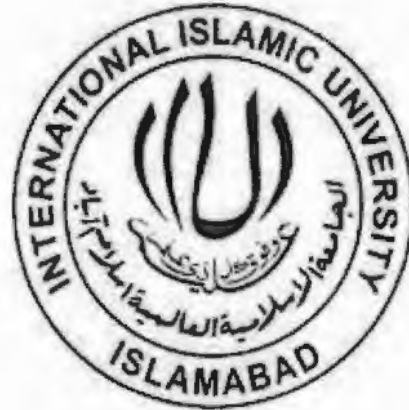


Thesis Title

**Women in Informal Economy: A Sociological Analysis of Self-employed Home-based  
Women Workers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad**



Researcher

Supervisor

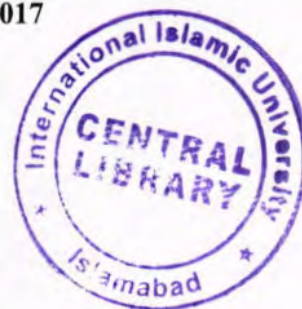
Muhammad Ashfaq

Dr. Farhan Navid Yousaf

Registration No: 219-FSS/MSSOC/S15

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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
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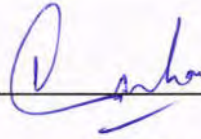
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**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD**  
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It is certified that thesis submitted by Mr. Muhammad Ashfaq Registration No. 219-FSS/MSSOC/S15 titled "Women in Informal Economy: A Sociological Analysis of Self-employed Home-based Women Workers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad" has been evaluated by the following viva voce committee and found that thesis has sufficient material and meets the prescribed standard for the award of MS degree in the discipline of Sociology.

**VIVA-VOCE COMMITTEE**

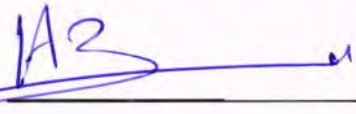
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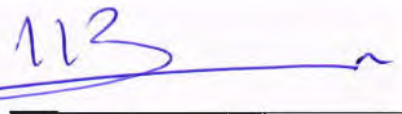
**External Examiner:**

  
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**Internal Examiner:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Deputy Dean FSS/Chairman,  
Department of Sociology**

  
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**Dean/Deputy Dean,  
Faculty of Social Science**

  
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## **Dedication**

To my parents and to my uncle Abid ul Haq and his everlasting help throughout my life.

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## Abstract

Home-based work is considered a gendered phenomenon as an overwhelming majority of them comprises women. Despite the fact that millions of women in Pakistan are engaged in home-based work, they are not recognized as workers in national labor laws and are deprived of social protection and other facilities available to workers in formal economy. Focusing on the lived experiences of self-employed home-based women workers, this study examines socioeconomic problems faced by the women workers and the ways they negotiate those challenges. The study also points out how vocational training affects the lived experiences of self-employed home-based women workers. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with home-based women workers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the study showed that home-based work is considered appropriate for women because it does not require them to compromise their primary roles as mothers and caregivers for their families. As the home-based work remains unregularized and outside the radar of labor policies, the women workers faced severe human insecurities, including economic insecurity, shelter insecurity, and health insecurity. Getting permission from family to attend the vocational training centre was a major challenge for women, but they negotiated that by drawing upon support from other women among their relatives or neighborhood. Formal training helped the women to enhance their sewing/embroidery skills according to the market trend, to learn basic skills to repair or maintain sewing/embroidery machines, and to get awareness about market price of their work. Despite working extensively, the earnings of home-based women workers were very meager. However, those home-based women workers who had obtained formal training were relatively earning higher because of better understanding of market price and improved skills. The government, in collaboration with other stakeholders, must recognize home-based workers as workers in labor laws and design interventions to address their issues and protect their rights as per international labor standards.



## **Chapter I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Home-based Work: A Brief Overview**

Drawing upon in-depth interviews with self-employed home-based women workers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, this study examines socioeconomic problems faced by the women workers and the ways they negotiate those challenges. The study also highlights how self-employed home-based women workers remain outside the radar of labor laws and impediments to the implementation of policies to acknowledge the contribution of home-based workers to national economy and providing them socioeconomic security as workers.

Women in informal economy refer to all those women engaged in economic activities, that are not registered according to labor laws, and which do not have systematic supervision, and done without official regulation. Informal self-employed workers do not have the protection of social insurance, social security, and old age pension benefits. Women informal economic activities include “wage workers” like informal employees of formal sector, and informal employees of informal sector (Chen, 2012). Women in informal economic activities are engaged in jobs that are unstable and lack social and economic security, like cart vending, hawking, roadside cobbling, and domestic work (Avasthy, Ray, & Deb, 2013).

The majority of workers in informal sector do not receive social security and health facilities as their work remains invisible i.e., not covered by labor laws. Further, as the economic contribution of informal sector is not included in the country’s gross national product, it remains invisible in the state’s economic policies and documents. Some workers may consider informal work more convenient as it does not involve restrictions by employer and the workers have the liberty to start and finish their work according to their own will. However, women workers in informal sector may experience more challenges e.g., obtaining

permission of male family members, and taking care of children and other household-related chores along with the work even when they are not feeling well (Olaya, Diaz, & Caicedo, 2007).

In this research, I conceptualize the term home-based workers as defined by the International Labor Organization (2002, p. 44) according to which home-based workers “refer to the general category of workers who carry out remunerative work within their homes or in the surrounding grounds. It does not refer to either unpaid housework or paid domestic work. Within the general category of home-based workers, there are two basic types of workers: those who work on their own (the self-employed) and those who work for others (mainly as industrial outworkers).”

According to Roots for Equity (2011, p.14), the total work force of home-based women workers (HBWWs) in Pakistan is 12 million. The home-based women’s urban workforce comprises 26% and the rural workforce 74%. Among the four provinces, the urban home-based women workforce in Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa is 41.9%, 24.6%, 29.8% and 3.7%, respectively. The rural home-based women workforce in Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and KP is 70.5%, 22.4%, 6.4%, and 0.65% respectively.

Due to shrinking job opportunities in public sector, the number of workers in informal sector, especially of women, has been increasing. However, unfortunately they are not counted in labor force survey because their economic activities unregistered and unregulated. According to Hassan and Farooq (2015), in Punjab mostly women worker started their informal economic activities in the early age of 7 to 9 years, and they acquired their skill 38% from their parents, 23% from friends, neighbors, and 19% from their relative. While 83.8% of home-based women workers liked their home-based work, 69% home-based women worker expressed the compatibility in their work at home because they considered this informal home-based work the source of income.

Pakistan has signed or ratified different international declarations and conventions regarding basic labour rights. However, Pakistani labor laws and Factories Act of 1934 do not consider self-employed home-based workers as worker because they have no relation with employer and work without any contract due to which they are deprived of their rights of social security, social insurance, and freedom of association. Even labor policies of 1955, 1959, 1969, 1972, 2002, 2008, and 2010 did not recognize home-based worker as worker because these policies cover only formal economic sectors and enterprises (Raza, 2009).

In the absence of any regulatory framework, home-based women workers remain vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Scholars (Khan, 2007; Naseer & Taib, 2014) note that due to patriarchal structures the majority of home-based women workers are abused physically and verbally. Moreover, home-based women workers face the challenges of non-availability of material resources and frequent electricity load shedding. Social, cultural, and religious barriers in many cases restrict the movement of women and confine them in homes. Due to these various factors, many women prefer to work in their domestic sphere. However, women involved in such work may face many issues like low wages, social and economic insecurity, irregular work, long working hours, deplorable working conditions, and frequent abuse by the employers.

However, conditions of home-based women workers vary across countries. For example, in Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia home-based women workers have easy access to credit, market, and land. Likewise, in Japan home-based women workers are skillfully organized. In India, Self-employed Women Association, in collaboration with different local and international organizations, has been successful in organizing/registering the trade unions of self-employed women workers, and raising issues of those women workers (Mehrotra & Biggeri, 2002). Unfortunately, Pakistan has not yet taken any concrete steps at the national level to organize home-based women workers to protect their rights and

to cover them in labor laws. Even those home-based women workers who are able to receive some sort of formal training are generally not aware of the market mechanism and prices of the products they produce; hence they remain vulnerable to socioeconomic exploitation (Oatman & Monson, 2007).

In Pakistan, Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) has been working in Orangi, Karachi since 1980. Various model programs of OPP have been designed and implemented focusing on women's issues, for example, family planning, immunization, and women involved in informal economic sector. To protect the labor exploitation of home-based women workers involved in the production of local crafts, sewing, embroidery, OPP is not only providing them various trainings but is also contacting them with market to ensure fair wages for their labor and crafts. The handicrafts prepared by the women are exported to international market, including America and Europe (Khan, 1992).

The informal economy trend has been increasing in developing countries due to globalization and neo-liberalization policies. The lack of employment opportunities in formal sector has enhanced more work options for home-based workers in informal sector, especially in developing countries. In all South Asian countries, the phenomenon of home-based work is marred with illiteracy, lack of formal trainings, low level of skills, and social exclusion. In addition, due to several socio-economic barriers that restrict women's movement, many women have been engaged in home-based work. The work of home-based women workers yield multiple benefits to employers as in addition to low wage, they can be easily fired or replaced by other workers. Due to lack of union formation among home-based women workers, they work in isolation and remain vulnerable exploitation (Hassan, 2014).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Due to socio-cultural factors, many women are not allowed to work outside their homes. Despite the fact that available statistics indicate that more than 80% of home-based workers are women, they remain outside the radar of labor laws and their work remains invisible in national economy. Without recognition of their work as an economic activity, home-based women workers remain vulnerable to socioeconomic exploitation. Although government has announced some policy interventions for home-based women-workers, the women workers are unable to receive the benefits as workers because of weak enforcement mechanism.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

- To study the demographic characteristics of home-based women workers.
- To explore the socioeconomic problems faced by the home-based women workers.
- To study the type of vocational training services available to home-based women workers.
- To study the impediments to policy implementation for home-based women workers.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

- What factors lead women to work as self-employed home-based workers?
- What are the socioeconomic problems faced by home-based women workers? How do the women negotiate these challenges?
- How formal vocational training affect the working experiences of self-employed home-based women workers?
- What interventions are being taken by nongovernmental organizations to address issues of self-employed home-based women workers?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The research sheds light on the invisible informal work of home-based women workers, problems they face, and how they negotiate socioeconomic barriers. The study reveals whether formal training makes any difference in the experiences of home-based women workers. The research also highlights the interventions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to address the issues of home-based women workers and barriers to the implementation of labor laws to include the work of home-based women workers as an economic activity. I expect the study will be helpful to understand the issues of home-based workers and take further interventions to address their problems by the government and non-governmental organizations.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is a summary of relevant work like articles, research papers, books etc. The aim of literature review is to get an understanding of the existing literature on the selected topic, identify gaps in previous research, it frame the research to address existing gaps.

The research study of Akhtar and Vanek (2013) conducted on home-based workers in Pakistan reveals that the majority of workers is engaged in manufacturing industry. A significant majority of home-based women workers is involved in the manufacturing industry and the number enhanced from 83 percent in 2005-2006 to 91 percent in 2008-2009. Among men home-based workers, ratio in manufacturing industry was 45 percent in 2005-2006 that increased to 54 percent in 2008-2009. Women are dominantly engaged in home-based activities as due to socio-cultural restrictions it becomes very difficult for them to work outside home.

The research of Avasthy et al. (2013) highlights the working experiences of women workers in informal sector in Delhi and shows that these worker women migrated to urban areas due to economic insecurity. The migrated women were dominantly involved in informal activities, like caring children, cleaning clothes, cooking, or worked as vendors. After migration, their family structure changed from traditional joint family to nuclear family, and they lived in slums.

The study of Khan (2007) conducted on the analysis of women's involvement in economic activities and paid work showed that mostly women workers in rural areas were engaged in agricultural-related informal activities and their work included earnings from livestock products or farm, home-based income-generating activities, piece-rate work, making bricks and performing domestic services. On the other hand in urban areas most of women were engaged in manufacturing, home-based, and informal sector activities like

helping domestic service, making handcraft goods and working as trader. As rapid socioeconomic changes have been taking place in Pakistan's urban and rural areas due to which more and more number of adolescent girls are showing interest in taking part in income generating activities whether in public or private sector. The research also indicated that many girls attended school to prevent early age marriage. With the passage of time, traditional norms and values have been changing, enhancing space for males and females and creating more job opportunities for them.

Similarly, a survey research of Roots for Equity (2011), an NGO, to encapsulate the socio-economic conditions of home-based women workers elaborates how the home-based work is structured by cultural norms and values of the traditional society. The research indicated that some of the home-based women workers were living in nuclear families. Under this family structure, the majority of women were working as home-based workers to economically support their families as their husbands were not working due to different reasons, including sickness, old age, disability, and drug addiction. The majority of home-based women workers' (HBWWs) families had their own dwelling or was not paying rent as they were living in extended family structure. Moreover 62% of the HBWWs and their families had no other opportunity of generating income except to work as home-based workers. Moreover, due to small living area, 44% of the HBWWs were carrying their work in their bedrooms. The study highlighted the negative effect of global economic waves on the worker women because these global economic flows have pushed unskilled women to piece-rate labor, home-based activities, and have broken the women union in the form individual freedom reinforcing the agenda of the global capitalism. Moreover, structural adjustment policies not only ignored the(invisible) informal economic activities of home-based women workers but also have been intensifying socioeconomic inequalities which disproportionately affect the women and make them more vulnerable.



The field research of Hassan (2014), involving interviews with 200 home-based women workers in North, South and Central Punjab, elaborates how home-based women workers face socioeconomic and cultural issues. The study indicated that 71% percent of the home-based women workers were living under poverty line and not surprisingly 93% of the women workers included in the study revealed that they engaged in home-based work due to economic insecurity. The majority of women workers told that due to socio-cultural obstacles they could not engage in outside home activities and preferred home-based informal activities. The study further showed that 74% percent of home-based worker were illiterate. Main reasons for their illiteracy included poverty, social cultural barriers and lack of access to schools. The majority of home-based women workers reported health problems, like joints and muscular pain, eyes swelling, headache, backache due to long working hours, unhygienic working conditions, and poor sanitation and sewerage systems. Also 20.4% percent of women workers had experienced abortion. The main reasons of abortion included unaffordable high quality medicine (63.2%) and stress (21.2%).

The research study of Hassan and Azman (2014) conducted on invisible home-based women workers' socio-cultural and economic issues revealed that in Lahore city market-based economic inequalities have pushed many women to home-based work or informal economic sector to fulfill the basic needs of their families. Likewise, many women have been restricted to home because their male family members fear that by allowing women to work outside homes, they would not be able to exert patriarchal control over the women. So they have imposed restrictions on women's work outside homes. In Pakistan, home-based women workers have not been considered as workers, and lack socioeconomic legal protections. They have been experiencing two main obstacles challenges. First, the activities of home-based workers have remained invisible in national economy and have not been included in international and national statistics of labor force survey. Second, appropriate guidelines are

not available to define home-based work. Further, as the traditional family concept of honor has been attached to women due to which women have been pushed toward private sphere in society, and this social construction of honor has been influencing women themselves as they tend to believe that engaging in home-based activities is more appropriate for women.

The research study of Barrientos (2002) conducted on women informal employment and their social protection indicated that in Latin America women were over-represented in informal employment. Women were working in informal sector and faced exploitation because of social and economic insecurity as they were not registered with formal institutions of the state. Women workers can get social protection through reforming labor market institutions by the state. The reforms should focus on enhancing women's access to market affairs, providing them conducive working environment, equal pay and good health facilities.

The research study of Awan, Faridi, and Abbas (2015) highlights the contribution of women workers' engaged in informal work to household income in Dera Ghazi Khan. Some of the major socioeconomic factors behind the women working in informal sector include lack of husband's education and income, and the burden of women's household responsibilities. Most of the women did work in informal sector because they had to supplement the family income to fulfill their family needs. The government needs to develop policies for addressing the needs of women in informal sector and providing them proper educational opportunities, technical training, and guiding them as skilled workers.

Doane (2007) reveals links between home-based work and poverty in South and South East Asia. The study unveiled that some of the factors that led to the conditions of intense and persistent vulnerability and poverty among home-based working women and in their children included social exclusion, age, gender, and economic trends, which together affected the wellbeing of home-based women workers. Owing to the prevalence of gender stereotypes that mark women workers as physically and biologically weaker persons led to

gender gap in equal pay for equal work, access to market, credit, and loan. To address the issues faced by home-based women workers in the region two leading NGOs Home Net South East Asia and Home Net South Asia have starting working together.

Further, the study of Mahadevia, Mishra, and Vyas (2014), conducted on home-based women workers in informal sector in Ahmadabad, India, reveals their socio-economic issues and highlights how particular type of home-based work intersects with religion, caste and other social hierarchies. For example, 95 percent of the garment workers included in the study were from Muslim communities and 57 percent of agarbatti rollers were Scheduled Caste women. The study indicated that among low-income home-based workers 12 percent workers' families were solely dependent on their home-based work, whereas 65 percent and 20 percent of workers informed that other family members' work in informal and formal sectors respectively was the main source of household earning. In the absence of social security coverage, the women workers had to make extra efforts to complete their work. Moreover, when they fell ill or faced some personal problems, their little earnings further declined significantly. The majority of the women workers were experiencing health issues, like pain in body and eyes. Although many self-employed home-based workers were sub-contracted i.e. they received work orders and materials from employer, most of them were not aware of the actual market price of the products they were making. In India, Self Employed Association (SEWA) has been successfully organizing home-based women workers in informal sector for protecting the women workers' socioeconomic rights, and supporting their work through trainings, union formation and provision of small loans through SEWA Bank.

The research study of Kazi and Raza (1989) highlighted several issues of women workers in informal sector, including sanitation, education, and health issues, in the area of Orangi, Lyari, Golimar, and Katchi Abadis of Karachi district. The research indicated that

most of the women workers in informal sector tend to be illiterate and possess some basic skills like sewing clothes, embroidery, stitching, basket making. The study showed that earnings of home-based women workers were even lesser than those who were involved in non-home-based economic activities in informal sector. Due to prevalent sociocultural norms, particularly young women and girls were not allowed to work outside home.

The study of Oatman and Monson (2007) pointed out several issues faced by women workers in informal sector in Benares, India, including lack of information about market matters, and lower human capital, mobility and remuneration than men workers in informal sector. Due to economic insecurity, mostly women were working in informal sector to fulfill daily family needs.

Sathar and Kazi (2000) explored various elements that constitute women's autonomy in rural areas of Punjab, Pakistan. The study highlighted that *Barani* areas in Punjab were very rigid and strictly adhered to patriarchal traditional rituals and values that assign decision making roles and authority to males in public sphere whereas women were confined to private domestic sphere with less opportunities to take part in public sphere activities where decision making lies. However, pre-urban areas in central Punjab were slightly more liberal in this regard. Women's involvement in productive activities outside the domestic sphere influences their autonomy i.e. the ability to act independently. Although a significant majority of women in Pakistan are involved in agricultural activities, agriculture is among the poorest paid sectors.

According to Kabeer (2012), inclusive employment helps economic empowerment of women. Focusing on the education of both men and women can provide them equal economic opportunities and address gender inequalities. However, prevailing labor market conditions clearly exhibit different gender-related inequalities restricting the choices available to women. Owing to patriarchal privileges, men occupy more rewarding and

dominant positions than women. Patriarchal norms and values create obstacles for women to actively take part in public sphere activities and reproduce women's disadvantage in the labor market by discouraging them to challenge the male dominance.

The above brief review of relevant literature provides information regarding home-based work, informal economy, different rewards and responsibilities associated with the rigid separation of public and private spheres, and particularly point out different socioeconomic issues faced by home-based women workers. The literature also indicates that informal workers, particularly home-based women workers, remain invisible part of economy; therefore, policy interventions are needed not only to acknowledge the contribution of home-based workers to the national economy but also to address the problems they face in their everyday lives. This study adds to the existing knowledge on home-based women workers by examining how the women negotiate socioeconomic and cultural barriers or challenges. Moreover, by comparing the working experiences of home-based women workers who received formal training with those who did not receive any formal training, the study sheds light on how formal training affect the experiences of home-based women workers.

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework provides a context for studying a problem. The theoretical framework plays a vital role in guiding the entire process of the research study by helping to understand how the social phenomenon occurs or is situated in the social world.

### **2.1.1 Socialist Feminist Theory**

According to Ehrenreich (1976), women are oppressed and subjugated to male authority within both private and public spheres. Women tend to be objectified as a commodity and due to a sexual division of labour they are confined to private sphere activities, such as child raising, cleaning, cooking, and performing personal services for adult males. Socialist feminist theory while challenging the dichotomy of public and private spheres focuses on the

elimination of women's socioeconomic and cultural oppression—a manifestation of patriarchy. Socialist feminists highlight the economic, social, and cultural importance of all home-based women workers who, in addition to economic activities, give birth, socialize children, and take care of household members. However, the multiple roles and work performed by the women workers are not appreciated or counted as work and are not economically rewarded. Exploiting the labor of home-based women workers, “global capitalists” have inherent interests to limit women to home-based activities. In patriarchal capitalist societies only men have been getting benefit because they work in public sphere, gain economic independence associated with rewards that lead to men's superiority over women. So confining women within homes serves the interests of patriarchal capitalist societies by exploiting their labour and restricting their mobility in public spheres.

### **2.1.2 Marxist Feminist Theory**

According to Hartmann (1979), most marxist analyses and considered women's exploitation happened due to class and economic system. Marxist analysis about the woman question has taken some main forms. Introducing women as part of the working class, the analyses consistently subsume women's relation to men under workers' relation to capital. Early scholars, including Marx, Engel, and Lenin, argued that capitalist system draw women into the wage labor force that has altered the sexual division of labor. Under the system of capitalism, women have been oppressed serving the interest of the capitalists and men as low or unpaid laborers. Capitalist structure has not included or rewarded women equally with men in labor force and produced separation between home, family, and the workplace to serve the capitalist patriarchal interests.

While separating wage work and home-based work, women have been excluded from wage work and limited to private sphere. In home-based work, which is not considered as formal wage work or yield similar reward, the women workers also perform all household

activities. In this connection, on the one hand, the women who are engaged in home-based work serve the interest of capitalists by working on minimal wage. On the other hand, they serve as free laborers in their homes. Thus, the capitalist structures make the economic and social contribution of home-based women workers invisible.

The above discussed theories, socialist feminist and Marxist feminism, revealed that women have been exploited both from class system and patriarchy. In Marxist feminist theory capitalist class is the major source of vulnerability and exploitation of women because capital created more space between segregated roles of male and female, and women are not only limited to private sphere but are also being engaged in public sphere. As cheap laborers women have been performing domestic responsibilities and on the other side modern industries also require these women to participate in public sphere, but the demands of both family and capital created more difficulties or burden for women to maintain the two spheres at the same time. The findings also of this research revealed when home-based women workers of Rawalpindi (Dhok Haso) attended vocational training centre then it was very difficult for them to perform work. On other hand their work value was considered lower than male work value. In Christian colony, all home-based workers of that area were not aware of any factory and modern industry could hire them as workers. In the socialist feminist theory patriarchy is considered the main source of exploitation of women, situation clearly visible in Rawalpindi (Dhok Haso) where male dominant structure had been controlling women in every decision and monitoring their every act. Socialist feminist theory critiqued Marxist feminist because Marxist feminist theory did not focus on patriarchy and pre-domestic worker issue as Marxist theory proclaims that class system has been exploiting women workers. Both of the theories guide my research. However, in addition to class and patriarchy, the research unveils that how the home-based work of women intersects with religious identity, norms and values.

## Chapter 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Methods

For this study, I collected data from self-employed home-based women workers in Dhok Haso in Rawalpindi and Christian Colony in Islamabad. The research sites were selected after meetings and consultation with two organizations, including, "Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi" (ITA) and World Vision (WV), that were providing vocational training to self-employed home-based women workers. During the meetings, I was informed that the majority of self-employed home-based women workers reside in these two areas. The majority of home-based women workers in "Dhok Haso" were receiving formal training in sewing clothes and embroidery in different private vocational training centres. However, home-based women workers in "Christian Colony" were not receiving any formal training because of lack of access to vocational training centre.

#### 3.2 Locale of The Study

My research locals were "Dhok Haso" in Rawalpindi, and "Christian Colony" in Islamabad. I selected these two areas because most of self-employed home-based women workers were living there. The women workers were involved in embroidery and stitching.

#### 3.3 Data Collection Tool

In order to examine the issues and experiences of self-employed home-based women workers, I used the tool of in-depth interview because it gave detail information about the experiences of self-employed home-based women workers. In total, I conducted 20 in-depth interviews from self-employed home-based women workers. Out of total 20 respondents, 10 respondents were selected from Dhok Haso who were receiving or had received formal training in stitching and embroidery while remaining 10 respondents were selected from



Christian Colony who did not receive any formal training. To select both categories of the respondents, I used snowball sampling technique. I initially contacted few women respondents with the help of two organizations, I mentioned before, that were providing vocational training. From these initial contacts, I built on my snowball sample.

I also conducted interviews with the representatives of two non-governmental organizations “Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi” (ITA) and World Vision (WV) that were working on the issues of women in informal economy. Using my personal contacts I selected these two organizations. These interviews helped me to analyze the interventions being taken to address the issues of home-based self-employed women workers. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

### **3.4 Research Ethics:**

The research ethics that guided my study include:

- I obtained oral informed consent from all the research participants to get their willingness to participate in the study.
- I did not ask names or other identifying information from the research participants. Further, the participants were assured that the information they provided would be kept confidential. I did not share the data with anybody except my adviser.
- As during the initial stage of the research participants were somehow reluctant in granting permission to record the interviews, I appreciated their choice and instead of recording the interviews took hand notes of the points they shared with me during the interview.

### **3.5 Thematic Analysis**

In this research, for the analysis of qualitative data, I have used thematic analysis to identify different patterns or themes in the data. According to Clarke and Braun (2013), the technique of thematic analysis can be used to analyse primary data e.g. interview transcripts and secondary data e.g. data obtained from archival sources. Thematic analysis comprises several steps or stages whereby every step contributes to the understanding of the issue and addressing the research objectives. The analysis starts with a careful and systematic reading of data and developing codes. The codes help to identify main themes in the data and understand relationship between different themes or dimensions of the data enabling the researcher to make arguments and draw conclusion grounded in the data.

**Chapter 4**  
**DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis consists of several steps to organize and interpret the data, including examining, categorizing, tabulating, and recombining the information, to find out various important patterns and trends. In qualitative data analysis logical connections are developed between patterns unveiled by the data. In this qualitative research, I have used thematic analysis approach to organize and analyze the collected data through identifying or developing different themes. The themes were developed through the process of coding while marking important things in the data pertaining to research questions (Dey, 2004).

In this chapter, I start discussion with a brief presentation of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents followed by major themes unveiled by the data.

**4.1 Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

<b>Socio-demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>Women Workers in Dhok Haso, Rawalpindi</b>		<b>Women Workers in Christian Colony</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Current age (in years)</b>				
16-20	3	30%	2	20%
21-25	3	30%	4	40%
26-30	4	40%	4	40%
<b>Level of Education</b>				
Uneducated	3	30%	4	40%
Primary pass	4	40%	4	40%
Middle Pass	2	20%	1	10%
Matric Pass	1	10%	1	10%
<b>Marital status</b>				
Married	7	70%	8	80%
Unmarried	3	30%	2	20%
<b>Family type</b>				
Extended	1	10%	0	0
Nuclear	9	90%	10	100%
<b>Family income in rupees (monthly)</b>				
Upto 9000	3	30%	4	40%
9001-12000	3	30%	6	60%
12001-15000	2	20%	0	0%
More than 15000	2	20%	0	0%

Earnings of the respondents in rupees (monthly)				
Upto 3000	4	40%	5	50%
3001-4500	2	20%	4	40%
4501-6000	4	40%	1	10%
Total	10	100%	10	100%

In Dhok Haso Rawalpindi out of 10 respondents, 3 respondents were in the age category of 16-20 years, 3 respondents were in the age category of 21-25 years, and 4 respondents were between 26-30 years of age. Whereas, in Christian Colony, out of 10 respondents, 2 respondents were in the age group of 16-20years, two in the age group of 21-25 years, and 4 were between 26-30 years of age. With reference to the education level of the respondents, in Dhok Haso, 3 were uneducated, 4 were Primary passed, 2 were Middle passed 2, and only 1 had passed the Matric exam. In Christian Colony, 4 respondents were uneducated, 4 were Primary passed, 1 was Middle passed, and only 1 had passed the Matric exam. In terms of marital status of the respondents, in Dhok Haso, 7 were married and 3 were unmarried, while in Christian Colony 8 were married and 2 were unmarried. With reference to the family type in Dhok Haso only 1 respondent was living in extended family and remaining 9 were living in nuclear family. In Christian Colony, all respondents were living in nuclear family structure. In terms of monthly family income, in Dhok Haso, 3 respondents had monthly family income up to rupees (Rs.) 9000, 3 respondents had monthly family income between Rs. 9001 to 12000, 2 respondents had monthly family income between Rs. 12001-15000, and only 2 respondents had monthly family income of more than Rs. 15000. In Christian Colony, 4 respondents had monthly family income upto Rs. 9000, and remaining 6 respondents had monthly family income between Rs. 9001 to 12000. In terms of respondents' monthly earnings, in Dhok Haso, 4 respondents had monthly earning upto Rs. 3000, 2 respondents had monthly earning betweenRs.3001 to 4500, and 4 respondents had

monthly earning between Rs.4501 to 6000. In Christian Colony, 5 respondents had monthly earning upto Rs. 3000, 4 respondents had monthly earning between Rs. 3000 to 4500, and only 1 respondent had monthly income between Rs. 4501 to 6000. The data clearly indicate that though home-based women workers in both the locales were living under conditions of poverty, the condition of the women workers in Christian Colony was even worse.

#### **4.2. Work Choice**

Home-based women workers from both the locales revealed that sewing clothes and embroidery were their work choice because they could do these works within their homes without confronting male family members who did not want them or allowed them to work outside their homes. Many home-based women workers wanted to engage in sewing clothes or embroidery to earn income because they had seen other female family members doing these works and learnt these skills from them in their homes. A young home-based worker explained:

Family environment, restrictions and insufficient family income were the main motivating factors to choose sewing clothes as home-based work. Moreover, many of my other female family members were involved in sewing and embroidery work and doing work inside home was the first priority of my family.

In addition, for many home-based women workers sewing clothes and embroidery were the only options of work available to them as it was easy for them to learn these skills and did not require huge economic resources. Likewise, they were of the view that as they had no or less information about other jobs and lack education, hence, they would not be able to get jobs offered by different organizations. As the women have been sewing clothes for

their brothers, sisters, and other family members, they perceived this work more convenient for them.

#### **4.3 Economic Insecurity**

The data of this research indicated that those home-based women workers who received formal sewing training and those who did not receive formal sewing training both faced economic insecurity in their lives as they did not have enough income to fulfill their basic needs. The home-based women workers said that they faced many problems in their lives because they did not consider themselves as workers and had no permanent jobs and just relied on daily earnings from sewing clothes to fulfill their basic needs.

Some home-based women workers emphasized that due to unemployed husbands, they started working as home-based workers to meet some basic family needs like seeking medical treatment during illness and paying children's school fees. Home-based women workers from both locales emphasized that economic insecurity was a major problem associated with their work that had psychologically, physically, socially and economically ruined their lives. Many of the poor women workers had no alternative source of income and relied on their husbands' or other male members' earnings. One of the respondents stated:

We do not have any opportunity to earn income except from sewing clothes or to rely on husband and family members' income. But our family income is not enough even to meet our daily basic needs which causes a continuous mental stress for us.

In order to overcome the economic insecurity, many women started working as home-based workers and preferred sewing clothes or/and embroidery as it was considered the easiest source of income for those women who cannot work outside home and does not require intensive technical skills. Due to lack of information, education and access to formal

bank loans, the women workers could not benefit from loan offered by banks to start personal business. Many respondents shared that they were neither aware of any kind of bank loan financing opportunities nor they had any information how to get loan from banks in order start personal business.

In the absence of any formal support systems, during times of crisis, home-based women workers provide informal support to each other. Both respondents who received formal training and who did not receive formal training elaborated that during periods of illness their work orders were delayed because they were unable to do work. However, during such times, many of them relied on other home-based workers in their neighbors to complete their orders till the time they recovered from illness. For example, a young 18-year-old respondent said:

When we are not well to complete the order work then remaining order work is completed by our neighbors or relatives because it is a common thing which retains us combine. It is our societal duty to help each other when someone needs help.

During interviews with home-based women workers, they repeatedly mentioned economic insecurity in their lives. Many home-based women workers shared that because of worst economic challenges and family pressure to contribute to family income they were continuously stressed, and frequently suffered from headache and high blood pressure. Many women workers had to do work for more than 12 hours a day, in addition to performing their regular household chores, which negatively affected their physical health. The situation was even worse for those women workers who were the heads of their families because the death of their parents or husbands and were solely responsible to manage the expenditure of their families. As there is no social security or support system for such vulnerable women, they are overstressed and marginalized. A 19-year-old home-based woman worker told:

After the death of my parents, being the eldest family member, I had to take care of my younger siblings. I started working as home-based worker to earn money and to fulfill the needs of my two younger sisters and one brother who are getting education in school. I stay at home and stitch clothes and do embroidery work to pay school fees of my younger siblings and take care of other family needs like food. But still the income that I earn from my work is not enough to fulfill the daily needs of my family and that stress is making me weaker day by day.

#### **4.4 Facets of Patriarchy and Home-based Work of Women**

Like other aspects of women's lives, home-based work of women is also strongly shaped or influenced by the facets of patriarchy. In this study, as the data indicate, I elaborate on this phenomenon with reference to two categories of self-employed home-based women workers, including the women workers who received formal training and those who did not receive any formal training.

The home-based women workers at Dhok Haso in Rawalpindi, who were able to receive formal training in stitching clothes and embroidery, shared that like other aspects of their lives, to engage in any work or training it was mandatory for them to seek prior approval of their male family members, including husband, father, and brothers who had the decision making power. The women workers could not work or express their desire to work outside their homes because they had fear of their husbands or other family members who considered outside working of women as social evil and violation of their norms and value that could bring shame or dishonor to the family. A 25 year-old married home-based women worker shared:



“As I cannot go outside home without my husband’s permission, I cannot work outside in any organization. Even I cannot sell the clothes that I stitch at home to the market or take order from there because it is considered as the violation of our culture and religion.”

Many home-based women workers perceived that male members monitor every act of their wives, sisters, daughters and limit their roles to private sphere only. This was the main reason that the women workers opted to engage in home-based work. Social pressure always exist in the mind of home-based women workers that they cannot violate the stringent family norms. It was very challenging for women workers to attend sewing centers to learn or polish their skills, but they were able to seek permission from male family members who thought that with the improved traditional skills the women could not only stitch clothes for their own family members to save money that would go to the tailors but they could also work from home and contribute toward family income. Women were not allowed to go alone to attend the training centre so they would go to the training centre along with other female relatives or neighbors.

Although the women workers were able to attend the sewing centre, they had to confront anger of the family if they returned late from the centre or did not take veil. Furthermore, as the male members of their family were not in the favor of women working outside homes, the women were not allowed to go (alone) to the market to buy raw material for their work. Either the male family members would buy the raw material for the women or they would go with them to the market. A 30-year-old woman who was receiving training in a vocational training centre said:

My family never really considered my receiving training in the training centre as an appropriate act because they still think it is against their values and according to them any outside home engagement of a woman devalues her

personal respect. In our society, it is believed that a woman is born only to pay attention to household-related activities and take care of her family members instead of going and doing work outside home.

The above quotation clearly marks the rigid norms that restrict the social mobility of home-based women workers. As Hassan & Azman (2014) have argued that due to the concept of family honor associated with women, they are socially isolated and confined to home-based work that yields less economic recognition and reward.

As traditionally men have been assigned or expected to perform the role of breadwinner for their families, women's economic contribution or work tend to be neglected or less valued and they are confined to domestic sphere. The rigid gender ideology denies the actual living conditions of women who have been trapped in the vicious circle of poverty.

However, the situation or living experiences of self-employed home-based women workers in Christian Colony were not the same. Although these women did not receive any formal training, they informed that they were allowed by their (male) family members to engage in economic activities outside home. But the women themselves preferred home-based work because they thought it as an easy economic activity for them without compromising their roles as mothers and caregivers for their families. This perception of work also reflects internalization of gendered socialization of women confining their roles to private sphere. The home-based women workers in this locality shared that they could either go to the market for buying raw material with their male family members or alone as their movement was not restricted by their husbands/fathers/brothers. One respondent stated:

My male family members do not restrict me to engage outside home activities and my husband would not mind if I work in an organization to earn money or go to the market to buy raw material for my work. However, I prefer home-

based work because I think it is easier for me to earn money without relying on anybody else.

Comparing the experiences of self-employed home-based workers in two different locales, we can clearly identify how religious norms intersect with patriarchy. In Dhok Haso, Rawalpindi, although the women workers were receiving training in vocational centres, they were not allowed to work outside home and their movement was restricted considering it as violation of social and religious values. On the other hand, the women workers in Christian Colony could not receive any vocational training because of lack of information or access to vocational training centres, but they perceived that doing home-based work was their own choice as they did not have any social pressure or restriction to engage in outside home economic activities.

#### **4.5 Challenges Faced by Self-employed Home-based Women Workers**

During interviews with the self-employed home-based women workers, they shared several challenges that they had to encounter in their everyday lives and the strategies they adopted to negotiate those challenges. As discussed in the previous section, many home-based women workers faced restrictions for engagement in outside home activities and could not spend more time in training centres because of the fear of their (male) family members. In such situation, not surprisingly, getting family permission to attend the vocational training centre was a real challenge for the women. To negotiate this challenge, the women workers would seek permission from family to attend the vocational training centre by referring to other women among their relatives or neighborhood who were already receiving the training and contributing to family income. They convinced their family members that they would go to the training centre with the other women to ensure their protection outside home. As I have explained above, economic insecurity was a major issue confronted to the families of home-

based women workers, their economic contribution was a big incentive for the families to allow them to receive training or engage in home-based work. Moreover, in order to buy raw material the women would ask the male family members to bring material from the market or accompany them without challenging this patriarchal privilege.

In Dhok Haso, Rawalpindi, the women workers had to face the problem of clean drinking water where the water would come through container only for one to three hour a day. With very limited access to clean drinking water, the women workers or their families had to buy water from the market which was expensive and a burden on their already scarce economic resources. One of the respondents stated:

“Clean drinking water has always been a major problem for us. When we do not have access to the water we do not have any other option except to buy the water from the nearby market which is very expensive.”

Attending vocational training centre did not mean that the women were relieved from their traditional household responsibilities. The women were well aware that although they got permission to attend vocational training classes, they could not provide any reason to the family members to revisit their permission by neglecting their household chores—their primary gender roles. Hence, the women would invest extra time and energy to complete their usual household tasks before going to the vocational training centre. Those home-based women workers who had small children and were getting formal training from sewing centres in Rawalpindi shared that as taking care of the children was their prime responsibility so they had to sought alternative social support system to fulfill this responsibility. They said that before going to the sewing centre they would leave the children to their mothers or sisters or in case they were not living nearby they would leave the children at neighbors' homes. This was very difficult decision for the women workers because they thought that infants or young

children need to be looked after by their mothers. But for them this was the only workable option for them in order to attend the vocational training classes.

One of the respondents shared her experiences as:

It is very difficult for us to go to sewing centre and leave our babies at home or at relatives' homes for short time. We particularly face problems from our husbands because they do not like this arrangement to go to sewing centre. We are aware that our husbands want us to remain at home and do household work. Therefore, we invest more time in to fulfill the domestic responsibilities and only after finishing the household work we leave for sewing centre.

Moreover, the women workers had to face many problems on their way to training centers. Many respondents shared that access to public transport was a major issue for them to commute to the training centre. Because of non-availability of public transport or overcrowded buses they would return homes late for which they had to face insult from their family members. In addition, the women workers told they that would frequently experience harassment, staring, and/or unwanted comments from males while commuting to the training centers. The women would ignore these acts and prefer not to inform their male family members about this issue because they knew it that if they informed male family members then they would not allow them to go outside home. A young respondent stated:

We have to face many problems while going outside home to attend sewing centre. Frequently we experience shameful acts from males on our way who stare at us, pass comments or call us from our backside. We simply ignore such acts.

On the other hand, the home-based women workers in Christian Colony, who did not receive any formal training, told that they did not face such problems outside their homes.

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They could easily go to the nearby market without any fear of harassment and their husbands supported them to engage in home-based work. One of the main reasons that the women could easily move in Christian Colony was that the people living in the colony were strongly integrated and personally knew each other. One of the respondents said:

We do not feel any fear while going out in Christian Colony. Neither do our male family members restrict us to remain inside homes. In our own area mostly people have good relations with each other and due to that reason every person respects each other, especially women.

Similarly, another 26-year-old respondent stated:

I never felt domestic problems because my husband gave me free hand in every decision related to my home-based work. My husband takes care of domestic responsibilities whenever I go outside home.

However, the home-based women workers in Christian Colony faced many other problems. For example, many of them shared that they wanted their children to acquire higher education to earn better future for themselves and their families, but as their work did not yield enough money it was really challenging for them to pursue their goal. As one of the respondents stated:

“I want to see my children becoming engineer or doctor but our family income is not enough to pursue their higher education. They can study till middle or matric and after that we cannot afford their further education.”

Another major problem faced by the women workers in this community was the shelter insecurity. As they did not own the land and their houses were built on the government land, they were highly insecure about their residency. They informed that sometimes police and government officials would come and ask them to vacate the place

stating that they were living there illegally. The threat of displacement was a continuous source of tension for the women workers and their families because they had been living in that area for so many decades and they did not have economic resources for alternate housing arrangement. One of the respondents revealed:

I have constant fear of police because they threaten us frequently to leave this place and go somewhere else. Sometimes I am so afraid and depressed that I cannot perform home-based work.

Frequent and extended electricity load shedding was also a major issue of the home based women workers. The women workers shared that sometimes they had electricity only for 7 to 8 hours in a day due which they found it really hard to complete their work orders in time and provide justification to the customer about the delay. One respondent said:

Sometimes customers do not order sewing clothes to us because they need their dresses to be stitched by a fixed time. But here due to frequent load shedding orders get late. We do not have the facility of generator to continue our work in load shedding because it requires enough money which we do not have.

The home-based women workers in Christian Colony who did not receive any formal training also reported that they did not have advance sewing machines and sewing/embroidery skills. The simple sewing/embroidery skills they had were becoming outdated for the clients. They said that many customers demand new or latest designs in dresses while others still rely on old simple designs. As the women workers were designing and sewing old traditional dresses, many customers ordered their dresses in the market where they were not only able to receive their stitched clothes back in time because in the market tailors could generator facilities but also they could select new dress designs. Because of these

reasons, many customers then did not order clothes to the home-based women workers. As one respondent revealed:

Many customers now demand new designing in dresses, like French and Indian designs, but unfortunately we do not have such skills because these designs can be learnt from a designer teacher to whom we cannot access. Because we do not have advance designing skills due to which many customers do not order sewing clothes to us.

Health is also a cross cutting issue in the lives of home-based women workers. As they were living in impoverished areas and conditions where health facilities were not adequately available or even if health facilities were available they did not have enough resources to afford those facilities. During interviews with the women workers, the majority of them reported various health issues they were suffering from, for example, continuous headache, weak eyesight, swollen eyes, backache, swollen feet, mainly due to unhygienic working/living conditions, long working hours and poor sanitation and sewerage system. As I have mentioned before, due to lack of money most of the women workers could not afford better treatment. They could only buy inexpensive medicine from nearby small medical store for temporary relief.

#### **4.6 Effects of Vocational Training on Home-based Work**

Those home-based women workers who received formal vocational training emphasized that they knew very little about sewing clothes and embroidery until they joined vocational training centre. After joining the training centre, their skills were greatly improved, and they learnt new techniques about sewing/designing clothes. One respondent explained:

Now I can realize that before joining the vocational training center, I significantly lacked skills in embroidery and stitching clothes. But when I



joined the sewing center then I got this opportunity to learn more advance techniques in sewing clothes in the guidance of a qualified instructor.

Home-based women workers indicated that initially they did not have any information about the vocational training centers run by the government and non-governmental organizations and their different programs or courses offered for the women. They came to know about the centres from their relatives or neighbors. After joining the centre, they realized that getting training was not difficult rather they found it interesting to learn new skills under guidance of qualified instructors. At the end of each class, they were assigned daily home-based sewing practice task. A 22-year-old worker told:

When I joined the vocational training center I was surprised to know that there were different programs offered for home-based women works in order to train them as skilled workers in the presence of instructors. Before joining the centre, I had never heard that kind of trainings for home-based women workers.

The women workers shared that after attending the vocational training centre they gained confidence and updated skills to produce new clothing designs which increased their demand and productivity. Further, they revealed that before going to the vocational training centre, they were not much familiar with market rates for stitching and embroidery but after that they got some idea about the worth of their skills and the market rates which helped them to better negotiate with the clients. They also got more information about the quality and types of raw material they were using for their work. Enhanced skills and improved productivity of the women also made them realized that they were no more economically dependent as they were now contributing in family income. Before engaging in home-based work, they were mainly relying on their family income which was not enough to meet the

needs of their everyday lives and during times of need they had no option except to take loans from relatives or neighbors. But after acquiring the advanced skills, they realize that through their work they could earn money for themselves and their families. One respondent said:

Before joining the vocational training centre, I was not aware of the market price of the work I performed and did not know how to deal with the customer. But after joining the sewing center, I came to know about market situation. Learning new skills at the centre made me more confident about my work and provided the opportunity to become an earning member of the family.

After acquiring the advance skills, the home-based women workers could now stitch clothes for different occasions like wedding, engagement, and religious rituals which enabled them to earn good amount of money. However, these home-based women workers could not go to market for selling their own stitched clothes or take direct orders from the market because it was considered as violation of their family norms and values. The majority of the workers shared that before attending the sewing centre they were not completely able to buy sewing clothes and used to give their own clothes to tailors in market on different occasions and had to pay them high amounts. But with their enhanced skills they could not only stitch their own clothes for different occasions but also for their other family members helping them to save significant money which they were paying to the tailors.

While attending the vocational training centres, the home-based women workers also learnt about the maintenance of their sewing machines and repairing some basic disorders of the machines that again helped them to save some time and money involved in the repair of machines from the market. Some home-based women workers emphasized that despite the fact that they could not get enough education to get government jobs, they were at least able

to attend the vocational training centre to earn some money for themselves and their families.

One of the respondents said:

I am an illiterate person because my family did not have the money for my education. In my family women's outside home education or work is not appreciated as it is considered a violation of our values. By receiving training from the training centre, I am able to work in home and stitch clothes for neighbors and relatives and earn some money for myself and my family.

Moreover, as the data presented in table 1 indicate, the home-based women workers who had obtained vocational training were able to earn comparatively more than the home-based women workers who did not receive any training—their earnings were very meager though.

#### **4.7 Interventions Needed to Improve the Conditions of Home-based Women Workers**

During interviews with the home-based women workers, they expressed several steps that should be taken by the government and nongovernment organizations to improve their working conditions. First of all, they demanded that home-based women workers should be recognized as workers by the government so that they are also entitled to social security and other benefits that are provided to other workers. It is important to mention here that those women who were receiving vocational training were more vocal about this demand as their instructors had sensitized them about this issue.

Second, the home-based women workers who lack economic resources to fulfill their basic needs should be financially supported. The government can provide monthly stipend to the women workers to fulfill their basic needs, provide free education to their children and free medical treatment during times of illness in nearby hospitals. The women workers could

not perform work during illness and were reluctant to consult doctors because of high consultation and medicine expenditures.

Third, for those women workers who were receiving vocational training availability of public transport was a major issue. Because of lack of availability of public transport for the women to commute to the training centre, it was very challenging for the women to attend classes that I have already discussed in detail in the previous section. Therefore, they were of the view that the government or NGOs should arrange special transport for them to attend the vocational training centre. Moreover, they were of the view that police should strictly deal with those people who harass them when they move outside their homes for training or buying raw material.

Fourth, according to the home-based women workers, their skill enhancement was very important. The government and non-governmental organizations should increase the vocational training centers with diverse courses for home-based women workers so that they could have an easy access to the centres to learn advance skills in other areas as well, for example, tie and dye, and making hand bags. Also, they should take necessary steps to aware the women workers and their families about such vocational training centres and the services that are provided through these centres so that more number of women workers could benefit from such institutions.

Fifth, for many home-based women workers the availability of clean drinking water and extended electricity load shedding were the main issues that were causing disturbance in their everyday lives. Because of lack of economic resources, it was difficult for them to buy water from market or afford generator during electricity load shedding. Therefore, they demanded that the government should take steps on urgent basis to provide them clean drinking water and uninterrupted electricity. One of the respondents said:

The government needs to pay attention towards the issues of home-based women workers, including financial support, free health facilities and transportation. To know the real issues of the women workers, the government can appoint social workers who can observe their daily routine. NGOs can also support the women workers by establishing more vocational training centers to provide them free trainings to improve their skills.

#### **4.8 Interviews with the Representatives of NGOs**

During interviews with the representatives of NGOs, including World Vision and Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi that were providing vocational training to women, they informed that the organizations have initiated various interventions for home-based women workers. The representatives told that the main goal of their organizations was to provide or improve the skills of women through vocational training centres. The organizations were providing free vocational training courses to women in stitching and embroidery for the duration of three to five months. The organizations had the capacity to train 25-30 women at a time. The trainers at the vocational training centres were teaching the women trainees to prepare dresses for different occasions according to the latest market designs. In addition to providing vocational training, World Vision had initiated another project called “Youth Informed for Better Life” to promote education of girls. The project was started in 2015 aiming at enhancing the female literacy rate by creating awareness among the community about the importance of female education and providing some basic reading and writing skills to girls.

Further, female staff of the organization would go to different communities and distribute pamphlets, flyers, and posters consisting of information about the importance of women’s education, their engagement in economic activities, and the women worker’s rights. They would conduct different sessions with women workers in the community to discuss the

importance of learning skills, issues and rights of women workers engaged in informal sector. They also formed Community Based Organizations (CBOs) involving the women workers to highlight and address the issues of women workers and provide them or their families small loans (around Rs. 10,000) to start their own personal business.

Likewise, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi, in addition to providing vocational training to women, had designed interventions for addressing the issue of child labor in Pakistan. The organization would provide free technical education and teach basic reading and writing skills to child laborers. Female social mobilizers hired by the organization would visit communities to meet women to create awareness about women's education, rights of women workers with reference to labor laws. The representative of the organization shared that they were lobbying with other organizations to convince the government to bring home-based women worker under labor law. According to the representative, the main problem faced by home-based women workers was economic issues. The women cannot buy the advance sewing machines and cannot get their machines repaired in case of any disorder. Therefore, when they attend the vocational training centre, they are taught by the organization instructor how to repair some basic faults that occur frequently in sewing machines. The organization desired to provide latest sewing machines to the trainees but currently due to lack of funding they could not do so.

The representatives of both the organizations shared several challenges they face. When their field staff visits local communities to talk about the significance of women's education and vocational training, frequently they are stigmatized as agents of the West who want to promote western agenda by motivating women to leave their primary household-related activities. Sometimes, people consider it against the religion and ethical values that mark public and private spheres divide across the gender lines. Similarly, some men consider it a threat for their patriarchal privilege and fear that if the women get education and become

economically independent they would lose their dominance over women. The organizations demanded security for their field staff. The organizations were supporting home-based women workers with the financial help of donor agencies. However, due to lack of funds they were finding it difficult to sustain their activities. Therefore, they were requesting the government to fund their activity so that they could extend and sustain those activities and higher more trained staff for vocational training centres and community outreach programmes. They also stressed that the government needs to show more political commitment to address the needs of home-based women workers. Despite announcing welfare programs for home-based women workers on different occasions, the agenda has not been on the priority list of the government.

## **Chapter 5**

### **MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter I briefly present the major findings of the study linking them with the literature review or the previous studies on this issue, conclude the whole discussion, and based on the analysis of experiences of home-based women workers provide some suggestions to address the issues they confront in their everyday lives.

#### **5.1 Major Findings**

In Rawalpindi (Dhok Haso), home-based women workers performed any kind of work with the permission of their male family members. The women workers could not engage in outside home economic activities because outside home activities were perceived by their families as the violation of their culture norms, values, and dignity of women. Because of their gendered socialization and cultural values, the women workers considered home-based work a suitable and easy option to engage in economic activities without challenging patriarchal structures. The women workers were allowed by their families to receive training from vocational training centers subject to accompanying other female relatives and neighbors to ensure their safety outside home. Although sometimes the women were harassed while going to the training centres, they did not share such incidences with their families because they knew that their family members would bar them attending the centres. The families considered the training beneficial as they could save some money by women stitching the clothes of family members within their homes. These findings are supported by the earlier studies of Hassan & Azman (2014), Kazi & Raza (1989), and Khan (2007) which indicate that the traditional concept of honor and morality tend to be associated with women due to which they have been isolated and confined to private sphere activities. Owing to such social construction of gender roles, women do not challenge or transcend the gendered



boundaries and engage themselves in home-based activities. However, despite working 12 to 14 hours daily such home-based activities are not acknowledged socially and economically. Home-based women workers tend to live under conditions of poverty, the majority of them is engaged in home-based work to escape the conditions of poverty. Further, socio-cultural factors confine them in home and motivate them to engage in home-based informal activities.

Home-based women workers in Christian Colony who were not receiving any formal sewing training shared that they did not face problems, such as sexual harassment or male trespassing, while going outside home or visiting nearby market. Their male family members did not restrict them inside homes. Conversely, their husbands supported them to work as home-based workers. They could easily ask their male family members to go to the market to buy raw material or even could go alone without fear of harassment. Even though the respondents in Christian Colony shared that they were not forced by their male family members to work only inside home, they had internalized gendered norms and considered home-based work appropriate for women as it did not require them to compromise their traditional household chores.

As home-based women workers are not covered as workers by the prevailing labor laws, they do not have any social security or social insurance and could not form formal unions to organize themselves to protect their rights. Pakistani labor laws and Factories Act of 1934 do not facilitate home-based workers as worker and provide them social protection mainly because these workers have no relation with employer. Labor policies in the country tend to focus only on those workers who are engaged in the formal economy (Raza, 2009). Thus, the policies and statistics fail to acknowledge the contribution of the majority of women workers who are engaged in informal economic activities to the national economy and their households (Awan et al., 2015). Economic insecurity remains one of the major issues faced by the home-based women workers.

Being isolated from the formal economic sector, home-based women workers are not much familiar with the market rate of their labor or the economic worth of their products. However, the data indicate that the home-based women workers joined vocational training centres were relatively more aware about market price of their products than those home-based women workers who did not attend vocational training centres. Although the earnings of the both categories of home-based women workers were very meager despite investing great time and efforts, those home-based women workers who had obtained formal training were earning higher because of better idea about the market prices and improved skills. After joining training centres and learning latest designs in embroidery and cloth stitching, the women were also able to enhance their productivity. These findings are supported by the study of Oatman and Monson (2007) which highlighted that attaining advanced skills from vocational training centres enhanced the productivity of home-based women workers who were also engaged with formal market by offering new designs.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Home-based work is a gendered phenomenon as the majority of the home-based workers comprise women. Despite the fact that millions of women in Pakistan are engaged in home-based work, they remain outside the radar of labor laws and social protection policies which make them socially vulnerable. The main objectives of this research were to study the lived experiences of self-employed home-based women workers and to what extent formal training makes any difference in their lived experiences, and to examine the socioeconomic challenges they face and the ways they negotiate those challenges. The study reveals that due to sociocultural barriers and gendered socialization home-based work is considered appropriate for women as they do not have to compromise their primary roles as mothers and caregivers for their families. Economic insecurity, shelter insecurity, and health insecurity

were the main issues confronted by all the home-based women workers. In Dhok Haso, home-based women workers who received formal training, getting permission from family was a major challenge. But, they negotiated that by referring to or getting support from other women among their relatives or neighborhood who were already receiving the training and contributing to family, income and by not sharing the problems they faced, e.g. harassment, while commuting to the centres. Conversely, in Christian Colony, though women did not feel family pressure to remain inside home, they could not get vocational training because of non-availability of vocational training centre. The women workers who received formal training were able to enhance their sewing and embroidery skills, get awareness about market prices and rights as workers, and acquire some basic skills in repairing their sewing/embroidery machines. Because of these factors, they were relatively earning higher than those home-based women workers who could not receive any training. Although some NGOs are providing vocational training services to home-based women workers and are lobbying with the government and other stakeholders to recognize them as workers to protect their socioeconomic rights, they lack resources and government support to address the issues of a significant number of home-based women workers.

### **5.3 Policy Recommendations**

The Government is obliged to device a comprehensive policy and take initiatives in collaboration with stakeholders to mainstream self-employed home-based women workers and protect their rights granted by the Constitution of Pakistan and several international conventions on labor rights. The foremost step that the government should take immediately is to include home-based workers as workers in national labor laws and acknowledge their economic contribution in the national economy to address the issue of severe human insecurity faced by millions of home-based women workers in the country, including

economic insecurity, social insecurity, and shelter insecurity. Moreover, simply developing policies are not enough. The government should show serious commitment to implement the policies. For example the government of Punjab in its Women Empowerment Package (2012), announced to take intentions for the welfare of home-based workers, but still no concrete efforts have been taken for its implementation.

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan grants basic fundamental human rights to all workers. For example, article 17 proclaims that all workers have the right to the freedom of association and the right to form trade union. Likewise, article 25 grants equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and requires the government to take special initiatives for the social protection of women and children, but unfortunately the work of home-based women workers still remain invisible in labor policies and statistics.

Moreover, being a member of ILO, Pakistan has ratified several international conventions to protect the rights of workers, including 8 basic conventions known as core labor standards. The ILO Home Work Convention (C 177), adopted on 20 June, 1996, specifically focuses on the issues and rights of home workers and requires the governments to develop policies to treat home workers like workers in formal economy and take necessary steps for fair wages of their work and the provision of social security. Unfortunately, Pakistan has not yet ratified the Home Work Convention. The government needs to ratify this Convention and take serious steps in line with the provisions of the Convention to protect address the issues of home-based workers in Pakistan.

All home-based women workers should have access to free vocational training to enhance their skills, learn new fashion designs, and get an idea of market price of their work. As this study has identified, vocational training provides some support to home-based women workers, efforts should be taken by the government, NGOs and donor agencies to establish more vocational training centres in those areas where women do not have such facility and

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## Appendix "A"

### **Women in Informal Economy: A Sociological Analysis of Self-Employed Home-based Women Workers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad**

#### **Interview Guide for Home-based Women Workers**

Date of the Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Socio-demographic Background**

- i. Age:
- ii. Education:
- iii. Marital Status: Single/Married
- iv. Family type: Extended/Nuclear
- v. Monthly family income (in rupees)
- vi. Respondent's monthly income (in rupees)

#### **Questions:**

- 1 How did you start working as a home-based worker?
- 2 What factors motivated you to work as a home-based worker?
- 3 Since how long have you been working as a home-based worker?
- 4 What type of work are you performing?
- 5 Are you aware of vocational training services for women in your area?
- 6 From where did you acquire the skill(s)?
- 7 What type of problems do women face while receiving formal training from vocational training centre?
- 8 For whom you are preparing home-based product, and why?
- 9 How does formal vocational training help home-based women workers?
- 10 What type of problems do you face as a home-based worker and how do you manage those problems?
- 11 How do you manage your earnings? Where do you spend your earnings?
- 12 Are you aware of any policy of government/non-governmental organization about home-based workers?
- 13 In your opinion, what steps should be taken by the government and non-governmental organizations to improve the working conditions of home-based women workers?



Appendix "B"

**Women in Informal Economy: A Sociological Analysis of Self-employed Home-based Women Workers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad**

**Interview Guide for the Representatives of NGOs**

Date of the Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What services are provided by your organization for home-based women workers?
2. In your opinion, what are the main issues confronted by home-based working women? How are you addressing those issues?
3. How does vocational training affect the working of home-based workers?
4. What are the main challenges that your organization is facing?
5. Why home-based working women are not considered as workers? What are the barriers in policy implementation?
6. What steps should government and NGOs take to address the issues of home-based women workers?