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**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF HOME-BASED WORKING  
WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN HYDERABAD, SINDH**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research paper focuses on socio-economic conditions of home-based working women in Hyderabad Division, of Sindh Pakistan. Main objectives of this research are (i) to analyze the Socio-economic condition of home-based working women (ii) to assess the poverty and home-based work (iii) to find out the illiteracy and home-based work (iv) to investigate the role of handicrafts and home-based work in cultural and economic development (v) to unearth the Sindhi culture of handicrafts in Hyderabad Division. To achieve research objectives qualitative research approach is adopted and data is collected by four case studies in Hyderabad division. All cases are selected randomly and analyzed by using thematic analysis method. Present study concluded that researched area is rich in handicrafts business. Women engaged themselves in home-based work due to poverty, unemployment and poor financial conditions of their families. This business has very low profit but female preferred this work due less skills and education required to carry handicrafts business. Home-based workers felt empowered due to having their own income and took part in decision making. In last it is recommended for policy makers and government agencies to give priority to this business because it has potential. It is necessary for economic development of families, culture and country.*

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**Keywords:** Socio-economic, home-based work, Hyderabad, handicrafts poverty, illiteracy.

**INTRODUCTION**

Home-based work is an important contributor in the economy of country. People in the developed as well as in the underdeveloped countries of world are engaged in home based work. There are two types of home based work one is Self-employed home based worker and other is Sub-contracted home-based work. In first type workers purchase their cost of production and work from home but in second

category workers are given raw material required in production and home-based workers are paid per piece of goods/product. In both categories workers work from home.

In Pakistan percentage of home-based workers is 6.6%, which is less as compared to other Asian countries. In total population engaged in home based work in Pakistan two third are women. Hyderabad division is second largest division in Sindh, Pakistan. Sindh is rich in cultural heritage and handicrafts of Sindh are liked in all over the world. Ajrak, embroidery work clothes, shoes, bed spreads, purses and various other products are exported internationally. In Hyderabad women are doing different types of home-based work as agriculture, construction, retail, handicrafts etc. (Akhtar & Vanek, 2013; Bertulfo, L., 2011).

Need based assessment of home-based workers conducted by Hassan, 2014 reveals that 71% of women enters to home-based work due to poverty. Cultural restriction and illiteracy are major factors after poverty in the choice of home-based work among female. 73% respondents confirmed that illiteracy as a major cause of home-based work. Study found the majority of respondents 63% were unaware of loaning facilities, NGOs work and provision legislation and were living in vulnerable conditions.

There are few studies at hand on problems faced by home-based workers, especially women in Sindh. This topic needs to be investigated in Sindh. This research is designed to analyze the socio-economic condition of home-based working women in Hyderabad, Sindh.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What are the socio-economic conditions of home-based worker women in Hyderabad Division?
- What were the causes of starting home-based work?
- Does poverty has impact or is cause of home based work?
- Does illiteracy has impact or is cause of home-based work?
- What is role of home-based work in cultural and economic development of country?
- What handicrafts are culturally made in Hyderabad Division?

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To analyze the socio-economic condition of home-based working women.
- To assess the poverty and home-based work.
- To find out the illiteracy and home-based work.
- To investigate the role of handicrafts and home-based work in cultural and economic development.
- To unearth the Sindhi culture of handicrafts in Hyderabad Division.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Sindh from centuries has remained hub of culture and civilization. Cultural products of Sindh are unique and beautiful, people make cultural artifacts and handicrafts with their hard work, dedication and creative art. Cultural products of Sindh have a good market but unfortunately handicrafts industry is managed by a middle-man. Female artisans are helped by different NGOs, they are provided micro credit, marketing and training on skill development. This old age profession of Sindh is updated by new demands of market. Handicraft sector is beauty of province and is very important economic sector. Government needs to support artisans (Khan, 2011).

Handicrafts is culture of Pakistan but it is also the profession of millions of people. Helps country to engage large labor force and control unemployment ratio. There are government programs to develop this economic sector, but could not provide satisfactory results due to limited outreach in country (Patel, Rajiv & Shah, Amisha, 2017).

Study explored that in Sindh large number of women are engaged in handicrafts. Main purpose to starting handicrafts as a profession is their cultural heritage, women who are engaged in handicrafts business are less educated and their average income is 3000-5000 which is not satisfactory (Nizamani, Ram & Nizamani, 2019).

Report indicated various aspects of labor force in Pakistan. There are various constraints in employment development, and low productivity and unskilled labor force is one of its reasons. Vocational and educational trainings are very important to develop labor force especially for low skilled and less educated labor (STEVTA, Government of Sindh & ILO, 2013).

Hassan, et.al., (2014) explores the economic and socio-cultural problems of home-based workers and analyzed the cultural restrictions, norms, taboos, illiteracy, and poor financial conditions of women related to home-based workers. Women prefer home-based work due to culture of staying in four walls and less income required for business. Mostly poor women who wants to help their families start home-based work. In Asian countries women of slum urban areas are mostly related to home-based work. Their contribution to economy is neglected. City government or urban planners should focus on this economic sector. Policies are recommended in study to develop slum urban areas. Infrastructure facilities especially in homes of home based workers should be provided. Planning, Policies and practices will improve socio-economic condition of home based workers in urban slums (Chen & Sinha, October, 2016).

K., Sivasubramanian; A., Pushpa; V., Raju; and Kumar, Madhu Dhruva (2020) in India home-based work is appropriate and suitable strategy to combat with poverty. Large number of labor force is employed in home-based work. In spite of that home-based workers, especially women face number of socio-economic and health issues. Their wage rate is very low that is IRS 100 per day for per piece product. They are always paid late and face number of other issues. Study suggested government to aware women about social security programs and other schemes offered to them by government. Government must provide occupational health safety policy for them because most of women are faced with back-pain, eye-problem, lungs problem and other health issues. Mehta (2012), highlighted the role of informal sector in economic development of country and found informal sector especially home-based worker's dynamic role economy of country. Home-based workers are ignored and their contribution is not recognized. But small scale business operation is necessary for low skilled, less educated workers.

Literature review on topic suggests that home-based work is main part of economy in developing countries. There is number of problems faced by home-based workers at national and international level. But we don't have enough researches or scholarly work available on socio-economic problems and conditions of home-based workers. Present study intends to fill up this gape.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Mies's theory of housewifization shows a process by which a woman is not recognized as a labor force. If a woman is engaged in income generating work that is labeled as a leisure time activity. Mies developed theory of housewifization while studying Indian village Narsapur and argued that in capitalist societies women are exploited in the name of house-wife. In some cases, women's labor is paid but not as equal as to labor paid for same work to men. They are not given job security (Prügl, Elisabeth & Prügl, Elisabeth, 1996).

There is another theory work-home conflict by **Error! Bookmark not defined.** which tells about the role conflict which home based workers experience. In order to work from home sometime housework has to be sacrificed and sometime work has to be sacrificed to fulfill house hold responsibilities (Kelloway, et.al., 1999 & Byron, 2005). Studies found that in work from home interference from private life affects home based work and work and home conflict do exist (Matthews et.al., 2010; Carlson et.al., 2015 & Smit et.al., 2016).

### CASE STUDY - I

Mrs. ABC is 45 years old a Muslim woman of Sindhi community. She lives in village Mal Khan Thebo, Taluka Jhando Mari District Tando Alhyar of Sindh, Pakistan. She is married and lives in her own house of four rooms with her eight family members. Due to financial condition of her family she could get education up to primary. Her profession is handicrafts; from which she earns average income 30,000 per month. She started handicrafts profession due to financial crises of her family. Her husband brings all raw material required for her work. She does work at home and also outside home where she has a man as a boss. She finds working environment and behavior of boss good. She is also satisfied by pay she gets of her work. From her earning she could only fulfils the basic needs of her home. There is no saving and luxury due to high inflation and low income. After returning from work she gets tired but still do all her house chores and works for her children. Her dream is to see her children well educated in society and live a better life.

Sometimes, this tough routine work and no rest irritates her and she feels over stressed but cannot make her work off fearing that her salary will be deducted. She does not know about any NGO or Government agency who provides small loans for business. Her plan is

to open her own store at home where she can sale her items. She feels herself independent in decision making, and admires all other women of her neighborhood.

#### **CASE STUDY - II**

Mrs. XYZ is 35 years old woman. She lives in village Mal Khan Thebo of Taluka Jhando Mari, District Tando Alhyar, Sindh, Pakistan. She belongs to a poor family and due to financial problems of her family she could not get education. She had a nuclear family, she lives with her husband and five children.

At early age she learnt and started Handicrafts work. She makes (*Pindi*) plates used for putting meals and also embroidery work. She is very hardworking woman. Along with her business work she also does all household chores, washing clothes, cleaning home, cooking four-time meal and etc. Her average earning per month is only Rs.5000. she is only one in her neighborhood engaged in this business.

Head of her family is her husband and he earns only Rs.8000 per month. She gives all of her earnings to her husband. All her income and her husband's income is spent in grocery of house and in satisfaction of basic needs. They also had a house on rent. She does not take part in decision making of her household, even for her own business she takes advice of her husband.

She had no saving no luxury but still she feels happy in her life. For her business she took loan from an NGO (NRSP), but no any government organization or personal helped them. She recommends government to help those who are engaged in handicrafts business, according to her handicrafts business is good and profitable business. Handicrafts are exported to other countries. Loaning and marketing facilities can increase their business and earning.

#### **CASE STUDY - III**

Forty-eight years old Hindu woman Mrs. EFG lives in hut built house of one room. She belongs to village Bhagt Malu Ram of Tando Soomro District Tando Alhyar, Sindh, Pakistan. She has two daughters and they are total four family members. She is uneducated but has a grocery shop that she runs as her business. She started her business right after her marriage due to weak financial condition of her house. She hardly earns Rs.4000 per month and total income of her house is

Rs.9000. From this income they could hardly satisfy their basic needs. They are living very tough life.

She is independent in earning and spending her income, after fulfilling her basic expenses she saves very little amount from her budget for hard time. She had a good knowledge of her rights, and to start business was her own decision. An NGO named (RDF) helped her in her business. She is not only taking care of her business but also her home and children are her responsibility. She washes dishes, clothes, cleans house and cooks. She performs multiple job tasks and works day night to avoid any kind of mismanagement. She is very bold woman. She never closes her grocery store, even if she does not feel well she keeps on working. She is very confident and never feels sham in doing her business. But she made choice to work from home, to avoid violation of her cultural norms. According to her negligence of government is main reason that home based workers work is not recognized. Pakistan in general and handicraft/home based workers in particular are suffering from this negligence. She suggests her children to learn skills of home based business along with their studies.

#### **CASE STUDY - IV**

Mrs. UVW is very young woman of seventeen years. She is married women her native language is Sindhi. She lives village Palh Mori of Taluka Jhando Mari District Tando Alhyar of Hyderabad Division. She is engaged in handicrafts business which she started after her marriage. From her business her average monthly income is Rs.4000 and total monthly income of her family is PKR 19000. She is living with her in laws in small kachha house.

After her marriage her desires and requirements were unsatisfied due to financial constraints. Then, she decided to work for herself. Now, her husband has provided her a small house of two rooms and fulfills all her basic needs. She spent her income on her desires or needs and also make savings. It was her own decision to work but she works hard day and night to make beautiful embroidery on bottles and also sew clothes to earn money. Even when she is sick, feels back pain, eye pain or other health issues she never stops working. Sometimes she feels tired and depressed due to work stress. But work is necessary to fulfil her requirements. She does not know about human / women rights; she has never attained any school or skill development training but feels independent. Besides handicrafts work

she cleans house, cook food for all family members, washes dishes and never compromises on her responsibilities of house. She feels feudalism system is responsible for not recognition of home-based work. She is well aware of marketing of her business. If supported technically or financially by government she will increase her business. She recommends handicrafts business to other women especially those who are not educated. According to her self-development is possible with economic development and empowerment of women.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Case study is one of the method applied in qualitative research to study a single case in depth, analytically, organically and culturally. Single unit is studied entirely to understand the qualitative aspects of data thoroughly (Stake, R. E., 2005).

In this research qualitative data is collected by four case studies. Exploratory case study technique is applied to understand conditions of home-based workers, get information of handicrafts business in universe, to analyze the socio-economic factors promoting home based work. Exploratory case studies are conducted to generate the hypothesis of the study. Case study data is collected by open-ended interviews and non-participate observation. In data analysis of four cases researcher has followed multiple steps as compared the theory with case studies, themes in case studies, made groups and categories, searched new facts and new insights in cases and compared cases for cross-case analysis.

#### **FINDINGS/RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF DATA**

**Home Based-work and Culture and Economic Development:** Study of four different case studies revealed that two from four cases were related with handicrafts business. Making embroidery and *pindi* (plate used in putting meal) are material culture of Sindh. Home-based workers are not only promoting their culture to at international level but earning their livelihood. In two cases it was the main source of income of families.

**Information on Handicraft Work:** Study indicated that still in Sind people are engaged in handicrafts business. There is a variety of handicrafts in Sindh. Different cultural things are still made with same unique patterns since centuries.

**Socio-Economic Life of Home Based-Workers:** People engaged in handicrafts business are hardly fulfilling their basic needs. There are no marketing or loaning facilities available to them to increase their income. Their income is less than minimum wage rate of Pakistan. Mostly they are living in Kacha-Paka house of one or two rooms. Have no savings no luxuries at home. They could only fulfil their basic needs to survive.

**Exclusion of Home Based Work From National Accounts:** Home based work is main source of income of large number of families in Sindh, Pakistan. But, unfortunately not recognized. Respondents of case study disclosed that they are never helped by any government organization. But, some non-governmental organizations have helped them time to time by providing small loans and marketing of their business.

**Illiteracy and Home Based Work:** It is identified that people engaged in home-based work are less educated or uneducated. But, all cases were ambitious to provide education to their children.

**Poverty and Home Based Work:** All home-based workers in these case studies were earning very less from their business of handicrafts or grocery store. From current income of families, they could hardly fulfill their basic needs.

**Unemployment and Home Based Work:** Home based work is business of less educated and poor people. Large force of laborers is engaged in this business. Less assets are required for business therefore all poor and unemployed women are engaged in handicrafts and home based work.

**Gender and Home Based Work:** In home-based work especially in handicrafts business large number of female workers are engaged. Male members of household can go outside home but for female it is recommended to stay at home and work from home.

**Environment and Home Based Work:** Study found that women workers were doing work from home and home were clean. In all four cases woman were living in small houses with nuclear families. Physical as well as social environment were good for work. Husbands and other family members were supporting. But, due to multiple job task sometimes women feel stressed and sometimes they could hardly manage house and work.

## DISCUSSION

This study was intended to analyze the socio-economic conditions of home-based working women in Hyderabad Division. Study found that women in all case studies were contributing to economic development of their family as well as their country. Large number of female home-based workers is engaged in handicrafts business. Similar results were found in study conducted by Banoo, 2002 that women were key contributor in economy of family and country. According to her study women were less educated workers and mostly related with handicrafts and low skilled work. Research conducted by Andal, et.al., (2002) revealed the similar facts that women who are working and earning feel empowered. Average income of home based workers is less. Sudarshan, Ratna M. (2010), Sudarshan, R., & Sinha, S., et.al., (2011). They know about their rights and live independent life. Though in current research women indicated that still they take advice of their husbands in their business and household affairs. But have good knowledge of their rights and feel at some extent empowered as well. Present study found the negligible role of government to facilitate the home based working women and similar findings were described by Makhdoom, Shah & Bhatti, (2016) in their study conducted on women's home-based handicraft industry and economic wellbeing: A case study of Badin Pakistan. In their study researcher's came up same findings of lack of loaning and marketing facilities available to handicrafts workers.

Findings of current study are supported by studies conducted by Nizamani, Ram, & Nizamani, et.al., (2019) in their research on handicrafts and socio-economic status of women. Majority of women are pursuing this business of handicrafts due to their culture. But, illiteracy and poverty are also conditions pushing women to carry this business. From this business very little income is generated due to negligence of government and other organisation. Present study revealed that government is not providing any social security of job or health. And same results are discussed in report of international labor organization as home-based workers are not given legal economic rights and social protection by government ILO (2002).

## CONCLUSION

Study concludes that home-based women workers are engaged in handicrafts business and they joined business in order to support their

poor families. But socio-economic condition of workers is still worst due to low income generation from handicrafts business. Female in researched area preferred to work from home due to cultural settings of society. Less educated and with less income family backgrounds women start handicrafts work. Handicrafts business gives them less profit. Non-government organizations are helping women in loaning and marketing of their products but government has negligible role in this regard. Home-based workers are working hard but unable to cope up with socio-economic conditions of their house. Women workers suggested government to provide them marketing facilities because their work is appreciated at international level.

Research also concluded that women feel empowered when they earn and at some extent participate in decisions of their family. Working women also stated that purpose of their earning is to give good education to their children after fulfillment of basic socio-economic needs of their family.

Primary data analyzed from four case studies shows that socio-economic conditions of women home based workers of Hyderabad division are clearly supporting the theoretical framework Housewifization of home based workers developed by Mies. Home-based workers are earning less, still not aware of their rights and very little participations of women in house hold decisions. In labor survey these women are often excluded from workforce of country. These all findings support the theory of housewifization of home-based workers.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Government must provide home-based working women marketing facility of their products.
- Government and Non-Government Organizations needs to increase outreach of micro-finance to help home-based working women.
- Health policy, infrastructure, labor union and other facilities are recommended to help home-based workers to improve their socio-economic condition.
- Further researches are recommended on topic to analyze and find out solutions of socio-economic, cultural, psychological and health issues of home-based working women.

- Government must focus on education, training and skill development among home-based workers this will improve quality of their work and their income.

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