ascertain its impact on the constraints selected for this study. In another study, it was shown that the main role of women was largely perceived to stay at home [2, P.25-26]. Such being the case, the married women have to face the constraints in employment more than women who are unmarried on account of apprehension of neglect of home making which would be felt more by the former than by the latter.

Table 3 shows percentage reporting various constraints in employment of women by their marital status. 62% of single women, 67% of married and 68% of the evermarried (Divorced, Widowed, Separated) women reported various constraints regarding women's employment. Generally, Table 3 shows that the married and evermarried women had more constraints than unmarried women.

A large number of respondents (98%) reported "Adherence to traditional values" as a major constraint. All of the evermarried reported the above constraint. With respect to most of the constraints, married women reported that they faced constraints more intensely as compared with unmarried women. More specifically, noticeably fewer of the single women reported "main role of women at home" and "working in offices with males" as constraints in employment.



**CONCLUSION:**

Economic development is dependent on the effective and better utilization of the resources of the country. In a country like Pakistan which is not so rich in natural resources, it is essential to concentrate on its abundant human resources. Unfortunately in Pakistan the human resources are not being utilized fully and effectively. The present population of Pakistan is around 70 million, out of which 49% is female population. The participation rate of women in total labour force is about 25 per cent. The reason why female resources are not fully utilized appears to be mainly due to the fact that in developing countries with high population growth rates job opportunities even for males are far short of the requirements and the male occupies a central place in the process of development. This is so because in most developing countries livelihood is considered to be primarily the responsibility of the male. This is particularly true for a country like ours. In Pakistan, many jobs which in developed countries are frequently occupied by women, are performed by men, e.g. typing, secretariat work, etc. The women of Pakistan should not be discriminated against in the job market.

Rise in the status of women is closely related with their economic independence. It is essential to remove

all discriminations against women. Apart from the provision of full facilities for education, skill training, job opportunities and equality in pay, there is need for bringing about changes in traditional/cultural values of society, which are a great barrier in women's gainful employment. Male superiority, Woman's role as housekeeper and segregation based on sex are some of the cultural values which are still held by the society. These factors are undermining the full participation of women in economic activity in the cities of Pakistan. Family Structure of Pakistan permits the relatives in raising objection against employment of women. This constitutes a barrier in the women's rights regarding freedom of action and thought.

In the present study, high education and family income were found to have a salutary effect on the relaxation of 'felt' constraints and showed that as education and income increased, perception of constraints in employment decreased. Marriage was also found to act as a restraint on women's participation in the labour force.

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Table - 1

## PERCENTAGE REPORTING VARIOUS CONSTRAINTS IN EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN BY EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF HOUSEHOLD

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF HOUSEHOLD	CONSTRAINTS OF EMPLOYMENT													
	Discouragement by Relatives		Objection to work in Offices where males are largely employed		Attitude of Co-worker		Conception of Male Superiority		Adherence to Traditional Values		Main Role of Women at Home		Total	
	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.
Illiterate	32	72.7(44)	39	88.6(44)	6	75.0(8)*	38	86.4(44)	41	93.2(44)	38	86.4(44)	194	(228)
Low Education	50	87.7(57)	41	71.9(57)	18	78.3(23)*	40	71.4(56)*	56	98.2(57)	42	73.7(57)	247	(307)
High Education	253	78.1(324)	120	57.0(324)	197	80.4(245)*	174	55.6(313)*	318	98.1(324)*	155	47.8(324)	1217	(1854)
Total	335	(425)	200	(425)	221	(276)	252	(413)	415	(425)	235	(425)	1658	(2389)
Percentage	78.8		47.1		80.1		61.0		97.6		55.3		69.4	

\* Difference in total is due to no response in each category.

Table 2

## PERCENTAGE REPORTING VARIOUS CONSTRAINTS IN EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN BY THEIR TOTAL FAMILY MONTHLY INCOME

TOTAL FAMILY INCOME	CONSTRAINTS OF EMPLOYMENT												T o t a l	
	Discouragement by Relatives		Objection to work in Office where males are largely employed		Attitude of Co-worker		Conception of Male Superiority		Adherence to Traditional Values		Main Role of Women at Home		Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.
	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.				
Low Income	92	80.0(115)	93	80.9(115)	24	75.0(32)*	75	69.4(108)*	111	96.5(115)	88	76.5(115)	483 80.5	(600)
Middle Income	123	77.4(159)	103	74.8(159)	91	75.8(120)*	112	67.5(166)*	156	98.1(159)	119	74.8(159)	704 76.4	(922)
High Income	120	79.5(151)	79	52.3(151)	104	85.2(122)*	94	64.4(146)*	148	98.0(151)	57	37.7(151)	602 69.0	(872)
Total	335	(425)	275	(425)	219	(274)	281	(420)	415	(425)	264	(425)	1789	(2394)
Percentage	78.8		64.7		79.9		66.9		97.6		62.1		74.7	

\* Difference in total is due to no-response in the category.

Table 3

## PERCENTAGE REPORTING VARIOUS CONSTRAINTS IN EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN BY MARITAL STATUS

CONSTRAINTS OF EMPLOYMENT

MARITAL STATUS	Discouragement by Relatives		Objection to work in Office* where male are largely employed		Attitude of Co-worker		Conception of Male Superiority		Adherence to Traditional Values		Main Role of Women at Home		Total	
	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.	Posi- tive Res. %	Total No. of Res.
Single	76	71.0(107)	26	24.3(107)	70	75.3(93)*	81	78.6(103)*	103	96.3(107)	33	30.8(107)	389	(624) 62.3
Married	115	40.1(287)	158	55.1(287)	139	84.8(164)*	183	65.8(278)*	281	97.9(287)	182	63.4(287)	1058	(1590) 66.5
Divorced ) Ever- Widowed ) married Separated )	20	64.5(31)	16	51.6(31)	11	64.7(17)*	17	58.6(29)*	31	100.0(31)	21	67.7(31)	116	(170) 68.2
Total	211	(425)	200	(425)	220	(274)	281	(410)	415	(425)	236	(425)	1563	(2809)
Percentage	49.6		47.1		80.3		68.5		97.6		55.5		55.6	

\*B.A\*

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