

A Study of Women Workers in Women-Dominated
Manufacturing Establishments in Metro Manila

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S u m m a r y

The study focuses on women-dominated manufacturing establishments in Metro Manila, and seeks to determine: a) the reasons why women predominate in these establishments; b) the status of women employees vis-a-vis men employees of similar positions and c) the contributions women make and the benefits they derive from these establishments.

Thirty seven (37) establishments representing 18 industry groups which are women-dominated were surveyed. From these establishments, 399 workers, 37 management representatives and 14 union officials were interviewed.

The findings of the study were:

1. On the dominance of women. The sex factor constitutes a major criterion in the hiring of workers. Female workers were hired because (a) the nature of work in these women-dominated establishment requires good finger dexterity and good resistance to monotonous work and (b) it was felt that women are better endowed with these qualities than men.
2. On the status of women vis-a-vis men. In general, it was found that there were no disparities between the two sexes in terms of salary and work conditions. No strict comparisons could be made, however, since men and women perform different functions. Nevertheless, salaries of both are generally confined to the minimum.

With respect to work related problems, there are also no significant differences in the response of both.

3. On contributions and benefits. The survey indicates that women workers have no meaningful participation in decision-making with respect to wage setting, fringe benefits, promotions, work organizations and the like. Participation is limited to the hiring of new workers and problem solving on a lesser scale (i.e., through information giving and consultation).

The results of interviews of management representatives show a higher quality of work put in by women than those by men. The more significant contribution put in by women, however, is towards the stability, peacefulness, and discipline of the work community.

As to benefits women derive from working, the following were found:

- a. earnings from work amounted to ₱169/week.
 - b. Despite work, a number still had time for leisure and to continue their studies. A number of companies provided subsidized culture-related activities.
 - c. Most workers were on temporary status. Very few workers indicated there were provisions for age old security.
4. On self-reliance, self-determination and sense of purpose. A considerable proportion of respondents were confident that they would progress in the company with their own qualifications. In general, however, most companies did not offer the workers opportunities for growth and advancement. Most women workers, therefore, hardly identified with the company and would probably choose another company if given the chance.

SUGGESTED INDICATORS

To assess the progress of women in development, particularly in women-dominated industries, the following indicators are suggested:

1. Indicators pertaining to the role of women workers participating in the development process;
 - a. Per cent of women workers participating in decision-making process by nature of participation (e.g., information giving or consultation, joint decision-making with management and none) in the following issues:

hiring, promotions, firing and other disciplinary measures, wage setting, fringe benefits, work pace, work organization, work scheduling, problem solving regarding work condition, company plans/programs, product plans and financial aspects.

- b. Per cent of women workers involved in union activities by type of involvement (e.g., member or officer).
2. Indicators pertaining to the expansion of employment opportunities for women and the improvement of their working conditions:
 - a. Per cent of women participating in government-sponsored job training programs (e.g., National Manpower Youth Council, Manila Technicians Institute).
 - b. Per cent of establishments promoting job enrichment schemes (e.g., job rotation)
 3. Indicators of status of women:
 - a. Per cent distribution of women by occupation.
 - b. Per cent distribution of women by tenure (e.g., permanent, temporary, casual).
 - c. Per cent distribution of women by length of service.
 - d. Per cent distribution of women by highest grade completed.
 - e. Per cent distribution of women by marital status.
 - f. Per cent distribution of women by number of children.
 4. Indicators of benefits derived:
 - a. Per cent of women receiving minimum wage
 - b. Per cent distribution of women by income received.
 - c. Per cent distribution of women by mode of payment (e.g., fixed rate and piece rate).
 - d. Per cent of women in school.
 - e. Per cent of women supporting a relative in school.

5. Indicators pertaining to motivation and attachment to the company:
 - a. Per cent distribution of women by their perceived work input (e.g., work harder, less hard and about the same as other people doing similar types of work).
 - b. Per cent of women who would choose the same company as a place of work if they could begin working all over again.

All these indicators except for 2a (per cent of women participating in government-sponsored job training programs) could be incorporated in the annual Survey of Establishments. Indicator 2a can be compiled by the National Economic and Development Authority or the National Census and Statistics Office from the agencies providing such training programs.

Policy Implications and Recommendations:

A. For the employers:

1. Job enrichment schemes or humanization of work plans to reduce monotony and boredom suffered by workers.
2. Some forms of relaxation be given to counteract the effects of fatigue and physical exertion, especially for piece-rate workers.
3. Flexible work schedules for those with young children or old and disabled people to take care of.
4. Comparable fringe benefits to male and female workers.
5. Improved medical facilities and health care systems for workers.
6. Systematic job evaluation should be conducted.

B. For the Workers/Workers' Organization:

1. Workers should remain vigilant of their rights and responsibilities.
2. Unions and other forms of workers' organization (i.e., informal groups, or cliques) can be marshalled to help improve the lot of the workers.

3. Unions should look more closely into the needs of women workers.
4. Union education and research should be undertaken to encourage both male and female workers to participate more extensively in union affairs.

C. For the Government:

1. Strict enforcement of labor laws, especially on shift work.
2. The government should encourage participation of women in manpower training programs in order to open more doors to them instead of relegating them to secondary or so-called "women" jobs.
3. Legislations permitting equal opportunities for both sexes to enter fields of their own choosing should be passed.
4. Finally, the government should re-study the labor and social legislations which are in effect today so as to come up with meaningful sets of legislations which are responsive to the needs of women workers.