Invisible Labor: A Study of Economic Empowerment of Home Based Women Workers in Rawalpindi

ABSTRACT

Home based work is vital category of work due to its significance for valuable contribution in country’s economy. However, workers involved in such type of work are the most vulnerable section of the society. Women more than men are involved in home based work but they suffer immense exploitation because of the conditions of their work and remained suppressed due to the conservative set up of their household which restrict them to be independent. This research study seeks to address some of these factors that led to women home based workers’ invisibility, seclusion, and discrimination due to specific socially constructed roles for them. Primary data was collected from the respondents of the study through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. In order to enhance the authenticity of data and support the findings from the field, a few case studies were also incorporated. Findings of the study indicated that, the discriminatory treatment women suffer inside the household hinders them from strengthening their position and altering the power structures that are constructed as a result of long established patriarchal norms and values. Moreover, home based women workers unawareness about the rights, their inaccessibility to approach the law implementing structures and the inclusion of middlemen in the processes of work are some of the key factors among many, behind their exploitation. Relevant governing bodies and law implementing institutions should collectively make an effort in including these workers within the realm of laws along with regularizing their work and wages. Furthermore, collaboration with the social sector can be a way to improve the lives of these women, through raising consciousness and provision of legal aid in their struggle against the routine humiliation they face both in the household and work matters.