



## An Analytical presentation of Professional and Economical attributes of working women of WCL (Western Coalfields Limited).

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**Abstract:** *In the past, women in India primarily chose employment in either agricultural activities or traditional rural industries. However, in contemporary times, factors such as competitive salaries, attractive benefits, and job stability have led an increasing number of women to consider working in organized industries. Currently, the proportion of women engaged in employment within urban areas lags behind their counterparts in rural regions. Simultaneously, the percentage of illiterate women in the workforce surpasses the number of literate counterparts. As of March 31, 2011 Census, women constituted 20.5% of the total workforce in organized sectors. This translates to approximately 59.54 lakh women employed in both the public and private sectors within the organized industry.*

**Keywords:** *Professional attributes of Working Women, Economical attributes of Working Women, Working Women in Western Coalfields Limited.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

In ancient India, women were idealized as 'Devi', a subject to be worshiped. Later, India was often characterized as a traditional and emerging nation, where the concept of women engaging in paid employment was historically viewed with a lack of prestige. Women were primarily confined to domestic roles and household chores, which were an integral part of their lives. But, because of economic crises in their families or the need for livelihood, from several decades ago, women entered the workforce out of necessity. Even if a woman served as the primary financial provider for her family, she still struggled to attain the title of "Bread Earner."

Coal India (CIL) as the name suggests, deals with one of the fossil fuels, coal. Coal primarily fuels power production and serves as a vital component for numerous large and small industries, including cement, steel, chemical, paper, sponge iron, and more. CIL stands as a Navaratna Company, with Western Coal Fields (WCL) as one of its subsidiaries, operating mines in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh regions. Given CIL's prestigious status as a leading public sector company in India, it offers attractive compensation and benefits to its workforce.

Beyond livelihood considerations, factors such as increasing female literacy, the rising cost of living, expenses associated with children's education, and the desire for economic and social independence and identity have compelled women to step out of their homes and pursue careers. In the early nineties, around 61% of the workforce in Indian coal mines were female. In 1929 the Mines Act was introduced and in 1935 it was revised, which completely prohibited the employment of women in underground roles and allowed them only to work in daylight hours. These regulations led to a significant decline in the number of working women in the coal mining industry. The percentage of women in the workforce dwindled to around 9.7% in 1980 and has remained below 10% to this day.

### 2. METHODOLOGY:

The 'Descriptive' research methodology was needed for intense study on this topic. 'Interview schedules' with open and closed ended questions were formatted. Primary data was collected from the company sites. The feedback of the 'Interview schedules' were the source of secondary data.



### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To understand the professional attributes of working in a coal sector company.
- To understand the economical attributes of working in a coal sector company.
- To study the contributing role of working women in W.C.L.
- To understand the professional hazards of working women in W.C.L.
- To study how the working women of W.C.L cope with their professional hazards.

### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW:

**Edgeworth, P.Y.** [“ Equal Pay to Men and Women for Equal Work”, (1922)]: argues that discrimination faced by women is not as unequal pay for equal work but rather as unequal job assignments as compared to men. He explained why women concentrate in certain jobs due to cultural or conspiratorial factors and the reasons for the low wage rate.

**John.Angela.V.** [“Coal Mining Women: Victorian Lives and Campaigns (Women in History)”, (1984)]: In the nineteenth century the British coal industry employed thousands of women, who mined, sorted and transported the coal. Angela John looked at the lives and struggles of these women, and their fight in the 1880s to keep their jobs at the pit.

**Deshpande, Sudha.** [“Changing Structure of Employment in India”, (1996)]: Conducted a study by pointing out the awful conditions of women workers in the informal sector. Ignorance, traditional bound attitudes, illiteracy, lack of skills, seasonal nature of employment, heavy physical work of different types, long hours of work with limited payment, sex discrimination in wage structures, lack of guarantee of minimum wages/ comprehensive legislation/ minimum facilities; migration and disintegration of families, bondage and alienation etc are some characteristics of employment of women in this sector.

**Lahiri-Dutt K.** [“Gin girls to scavengers: Women in the Raniganj coal belt”, (Economic and Political Weekly), (1999)]: In the beginning, the coal mining industry employed women from the adivasi and lower caste communities in various stages of production. Their role continued to be significant as long as technology remained labor-intensive and collieries were small and surface-bound. The expansion of the industry and increasing mechanization saw a decline in women's participation.

**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 flexibilities of work. Much employment in this sector is based on the “male breadwinner” model, which does not give adequate space or freedom to women who also have other domestic responsibilities. The employer's desire to ensure more work for less pay exploits this situation.

**Suzanne E. Tallichet.** [“Daughters of the mountain, Women coal miners in central Appalachia”, (2006)]: Focused upon women's on-the-job experiences with male miners and bosses, their attempts to advance, and their relationship with their union at a large coal mine in southern West Virginia. She found out that the women's accounts were as empowering for them to tell as they were for her to hear. Because they had entered the male-dominated and masculine-identified world of underground coal mining years before, they had developed particular points of view toward themselves, the male miners and bosses with whom they work, family members, and members of their own mining communities.

### 5. AN ANALYTIC PRESENTATION of Professional and Economical attributes of working women of WCL (Western Coalfields Limited).

The provided data by this research, presented a comprehensive insight into the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by working women in Western Coalfields Limited (WCL). The break down the key findings and explanations are as follows:



- **Working Hours:** A significant observation is that 100% of the respondents work only for eight hours. However, there's a notable exception for the executive class, where there is no strict time bounding, and work is conducted based on the demands of the job. The retired director of finance highlighted that during auditing, work sometimes extended until midnight, emphasizing the dedication and commitment required in certain roles.
- **Recruitment and Work Nature:** The survey highlights that 13% of respondents were recruited on a regular basis, while 83% were recruited as dependents, often due to the death of their husbands during service on compassionate grounds. Thus the majority of respondents are General Mazdoors, which is categorized as Category 1 workers. Notably, this information sheds light on the recruitment practices at WCL.
- **Nature of Work:** The data reveals that 70% of the respondents are engaged in manual work, with smaller percentages involved in paperwork (18.66%), technical work (9.33%), and mechanical work (2%). This distribution indicates that the majority of respondents rely on manual labor for their livelihood.
- **Support for Reservations:** An overwhelming 90.33% of respondents are in favor of reservations during recruitment for various posts in coalfields, indicating their endorsement of affirmative action measures.
- **Commute and Distance:** The majority of respondents commute to work using their own vehicles (38%), while a substantial portion (36%) go on foot. Interestingly, 38% live less than 1 km from their workplace, while 48.67% live more than 2 km away, shedding light on the diversity of commutes among these women.
- **Relations with Superiors:** A significant 98.67% of respondents described their relations with superiors as "formal." This finding provides insights into the professional dynamics within the organization.
- **Performance Assessment:** The majority (96.33%) believe that higher officials do justice while assessing annual performance, although 3.67% feel that bribery and flattery play roles in the process. Additionally, 97.67% express satisfaction with the current annual performance assessment process.
- **Facility Availability:** The survey reveals the absence of several facilities, such as separate washrooms, libraries, rest shelters, and reading rooms for working women. Only 78.33% have access to a canteen, and 78.33% have drinking water at their workplace, highlighting the need for improved facilities. Additionally, there is limited access to training programs.
- **Work Hazards:** The data suggests that 92.67% of respondents feel that they can get solutions to work hazards, while 7.33% disagree. The absence of female officers for consultation is noted as one of the challenges.
- **Work-Related Stress and Challenges:** The survey highlights that various factors contribute to work-related stress among respondents, including work pressure, health problems, and family issues. This data underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by working women.
- **Stress Factors:** The majority attribute tension with higher officials to work pressure (88.33%), while 9.33% feel there is no tension. The data also highlights various stress factors related to work, including health problems, family problems, and social issues.
- **Shifts and Stress:** Interestingly, 67.33% find their work to be physically hard, and among them, 47.52% experience physical stress. Additionally, 71.3% face mental stress, indicating the demanding nature of their jobs.
- **Union Membership:** All respondents are members of unions, and most believe that unions are helpful (88.67%). However, 2.33% feel that union leaders sometimes exploit workers.



- **Union Participation:** While many respondents are members of unions, a significant portion (88%) does not participate in union activities. However, unions are generally viewed positively, with 88.33% of respondents finding them helpful.
- **Women in Leadership:** Respondents reported a lack of female union leaders and leaders within the organization. This data suggests room for improvement in gender diversity in leadership roles.
- **Reservations and Women's Empowerment:** Respondents expressed support for reservations based on economic need and suggested that a shift toward economically weaker families for reservation purposes would be beneficial.
- **Leaves and Attendance:** A significant 54.20% have 90% attendance, while 10.20% have 100% attendance. The data also shows that all respondents avail 10-15 days of earned leave (EL) in addition to casual leave (CL).
- **Motivation and Efficiency:** The data suggests that there is no specific motivation for work (100%). However, respondents believe that the installation of CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) at important places would improve efficiency and safety.
- **Future Prospects:** A substantial portion (57%) is aware of the future prospects for women in this field. Many respondents (77.67%) express satisfaction with their current jobs.
- **Social Issues:** A notable finding is that 100% of respondents report facing "cheap comments" from male colleagues, indicating a concerning issue of harassment at the workplace. It also indicates the need for better security measures, including the installation of CCTV cameras.
- **Gender Discrimination:** The data suggests that discrimination on the basis of gender occurs, with 24.33% stating that it is prevalent. Moreover, 32.33% believe that sex abuse occurs at the workplace, but these incidents are rarely reported.
- **Awareness:** A majority of respondents (96.67%) are unaware of important aspects like RTI (Right to Information) and the symbol of womanhood.
- **Work Satisfaction:** Despite some challenges, 84% express satisfaction with their existing pay and perks.

In summary, the data reflects the diverse experiences and challenges faced by female employees in WCL. It highlights the need for improvements in facilities, safety, gender equality, and addressing issues related to harassment and discrimination at the workplace. Additionally, there is a call for greater awareness and education on important matters like legal rights and opportunities for women.

## 6. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, our extensive research has illuminated the intricate tapestry of the working lives of women within Western Coalfields Limited (WCL). Through meticulous data collection, we have gained profound insights into the challenges and realities they confront daily.

One striking observation is the unwavering commitment exhibited by these women, except for executive roles that demand extended work hours beyond the conventional eight-hour day. It is noteworthy that a significant portion of respondents, often recruited as dependents due to family circumstances, predominantly occupy the role of General Mazdoors, underscoring the prevalence of dependents within the workforce. The core of their contributions lies in manual labor, emphasizing their indispensable role in the organization's operational framework. Their overwhelming support for recruitment reservations signifies their endorsement of affirmative action aimed at fostering gender diversity.



While satisfaction with the annual performance assessment process generally remains high, the absence of certain facilities and limited access to training programs point to areas requiring improvement. The respondents' ability to devise solutions to workplace hazards underscores the necessity for enhanced consultation resources. The data underscores the multifaceted nature of work-related stress and challenges, encompassing work pressure, health concerns, and family issues. Among these, work pressure emerges as a significant contributor.

The scarcity of female leaders, both within unions and the organization, underscores the urgency of enhancing gender diversity in leadership positions. The respondents' support for reservations based on economic need aligns with their aspiration for women's empowerment. Attendance patterns and motivations for work exhibit variance, with a unanimous call for improved efficiency and safety through the installation of CCTV cameras. Notably, despite facing numerous challenges, a considerable number of respondents express satisfaction with their current jobs.

In summary, this research has shed light on the diverse experiences and challenges encountered by working women at WCL. It underscores the pressing need to address issues related to facilities, safety, gender equality, harassment, and discrimination in the workplace. Furthermore, there is a clear imperative for heightened awareness and education on critical topics such as legal rights and opportunities for women.

## 7. RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the comprehensive findings outlined in the conclusion of this research, several recommendations can be made to improve the working conditions and opportunities for female employees at Western Coalfields Limited (WCL):

- **Flexibility for Executive Roles:** Recognize the dedication exhibited by female employees and consider introducing greater flexibility in executive roles, allowing them to balance their responsibilities more effectively.
- **Diversified Recruitment Practices:** Evaluate and revise recruitment practices to ensure a broader representation of female employees in various job categories, reducing the reliance on dependent recruits.
- **Workplace Facilities:** Address the absence of essential facilities such as separate washrooms, libraries, rest shelters, and reading rooms for working women. Prioritize their availability to enhance the work environment.
- **Training Opportunities:** Expand access to training programs for female employees to further develop their skills and enhance their career prospects within the organization.
- **Safety and Consultation Resources:** Improve safety measures and consultation resources for addressing work hazards, especially considering the absence of female officers for consultation.
- **Leadership Diversity:** Implement strategies to promote gender diversity in leadership roles, both within the organization and its associated unions, ensuring a more inclusive representation.
- **Awareness and Education:** Develop initiatives to raise awareness and educate female employees about their legal rights and opportunities within the organization, promoting empowerment and informed decision-making.
- **Security Measures:** Take immediate steps to address the issue of harassment by installing CCTV cameras and other security measures to ensure a safe and respectful work environment.
- **Encourage Union Participation:** Encourage more active participation of female employees in union activities to strengthen their collective voice and influence within the organization.
- **Periodic Review:** Regularly assess progress in implementing these recommendations and make necessary adjustments to foster a supportive and equitable workplace for female employees.

By implementing these recommendations, WCL can not only improve the experiences of its female workforce but also contribute to a more inclusive and gender-equal workplace, ultimately benefiting the organization as a whole.

## 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. 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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