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Women Workers in Focus: A Study of Socio-Economic and Workplace Challenges

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the socio-economic realities and working conditions of women workers in Haryana State. Using a structured questionnaire with 15 Likert-scale statements, data were collected from 600 respondents across diverse industrial and occupational sectors. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to validate the scale and identify underlying dimensions of women's experiences. The analysis revealed five distinct factors: Economic Security and Workplace Well-being, Employee Empowerment and Support, Workplace Rights and Safety, Employment Stability and Financial Access, and Gender Equality and Career Opportunities. These factors collectively highlight the multifaceted challenges faced by women workers, ranging from income sufficiency and workplace safety to gender inclusivity and career advancement. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic and workplace environment, offering valuable insights for policymakers, employers, and researchers.

Keywords: Women Workers, Legal Perspective, Socio-Economic Empowerment, Haryana State.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women workers form an integral part of the global labor force, contributing significantly to economic growth, household income, and social development. Yet, despite their increasing participation across industries, they continue to face persistent workplace challenges that limit their potential and well-being. These challenges often manifest in the form of wage disparities, limited career advancement opportunities, inadequate workplace facilities, and exposure to unsafe or discriminatory environments. Understanding these issues is essential for building inclusive workplaces that recognize and support the unique needs of women workers.

Workplace challenges for women are not confined to economic aspects alone; they also intersect with social and cultural expectations. Many women struggle to balance professional responsibilities with family obligations, often in environments that lack supportive policies such as maternity leave, childcare facilities, or flexible working arrangements. In addition, issues of harassment, unequal pay, and restricted access to training or skill development programs further exacerbate the difficulties faced by women in the workforce. These barriers highlight the need for comprehensive assessments of workplace conditions to ensure fairness, safety, and empowerment [1].

In regions like Haryana, where industrial and service sectors are rapidly expanding, women workers play a vital role in sustaining economic activity. However, their workplace experiences are shaped by structural inequalities and socio-economic realities that demand closer examination. By focusing on

women's perceptions of workplace safety, rights, facilities, and opportunities, researchers can identify critical gaps that hinder their participation and growth. Such insights are crucial for informing both organizational practices and policy frameworks aimed at improving labor standards.

This study seeks to provide a systematic understanding of the conditions faced by women in their places of work. Through empirical analysis of structured survey responses, it highlights the dimensions of workplace challenges and offers evidence-based recommendations for creating safer, more equitable, and supportive environments. Ultimately, the research contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality and labor rights, positioning women workers at the center of strategies for inclusive and sustainable development.

2. REVIEW LITERAURE

Bhagra (2025) conducted a conceptual study that relied entirely on secondary data to analyze the issues, challenges, and necessity of women's empowerment in India, with a particular focus on aligning national development goals with global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The study aimed to highlight the centrality of women's empowerment in achieving societal well-being, gender equality, and social justice. Through a review of existing literature, reports, and policy documents, the research identified persistent obstacles such as patriarchal domination, limited access to resources, and socio-political underrepresentation of women. The findings revealed that empowerment was not merely a slogan but an essential catalyst for progress in families, communities, and the nation. The results emphasized that although governmental efforts were significant, they remained insufficient without active participation from civil society in creating a gender-sensitive environment. The study concluded with a call for integrated, holistic strategies that embed women at the heart of development processes, and suggested future efforts should focus on strengthening inclusive practices that ensure equal opportunities, self-determination, and full participation for women in all spheres of life [2].

Yan et al. (2024) examined gender diversity initiatives aimed at empowering women in the Australian construction industry. It analyzed corporate policies, action plans, and reports to assess the effectiveness of diversity strategies. Findings revealed six key themes: flexible working arrangements, inclusive workplace culture, career development opportunities, recruitment and promotion policies, shared caregiving responsibilities, and strategic commitments. The study identified gaps in implementation and provided recommendations for enhancing gender diversity efforts [3].

Kaur et al. (2024)analyzed the legal safeguards afforded to female workers in India, emphasizing wage parity, occupational safety, and maternity entitlements. The analysis encompassed significant legislations such as the Equal Remuneration Act (1976), Factories Act (1948), Maternity Benefit Act (1961), and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013). The findings indicated that although these laws established a robust legal framework, implementation was variable, especially within the informal sector. The study underscored the prevalence of unpaid labor, salary inequities, and restricted access to legal remedies, accentuating the necessity for policy reforms and enhanced enforcement measures to guarantee fair labor rights for women [4].

Mishra (2024) conducted a study with the objective of assessing the effectiveness of planned development as a strategy to address poverty, social imbalances, and systemic discrimination against rural disadvantaged women in India. Utilizing a policy analysis methodology, the research reviewed various government-led initiatives, Five-Year Plans, and budgetary provisions aimed at advancing

women's welfare and empowerment. The findings revealed that targeted policies and programmes had been implemented to uplift the socio-economic conditions of rural women, addressing issues such as access to resources, employment, political participation, and freedom of expression. The results underscored that government and voluntary sectors had taken significant steps to integrate gender-sensitive policies into national development agendas. However, persistent gaps in accessibility and influence indicated the need for more inclusive and sustained interventions. The study concluded with a call for stronger institutional frameworks and continuous reform to bridge disparities and promote equitable growth, thus supporting the broader goal of building a prosperous and welfare-oriented society [5].

Arya et al. (2024) undertook a study to explore the gendered experiences of platform workers in India, with a focus on the beauty and personal services sectors. The primary objective was to analyze the working conditions, challenges, and legislative context affecting both male and female workers engaged through two major digital labor platforms. Given the limitations in available data, the researchers employed a novel mixed-method approach based on a sample of 328 worker responses. The study found that workers commonly faced issues such as algorithmic control, inadequate technical support, weak feedback systems, safety risks, and financial burdens. It also highlighted the legal protections currently in place for women workers, along with recent legislative developments concerning platform-based labor. The results underscored the urgent need to align India's legal frameworks with rapidly evolving digital work environments, advocating for gender-inclusive reforms that ensure fair and equitable labor opportunities. Future research was recommended to deepen understanding of platform-specific vulnerabilities and promote regulatory mechanisms that adapt to the intersection of technology, gender, and labor rights [6].

Khandwe et al. (2024) conducted a legal and analytical study with the objective of examining the role of women in the corporate sector and assessing the effectiveness of the legal provisions designed to support their empowerment. The research focused on identifying existing legal frameworks, evaluating their implementation, and highlighting the gaps and challenges that hinder gender equity in corporate environments. Employing a doctrinal approach, the study reviewed relevant statutes, judicial interpretations, and institutional practices. The findings revealed that although strong legislative measures exist to promote women's rights in the workplace, their impact was limited due to weak implementation, lack of awareness among stakeholders, and inconsistent enforcement of court judgments. The results emphasized that mere legislative existence was insufficient to dismantle systemic barriers unless supported by robust application and compliance mechanisms. The study concluded by advocating for increased awareness campaigns, improved regulatory oversight, and consistent application of legal provisions to create inclusive workspaces where women could participate equally and thrive professionally. Future efforts were recommended to focus on bridging enforcement gaps and fostering a culture of accountability and inclusivity within corporate systems [7].

Gnanadesigan et al. (2024) conducted a conceptual study to examine the lived experiences of women working in India's unorganized sector, with the objective of identifying key challenges related to wages, job security, and gender-based discrimination. Utilizing a qualitative methodology involving interviews and field observations, the researchers explored a wide range of informal occupations including domestic work, street vending, garment production, and small-scale manufacturing. The findings revealed that these women endured harsh working conditions marked by long hours, minimal benefits, and a lack of social security, healthcare, and educational access. The results also brought attention to the

compounded nature of discrimination, showing that intersecting factors such as caste, class, and religion intensified their vulnerabilities. The study concluded that without targeted interventions and inclusive policies, these systemic inequalities would persist. Future efforts were encouraged to address these multidimensional barriers through tailored social protection schemes, awareness programs, and structural reforms aimed at improving the rights and well-being of women in informal labor [8].

Jeysari (2023) demonstrated the empowerment of women in the Indian workforce by analyzing their rights under labor legislation. The involvement of women in the workforce was crucial for sustained economic development and gender parity. Nonetheless, gender-based discrimination and inequitable treatment continue to obstruct women's advancement in the workplace. The study sought to identify and examined the principal stipulations of Indian labor legislation that protect women's rights, including the Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act, and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, among others. Furthermore, it examined the implementation and enforcement procedures of these laws to evaluate their efficacy in advancing gender equality. The research utilized a blend of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, encompassing document analysis, stakeholder interviews, and statistical examination of pertinent data. The findings illuminated the current challenges encountered by women in the Indian workforce and offer recommendations to bolster women's empowerment through policy reforms, awareness campaigns, and capacity-building efforts [9].

Surendra and Gayathari (2023) indicated that the trajectory of labor laws was progressing toward a dynamic future, requiring agility and adaptation in response to changing work paradigms. These laws were at a critical point, ready to establish inclusive, sustainable, and resilient frameworks that address a diverse and quickly evolving workforce. Integrating technological breakthroughs while protecting worker rights, enhancing diversity, and encouraging environmental stewardship are essential components for the future framework of labor rules. The future of labor laws highlighted the necessity to adapt to non-traditional work arrangements, including gig economies and remote work, by guaranteeing fair treatment and opportunities for collective bargaining. Provisions that empower workers, particularly those impacted by automation and AI, were essential for alleviating disparities resulting from technological changes. Moreover, inclusion was fundamental, requiring the implementation of strategies that promote diversity, equality, and representation in professional environments. Eliminating gender wage discrepancies, addressing inequities experienced by underrepresented groups, and promoting an inclusive culture were essential for the advancement of labor laws towards a more just and equitable future. The future of labor laws depends on their capacity to adapt to change, promote inclusivity, and maintain ethical and sustainable practices. By proactively tackling new difficulties and promoting resilient, adaptive frameworks, these laws could establish a foundation for a more egalitarian, empowered, and progressive workforce in the future [10].

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this research is to examine the socio-economic and working conditions experienced by women workers, with a focus on understanding how their employment environment interacts with broader aspects of their economic and social lives. By analyzing responses to structured Likert-scale statements, the research seeks to identify key dimensions that shape women's experiences in the labor market, highlight disparities or challenges they face, and provide evidence-based insights that can inform organizational practices and policy interventions designed to improve the quality of work life for women workers.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Women workers constitute a vital segment of the labor force, contributing significantly to both household income and national economic growth. Despite their growing participation across diverse sectors, they often face unique socio-economic and workplace challenges that hinder their full potential. Issues such as wage disparities, irregular employment, limited access to financial services, and inadequate workplace facilities continue to shape their experiences in the labor market. Understanding these conditions is essential not only for improving women's quality of work life but also for promoting inclusive and sustainable development [11].

In the context of Haryana [12], a state with a dynamic industrial and service sector landscape, women workers play a crucial role in manufacturing, retail, education, and informal employment. However, their socio-economic realities are often intertwined with cultural expectations, family responsibilities, and structural inequalities. Examining both their economic contributions and workplace conditions provides a holistic view of the challenges they encounter, ranging from income sufficiency and career advancement opportunities to workplace safety and gender equality.

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive [13] research design, which is appropriate for examining the socio-economic and workplace challenges faced by women workers. A descriptive design allows the researcher to capture the status, perceptions, and experiences of respondents without manipulating variables. Since the objective is to understand and evaluate conditions as they exist, this design provides a clear and systematic framework for collecting and analyzing data. The use of a question-based survey instrument ensures that responses are standardized, quantifiable, and suitable for statistical analysis.

Study Area

The research was conducted in Haryana State [14], a region known for its industrial hubs, service sector growth, and diverse socio-economic landscape. Haryana provides a relevant context because women workers here are engaged in both formal and informal sectors, ranging from manufacturing and retail to education and domestic work. Studying this area allows for insights into how industrial development and socio-cultural factors intersect to shape women's workplace experiences.

Sample Size

A total of 600 respondents were selected for the study. This sample size is sufficiently large to ensure representativeness and statistical reliability, while also being manageable for detailed analysis. With 600 participants, the study can capture variations across demographic categories such as age, marital status, education, and type of employment. This enhances the generalizability of the findings and provides a robust basis for factor analysis.

Analytical Tool and Technique

The primary analytical tool used is Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) [15]. EFA is particularly suitable because the study involves 15 Likert-scale statements designed to measure multiple aspects of socio-economic and workplace conditions. By applying EFA, the researcher can reduce these items into a smaller set of underlying factors, thereby identifying the key dimensions that define women's experiences. This statistical method ensures that the constructions are valid, reliable, and theoretically meaningful.

Sample Area Selection

The six districts, Faridabad, Gurugram, Panipat, Karnal, Ambala, and Hisar were strategically chosen to represent Haryana's industrial and socio-economic diversity.

- **Faridabad**: A major industrial hub with a concentration of manufacturing units, making it ideal for studying women in industrial employment.
- **Gurugram**: Known for its IT, corporate, and service sector presence, offering insights into modern workplace challenges and opportunities for women.
- **Panipat**: Famous for textiles and small-scale industries, providing a perspective on women's participation in traditional and semi-formal sectors.
- **Karnal**: An agricultural and semi-urban district, included to capture the experiences of women in less industrialized but evolving employment contexts.
- **Ambala**: With its mix of trade, education, and defense-related industries, Ambala adds diversity to the sample by including women in varied occupational roles.
- **Hisar**: A growing center for education and agro-based industries, chosen to reflect the conditions of women workers in emerging sectors.

By selecting these districts, the study ensures coverage of both urban and semi-urban contexts, industrial and service sectors, and traditional as well as modern workplaces. This strategic sampling enhances the representativeness of the findings and provides a comprehensive view of women's socio-economic and workplace challenges in Haryana.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Examining the socio-economic and working conditions experienced by women workers involves understanding both their personal circumstances and workplace realities. Socio-economic factors such as income level, education, family responsibilities, and access to resources directly influence how women engage with their jobs and balance their roles. At the same time, working conditions such as wages, hours of work, safety, facilities, and organizational support shape their overall employment experience. Together, these dimensions provide a holistic picture of the challenges and opportunities faced by women in the labor market.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is used in this context to uncover the underlying dimensions within the 15 Likert-scale statements related to socio-economic and working conditions. Since these statements may overlap or measure related aspects, EFA helps reduce them into meaningful factors (e.g., financial stability, workplace safety, organizational support). This statistical technique identifies clusters of items that represent broader constructions, ensuring that the scale is both valid and reliable. By using EFA, researchers can move beyond individual responses to reveal the structural patterns of women's experiences, making the analysis more precise and theoretically grounded.

Table 1: KMO Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.818
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3316.421
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

Source: SPSS tool

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy value of 0.818 indicates that the data are highly suitable for factor analysis, since values above 0.80 are considered "meritorious" and show

that correlations among variables are compact enough to yield reliable factors. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity further supports this suitability, with a chi-square value of 3316.421, degrees of freedom 105, and a significance level of 0.000. The significant result ($p < 0.05$) confirms that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, meaning there are sufficient relationships among the variables to justify the use of factor analysis. Together, these results validate the appropriateness of applying Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to the dataset.

Table 2: Variance Analysis

Total Variance Explained							
Component	**Initial Eigenvalues**			**Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings**			**Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a]**
	Total	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**	**Total**	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**	**Total**
1	3.70	24.706	24.706	3.70	24.706	24.706	2.510
2	2.80	18.709	43.415	2.80	18.709	43.415	2.668
3	1.53	10.212	53.627	1.53	10.212	53.627	2.749
4	1.32	8.834	62.461	1.32	8.834	62.461	2.839
5	1.02	6.821	69.282	1.02	6.821	69.282	2.358
6	.872	5.811	75.094				
7	.693	4.622	79.716				
8	.583	3.886	83.601				
9	.521	3.472	87.073				
10	.450	2.997	90.070				
11	.388	2.589	92.659				
12	.346	2.310	94.969				
13	.296	1.971	96.939				
14	.234	1.561	98.501				
15	.225	1.499	100.000				
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							

Source: SPSS tool

The Total Variance Explained table shows the results of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) applied to the 15 statements. The initial eigenvalues indicate that five components have values greater than 1, which means they are statistically significant and retained for further analysis. Together, these five components explain 69.28% of the total variance, demonstrating that they capture most of the information contained in the dataset. The first component accounts for 24.71%, the second for 18.71%, the third for 10.21%, the fourth for 8.83%, and the fifth for 6.82% of the variance. After rotation, the variance is more evenly distributed across the five factors, with each contributing between 2.35 and 2.84 to the total, which improves interpretability. This confirms that the data structure is well represented by five meaningful factors, reducing complexity while retaining most of the explanatory power.

Table 3: Factor Analysis

Factor for Socio Economic Condition	Statements	Factor Loading	Mean	Average Mean
Employee Empowerment and Support (EES)	I have opportunities for training or career advancement.	0.875	3.87	3.84
	My workplace accommodates my family responsibilities.	0.826	3.83	
	My opinions and concerns are respected in my workplace.	0.793	3.81	
Economic Security and Workplace Well-being (ESW)	I contribute significantly to my household income.	0.997	3.53	3.53
	My income is sufficient to meet basic family needs.	0.856	3.54	
	My workplace provides a safe and healthy working environment.	0.493	3.53	
Workplace Rights and Safety (WRS)	I feel secure from harassment or abuse at work.	0.902	3.67	3.62
	My workplace adheres to labor rights and fair wage policies.	0.813	3.7	
	I am allowed to take breaks during my working hours.	0.544	3.53	
	I have access to essential facilities like toilets, drinking water, and rest areas.	0.491	3.6	
Employment Stability and Financial Access (ESF)	I experience seasonal or irregular employment.	1.001	3.76	3.76
	I have access to financial services (e.g., banking, savings, credit).	0.715	3.76	
Gender Equality and Career Opportunities (GCO)	I receive equal pay for equal work compared to male colleagues.	0.902	3.81	3.77
	Maternity leave and childcare support are available to me.	0.861	3.82	
	My education level helps me access better job opportunities.	0.59	3.68	

Source: SPSS tool

This study, based on responses from 600 women workers across Haryana, employs Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to analyze 15 structured Likert-scale statements. The statistical approach enables the identification of five key factors that represent the underlying dimensions of women's socio-economic and workplace experiences. These factors economic security, empowerment and support, workplace rights and safety, employment stability and financial access, and gender equality and career

opportunities offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted realities of women workers.

By focusing on these dimensions, the research aims to provide evidence-based insights that can inform organizational practices and policy interventions. The findings not only highlight areas where women workers continue to face barriers but also point toward opportunities for reform and empowerment. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on labor rights, gender equality, and socio-economic development, positioning women workers at the center of strategies for inclusive growth.

The factor analysis of socio-economic conditions among women workers in Haryana revealed five distinct dimensions that capture their workplace and economic realities. Employee Empowerment and Support (EES) emerged as a strong factor, with high loadings on statements related to career advancement opportunities, family responsibility accommodations, and respect for opinions, averaging a mean of 3.84. This indicates that women perceive moderate levels of empowerment and support in their workplaces. Economic Security and Workplace Well-being (ESW), with an average mean of 3.53, highlights the importance of income sufficiency, contribution to household earnings, and workplace safety. Although women contribute significantly to household income, the relatively lower mean suggests that economic security remains a challenge. Similarly, Workplace Rights and Safety (WRS), averaging 3.62, reflects women's perceptions of harassment protection, adherence to labor rights, and access to essential facilities, pointing to a moderately positive but still improvable environment.

The other two factors, Employment Stability and Financial Access (ESF) and Gender Equality and Career Opportunities (GCO) further emphasize critical aspects of women's socio-economic conditions. ESF, with a mean of 3.76, shows that while irregular employment is a concern, access to financial services provides some stability. GCO, averaging 3.77, underscores the role of equal pay, maternity support, and education in shaping women's career opportunities. Together, these five factors explain the multidimensional challenges faced by women workers, ranging from empowerment and workplace safety to financial inclusion and gender equality. The moderate mean scores across all factors suggest that while progress has been made, significant gaps remain in ensuring equitable, secure, and supportive working conditions for women. This framework provides a comprehensive basis for policymakers and organizations to design interventions that address both socio-economic and workplace challenges in a holistic manner.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that women workers in Haryana face a complex interplay of socio-economic and workplace challenges. While many respondents reported contributing significantly to household income and accessing basic facilities, issues such as irregular employment, limited financial inclusion, and gender disparities in pay and career advancement remain prevalent. The five factors identified through EFA demonstrate that women's workplace experiences cannot be understood in isolation but are shaped by broader socio-economic realities. The results emphasize the need for targeted interventions to improve workplace safety, ensure fair wages, strengthen gender equality, and enhance opportunities for training and career growth. By addressing these dimensions, organizations and policymakers can foster a more equitable and supportive environment for women workers.

7. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The findings carry important implications for future research, policy, and practice. Academically, the

five-factor framework can serve as a validated model for studying women's socio-economic and workplace conditions in other regions, enabling comparative analyses. Employers can use these insights to implement employee-centric practices that promote empowerment, safety, and inclusivity. Future studies may also employ longitudinal designs to track changes over time or integrate qualitative methods to capture deeper narratives of women lived experiences. Ultimately, this research provides a foundation for building workplaces that not only protect women workers but also empower them to thrive economically and socially.

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