



A Social outline of Working Women of WCL (Western Coalfields Limited).

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Abstract: *Earlier, in India, women preferred to work either in agricultural activities or in traditional rural Industries. Nowadays, because of pay, perks and job security, they also prefer to work in organized industries. At present, women working in urban areas are significantly lower than rural areas, at the same time, the rate of illiterate working women is greater than illiterate women. On 31st March, Census 2011 reflected that in organized sectors, women workers constituted 20.5% of total employment. In this manner, about 59.54 lakh women workers were employed in the organized public and private sector.*

Keywords: *Working Women in Coal Mines, Status of Working Women, Western Coalfields Limited.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

India is a traditional and developing country. To work, to earn was against the prestige of women. Mostly, women were limited to household and domestic work. Domestic chores were an undivided part of their life. In the early nineties, the main reason for working for a woman was to meet an economic crisis. Even if she was the primary financial support of the family, she failed to get the status of 'Bread Earner.'

Coal India Limited (CIL) is a Navaratna Company. The Western Coal Fields (WCL) is one of the subsidiaries of Coal India Limited. Coal India Limited is related to one of the fossil energies, 'Coal.' Coal is needed for power production and it is an essential component for running many large and small industries, like, cement, steel, chemical, paper, sponge iron industries etc. CIL is a prestigious public sector company of this Nation, it provides a handsome pay and perks to its working force.

Apart from livelihood, with Increasing women's literacy, high cost of living, expenses on children's education, desires to gain economic and social independence and identity also, women were forced to step out to take up a career. In the early nineties, the women working force was around 61% in coal mines in India. But in 1929 and again in 1935, the Mines Act entirely prohibited company owners from deploying women in underground works. And then in 1952, it was stated that women miners will be deployed only in surface work and only in day shift. All this resulted in a sharp fall in the numbers of working women in the coal mining industry. The percentage of working women was left at around 9.7% in 1980. And the percentage never rose more than 10% till date.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To understand the reason for a woman to work in a coal sector company.
2. To examine the social background of the working women of WCL.
3. To study the role of working women in W.C.L.
4. To understand the problems of working women in W.C.L.
5. To study how the working women of W.C.L are coping with their multifarious problems.



3. METHODOLOGY:

This research was objectives oriented. The objective of this research was to understand the multifold problems of the working women and the hidden prospects for them in this industry. So, the 'Descriptive' methodology was adopted for this research.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Meera Desai, [“Economic Opportunities in women”, (1984)]: She says that women who are managing dual roles of homemaker and worker face serious problems, especially young mothers who often get no help of supportive services such as daycare, community crèche, foster daycare, etc.

Susan Bullock, [“Women and work”, (1994)]: She has stated through proven facts and figures that not only do the women encounter more problems in education and training but they are over represented amongst the lowest paid, part time work force, enjoying limited employment rights. Hence there is a need to work for elimination of gender discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers.

Jayati Ghosh, [“Trends in Female Employment in Developing Countries: Emerging issues; Paper for UNDP”, (1995)]: Like in most other developing countries across the globe, the period since 1980 has been notable for increasing participation of women in recognized paid employment and this trend has further intensified since 1990. This widespread pattern of feminization of work is essentially related to certain macro-economic trends in operation in different ways in these countries. The extent and trend of female labour force participation indicate greater involvement of women in recognized and remunerative employment.

Narasimhan Sakuntala, [“Empowering women: an alternative strategy from rural India” (1999)]: In her comparative study of the effectiveness of state initiatives with the motivation and conscientization strategy advocated by AWARE (Action for Welfare and Awakening in Rural Environment), she has found that psychological empowerment and awareness generation, rather than conventional economic intervention more works.

Ghothoskar, [“Status of Indian Women: Crisis and Conflict in Gender Issues”, (2003)]: He points out that construction work is the product of a combination of historical, economic and social factors and processes, which may change with time and circumstances. It is argued that women are found to be not over represented in the construction sector due the flexibility of work.

Subhas, C and Panda, Samitas. N, [“Empowerment of Women in India”, (2009)]: In the current changing scenario of global competition, advances in technology, open economic environment and gradual shifting from muscle to machine and brawn to brain power, importance is attached to Human Resources. The HRD for women covers a wide range of areas like education in a wider context, political empowerment of women and other developmental programmes for women sponsored by the Government.

Dr. Ahmed Nesar, [“Pushed to the Marhin: Women workers in Indian mining Industry, International mining history congress' ', (2012)]: Dr. Ahmed Nesar in his study looks at the factors leading to the declining women's share in the coal mines. The major theoretical question addressed by him is: how the institutions and technology interact at the workplace and how they impact the women workforce. He further found out that the policy changes and technological developments in the industry have co-evolved to produce negative outcomes for the women workers.

5. AN ANALYSIS: The Social outline of working women of WCL in society and her life:

Working women have long been an integral part of the global workforce, contributing significantly to economic growth and societal development. A field study was conducted between 2008 to 2013, in Western Coalfields Limited (WCL), involving 300 respondents. A diverse range of insights emerged, shedding light on the educational backgrounds, marital and recruitment statuses, caste and religious affiliations, housing situations, and family dynamics of these working women.



- **Educational Background:** In the wide spectrum of educational backgrounds, it was astonishing that 63.33% of working women were found to be uneducated. However, there were 8% graduates and 7.33% postgraduates. These women averaged around five technical and additional qualifications, underlining their commitment to self-improvement.
- **Marital and Recruitment Status:** In the context of W.C.L, a significant 70% of working women were widows recruited as dependents, showcasing the company's role in providing employment opportunities to this demographic. Meanwhile, 21.33% of respondents were married, and 8.67% were unmarried. Remarkably, none of the respondents was a divorcee.
- **Caste and Religion:** The diversity of the respondent pool was evident in their caste and religious affiliations. 30% identified as Scheduled Castes (SC), 8% as Scheduled Tribes (ST), and 4% as Nomadic Tribes (NT). A substantial 37.33% belonged to the Other Backward Classes (OBC), while 20.67% were from the general category. In terms of religion, 88.67% of respondents were Hindus, with smaller percentages representing Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, and Christian communities.
- **Housing Situation:** The study delved into the housing arrangements of these working women, with 43.33% residing in their own or permanent houses, reflecting a degree of financial stability. But, 51.33% were living in the company's quarters.
- **Residence and Work Location:** The majority of respondents (86.67%) were working in their hometowns. But, understanding the importance of employment, 13.33% of respondents were from another state.
- **Family Support and Preferences:** The family dynamics of working women were a central focus of the study. Nearly half (47.67%) of the respondents were living alone with their children, highlighting the prevalence of single-parent households. It was heartening to find that 98.33% believed that a joint family structure was preferable for a working woman, emphasizing the significance of familial support.
- **Appreciation and Household Work:** Working women experienced varying degrees of appreciation and assistance within their households. An overwhelming 98.67% were appreciated by their parents and children, underscoring the role of familial support in their lives. However, only 1.33% received appreciation from in-laws, indicating potential areas for improved family relationships. Balancing household chores and work commitments was a challenging factor, with 84.33% of respondents continuing domestic tasks even after returning from their jobs. Unfortunately, 97.33% faced challenges and felt exploited while juggling these responsibilities, underscoring the need for greater familial and societal support.
- **Impact on Personal Life:** The dual responsibilities of work and family took a toll on the personal lives of working women, with 97.33% feeling exploited and neglected. These women often experienced stress due to their demanding roles, showcasing need for work-life balance initiatives and mental health support. Despite these challenges, a remarkable 98.67% admitted that they were primarily able to fulfill family obligations, particularly in the context of raising young children.
- **Challenges of Balancing Work and Family:** Balancing work and family remained a significant challenge for a substantial portion of respondents. While 3.67% managed both roles without difficulty, 4% found it extremely challenging, and 13.33% sometimes struggled to strike a balance.
- **Perceived Family and Job Satisfaction:** Despite the challenges they faced, a significant majority of respondents (81.33%) believed they were doing justice to both their family and job responsibilities. However, 7.33% of women did not feel they could do justice to either role, highlighting the need for additional support and resources. A smaller percentage (0.67%) felt somewhat successful in managing both aspects of their lives, indicating room for improvement.



- **Response to Being Late at Home:** Surprisingly, 97.3% of respondents felt that their families did not react differently when they were late returning home, suggesting an understanding and accommodating family environment. Only a minority of cases (2.3%) resulted in family members feeling irritated, and an even smaller percentage (0.3%) had suspicious family members.
- **Perception of Working Women's Status:** The study examined how working women perceived their status within the family. A significant 80.33% believed that the status of working women in a family should be "very respected." However, 15% considered it "nothing special," and 4.67% felt it was "usually exploited."
- **Ideal Status of Working Women:** Regarding the ideal status of working women, 76.33% of respondents believed it should be "very respected." However, 18.33% thought it should be "secondary," and 5.33% believed it was "nothing great."
- **Factors Influencing Status Improvement:** Regarding factors that could improve the status of working women, 87.67% of respondents believed that rational family members played a crucial role. Additionally, 5% thought continuous efforts to make family members realize their contributions could help. However, 7% felt that nothing could improve the situation, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and awareness campaigns.
- **Fulfillment of Family Obligations:** The study found that 79.33% of respondents admitted they could only partially fulfill family obligations. This was largely attributed to having young children, as 19.34% felt they could not fulfill them at all. In contrast, 1.33% claimed to fulfill family obligations entirely and honestly.
- **Birth Control Attitudes:** A unanimous 100% of respondents believed in adopting birth control after having two children, emphasizing the importance of family planning. However, attitudes toward who should adopt birth control varied. While 81.33% felt that women should adopt birth control measures, 18.33% believed men should do so, and 0.33% thought anyone could.
- **Selective Abortion and Crèche Facility:** All respondents opposed selective abortion, demonstrating a strong stance against gender-based discrimination. Unfortunately, there was no Crèche Facility at their workplace, indicating a lack of support for working mothers and underscoring the need for improved workplace policies.
- **Maternity Leave and Childcare:** The majority (95.67%) of respondents availed Maternity Leave, indicating the importance of this benefit for working women. These women often took care of their sick children at night and were actively involved in their children's homework and school-related activities, showcasing their dedication to their family responsibilities.
- **Career Planning for Children:** A surprising finding was that 100% of respondents did not plan for the careers of their children, suggesting a lack of focus on this aspect.
- **Dowry and Daughter's Job After Marriage:** All respondents were aware that giving or taking dowry is illegal and expressed opposition to the dowry system. Furthermore, an overwhelming 97.33% supported their daughters pursuing a job after marriage, while only 0.67% disagreed. A smaller percentage (2%) believed it should depend on their daughters' wishes.
- **Daughter Joining CIL(Coal India Limited):** Regarding their daughters' career choices, 46.33% of respondents felt that their daughters should join CIL. However, 33% disagreed, and 20.67% believed it should depend on their daughters' desires.

In conclusion, this study underscores the need for continued efforts to empower these women through education, support systems, and changes in societal attitudes. By addressing the unique challenges faced by working women and fostering an environment of respect and equality, society can harness the immense potential and contributions of this vital segment of the workforce.



6. CONCLUSION:

The study on working women within Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) provides valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges, aspirations, and societal dynamics that shape the lives of these women. Several key takeaways emerge from this comprehensive analysis.

It is evident that working women constitute a diverse group, with varying educational backgrounds. While there are encouraging numbers of graduates and postgraduates among them, a substantial 63.33% being uneducated highlights the persistent educational disparities. This underscores the urgent need for educational access and opportunities for these women. The study highlights the remarkable role of WCL in providing employment opportunities to widowed women, with 70% of them recruited as dependents. This demonstrates the potential for companies to contribute to social empowerment by offering employment to marginalized groups.

Family support plays a crucial role in the lives of working women. While an overwhelming majority believes in the value of joint family structures, the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities are evident. There is a pressing need for societal and workplace support mechanisms to alleviate this burden. The study reveals the personal toll of dual responsibilities on working women's lives, emphasizing the importance of work-life balance initiatives and mental health support. Furthermore, it underscores the need to address societal perceptions of working women's status and encourage greater appreciation of their contributions.

7. RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the comprehensive field study conducted between 2008 to 2013 at Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) involving 300 working women, it is evident that the status and lives of these women within society are both complex and multifaceted. The study reveals that the working women are mostly uneducated and doing marginal work. The graduates and postgraduates had educated parental backgrounds, so, they were demonstrating their commitment to self-improvement. In terms of marital and recruitment status, the study highlights that WCL plays a crucial role in providing employment opportunities, particularly to widows recruited as dependents.

Regarding their perceived status within the family, a substantial portion believes that the status of working women should be "very respected", underlining the importance of changing societal perceptions. When it comes to factors influencing the improvement of their status, the study shows that rational family members play a crucial role, emphasizing the need for family education and awareness campaigns.

No doubt, this study reveals that working women in coal mining segments are majorly from weaker backgrounds. A continuous effort is needed to empower working women through education, support systems, and changes in societal attitudes. By addressing their unique challenges and fostering an environment of respect and equality, society can harness the immense potential and contributions of this vital segment of the workforce.

8. FUTURE SCOPE:

This study serves as a vital resource for understanding the challenges and aspirations of working women of WCL. Here it is necessary to note down that WCL is one of the subsidiaries of Coal India Limited. These subsidiaries are spread around in many states. At the same, it is not only Coal India Limited, but private parties also acquire coal mines. To understand the actual conditions of working women in the coal mining sector, more studies are required in other subsidiaries of Coal India Limited as well as in the areas where private mines are being operated..

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