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Breaking Barriers: Analysing Gender Dynamics and Occupational Trends Among Women Workers in the Kashmir Valley

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the district-wise distribution of female occupational patterns in the Kashmir Valley to understand how cultural and traditional progression influences workforce participation. The occupations of the respondents were divided into three sectors: Primary, secondary, and tertiary, according to the codes given in the reliable and standardized National Industrial Classification 2008 (NIC-2008). The standard deviation method was used to understand the degree of variation of the occupation across the districts. The values for high concentration in the primary sector are calculated to be (48.62-64.24%), Medium (33-48.62%), and low (<33%). For the secondary sector, it was calculated to be (33.08-43.72%) for high concentration, Medium (22.44-33.08 %), and low (<22.44%). For the tertiary sector, high concentration values were (67-6-90.64 %), Medium (44.56-67.6%), and low (<44.56%). The Kulgam district has the highest concentration of females in the primary sector, while Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Budgam, and Pulwama have the lowest. Ganderbal leads in the secondary sector, with lower concentrations in Anantnag, Bandipora, Baramulla, Budgam, Kupwara, Shopian, and Srinagar. For the tertiary sector, Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, and Budgam have the highest concentrations, while Kulgam, Kupwara, and Shopian have the lowest. The findings from primary and secondary data reveal that a vast gender gap was observed in employment across districts. Develop policies to address gender disparities, focusing on increasing female representation in marginalized sectors.

KEYWORDS: Occupation; Female occupational; Gender gap; workforce; Kashmir Valley

INTRODUCTION

The Kashmir Valley, an intermontane valley in northern Jammu and Kashmir bounded on the southwest by the Pir Panjal Range and on the northeast by the Greater Himalayan range, is renowned for its breathtaking landscape, rich cultural heritage, and diverse communities (Lone et al. 2023; Yousuf et al., 2021) In this region, one of the primary aspects to be considered is the occupational categorization of the female workforce so that progression in the culture and traditions can be found. Historically, women in the Kashmir Valley have played a pivotal role in sustaining their livelihoods through traditional occupations such as agriculture and handicrafts. These traditional occupations have provided ample employment opportunities, particularly for women, and have been integral to the region's cultural and economic fabric. However, a critical aspect of this region today is the occupational distribution of the female workforce, which is essential for understanding cultural and traditional progression. Analyzing the occupational categorization of women in this area is crucial for both the global and Indian economies (Kuwana, 2024). The dynamics have recently shifted from traditional roles to more urbanized prospects, driven by advancements in education, healthcare, and technology (Fazal, Vaid, & Jodhka, 2024). This transition highlights the evolving role of women in the workforce, marking a significant shift from their traditional involvement to new and diverse occupational opportunities.

This paper aims to identify the occupations in which women workers are concentrated and examine whether there have been shifts in these patterns over recent years, as well as how gendered roles impact work profiles.

The occupational categorization of the female workforce in the Kashmir Valley, India, is deeply intertwined with the region's cultural, historical, and socio-economic context. Often referred to as "Paradise on Earth," Kashmir boasts a rich cultural heritage shaped by its diverse landscapes, serene lakes, and unique artistic traditions. Historically, Kashmiri society has been influenced by various cultures, including Persian, Central Asian, and Mughal, which have impacted women's working conditions and positions. Culturally, Kashmiri women have been integral to the region's economy, engaging in activities such as agriculture, handicrafts, and household management. Traditionally, they have played a significant role in uplifting society.

There is, however, concern regarding the dynamic shift toward a modern approach. Over the years, the valley has undergone significant changes due to urbanization, globalization, and education, creating new opportunities for women and transitioning them from traditional and small-scale businesses to more modern structures (Hamid et al., 2024). Despite these advancements, Kashmiri women face considerable challenges, including a lack of socio-political support, resource scarcity, gender-based discrimination, insufficient regulatory measures, and regional instability, all of which impede their professional and personal development (Gulzar & Naik, 2024). Addressing these complex issues is crucial for improving the occupational categorization of the female workforce in the Kashmir Valley. This study also examines the roles and contributions of women in the region and suggests ways to enhance their circumstances.

Even though new opportunities have emerged for women in the Kashmir Valley, multiple factors continue to pose challenges, including political unrest, security issues, socio-cultural obstacles, and a lack of new opportunities in their chosen fields. Women in the Kashmir Valley face numerous challenges due to gender-based stereotypes and conflicts. Raazia and Rehman (2021) found that women are considered a vulnerable group in Kashmir due to past violence by state and non-state actors. Additionally, the patriarchal nature of the community and cultural norms have not facilitated job opportunities for Kashmiri women. Zeeshan and Aliefendioğlu (2024) highlight that women in these areas face challenges due to gender conflicts and the absence of systems, culture, and political frameworks necessary to improve their working conditions. According to Amir Ahmed (2022), occupational categorization is particularly challenging for female journalists, who contend with stereotypical roles, gender bias, job insecurity, lower wages, and limited capabilities.

1. Materials and Methods

Study Design and Participants

To understand the occupational patterns in the study area, a mix of both primary and secondary data is used. The primary data has been collected through a self-reporting questionnaire with a proposed sample of 500 respondents, which includes information on the respondents' occupations and demographic aspects. The occupational data collected through the primary data was coded according to the codes given in the National Industrial Classification (NIC, 2008). Methodological triangulation was adopted while preparing the questionnaire. This method of blended qualitative and quantitative approach helps in confirming findings, providing more comprehensive data, and increasing the validity of studied phenomena (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The secondary data has been taken from different sources. For the primary sector, data was extracted from the e-Sharam website for 2022-2023. DIC reports (district industrial sector) and revised district profiles (available online) for the secondary and tertiary sectors were considered for each district. Gender-wise occupational data was taken from the Employment Labor Force Survey (ELFS), available online on the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) website, Government of India. However, the sample size of the surveys conducted by the MOSPI at the district level is small, and not all occupations were studies in the sample population (Figure 6). For a comparative analysis, data from 2011 was also taken into consideration. To ensure a representative sample, 5% of the total population of Kashmir Valley (10 districts) was taken. The sample size was calculated using the Raosoft sample size calculator (Althomali et al., 2021) with a confidence interval of 95% and a 5 % marginal error. The data was collected between 2022 – 2023. A significant aspect of our data collection process is using the purposive sampling technique, which ensures that the data collected is relevant to the study area (Cash et al., 2022). Among 500 respondents, 437 were selected for the final analysis, excluding responses due to the missing information.

Occupational groups

The age group of workers taken is above 18 years. Three broad divisions of NIC-2008 taken for the study are given below-

1. NIC (01-03): This NIC division is defined as the primary sector. Respondents belonging to this sector are the Perennial cultivators, Non-perennial Cultivators, Silkworm rearers, and Fisherwomen.
2. NIC (05-43): This NIC division is defined as the secondary sector. Respondents belonging to this sector taken for the study are Handicraft workers and food processors.
3. NIC (45-99). This NIC division is defined as the tertiary sector. Respondents belonging to this sector taken for the study are Primary teachers, Doctors, Bankers

Statistical Methods

The present study focuses on understanding the occupational patterns of the female population in Kashmir Valley. The statistical methodology was broken down into 2 parts. In the first part, the methodology given by Nelson (1955) for the functional classification of town was used. Nelson's methodology is considered one of the most widely used techniques for the functional classification of regions based on the occupations of the respective region (Nelson, 2020; Mishra and Sharma, 2007). The idea behind the standard deviation (SD) method is to understand the degree of variation and understand the representative occupational categories in the study area. The researchers used this methodology to classify the study area based on female occupation across different sectors of the economy i.e. (Primary, Secondary, and tertiary)

The classification scheme of mean values and standard deviation (SD) of occupational categories are presented in Table 1 below and the formula for calculating the standard deviation (SD) is given below. (Sanepa et al. 2017; Mishra and Sharma, 2007; Banski, 2021; Sharma et al. 2006).

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(x - \underline{x})^2}{n}}$$

where: SD = standard deviation; x = individual values of the numbers included in the calculation; $\underline{x}$ = arithmetic average of various values of x; Σ = summation of all values of x; n = the number of items considered.

Categories	Criteria	Description
1	< Mean	Low Concentration
2	Mean to 1 SD	Medium Concentration
3	1 SD to 2 SD	High Concentration
4	Above 2 SD	Very High Concentration

The occupations established were grouped according to the codes given in the National Industrial Classification (NIC-2008). To consider the level of functional specialization and thereby representation spread across the study area, the standard deviations from the means were taken. For, each occupation, the arithmetic mean and 1SD, and 2 SD values were computed. Each district was assessed individually to examine its respective occupational pattern as per the SD classes defined above. The districts were accordingly grouped. Based on this classification, district-wise female occupational patterns were identified.

Primary Sector

Table 2 presents data on the distribution of participants across sectors, offering valuable insights into the labour landscape. In the Primary sector, i.e., from Division (01-03), the total number of participants is 117 (26.77%). The respondents in the primary sectors represented different occupations: Perennial cultivators, Non-perennial Cultivators, Silkworm rearers, and Fisherwomen. The mean age of the participants under this category was found to be 35 out of which 41 % were married. **Figure 1 shows the district-wise distribution of the occupational pattern of female workers based on the Primary survey. This distribution is significant as it helps us understand the regional variations in female labour participation. The**

distribution of the primary sector reveals that the highest percentage of female workers involved in the primary sector (NIC 01-03) is found in the Kulgam district (>55%) The second highest percentage of female workers in the primary sector was found in Kupwara (35%) and Bandipora (25%). The lowest female participation in the primary sector was found in Srinagar district (8%).

Secondary sector

The secondary sector, i.e., NIC- 2008 (05-43), had 80 participants (18.3%). In the secondary sector, occupations included Handicraft workers and food processing. The mean age of the respondents was 31, and only 28 % were married. The results indicate that unmarried females dominated the secondary sector compared to married ones. **The female workers involved in the secondary sector (NIC 05-43) compared to the tertiary and primary sectors were seen as lower in all the districts. The highest was observed in Ganderbal (45%), Shopian (30 %), and Kulgam (20%). The lowest was seen in Srinagar (10%).**

Tertiary Sector

Similarly, in the tertiary sector, occupations were primary teachers, doctors, bankers, and administrators. The mean age of the respondents was 34, with 50% of them married. **The female participation in the tertiary sector, NIC (45-99) was observed to be higher across the districts except for Kulgam and Ganderbal. The highest tertiary sector female participation was seen in Srinagar (75%), Anantnag (60%) & Baramulla (55%). The lowest was seen in Kulgam (5 %) (Fig 1).**

The present scenario signifies that the female workforce participation rate among married women is relatively low compared to that of married women, irrespective of whether the women are from the primary, secondary, or tertiary sector. Across the three sectors, married women reportedly display a relatively low work participation rate compared to unmarried women. Women's domestic responsibilities are often cited as the main barrier to their entry into the workforce (Karia & Mehat,2021; Dhamija, 2020).

The additional domestic duties after marriage often influenced their career choices, leading them to leave their jobs or opt for activities that required less physical labour. The primary data revealed that marital status in the primary and secondary sectors was reported to be 41 and 28 %, respectively. Continuing work after marriage is often a question mark for females. Roy (2013) stated that marriage plays a significant role in the employability of female workers in India, with differences observed between currently married and never-married women. International literature supporting this view are Corno et al., 2020; Mibiti, 2007. On the contrary, In the tertiary sector, personal investigations revealed that marriage added to the extra domestic duties but did not impact their representation in the female workforce. Personal investigations indicated that education played a key role in determining the employability status of the females.

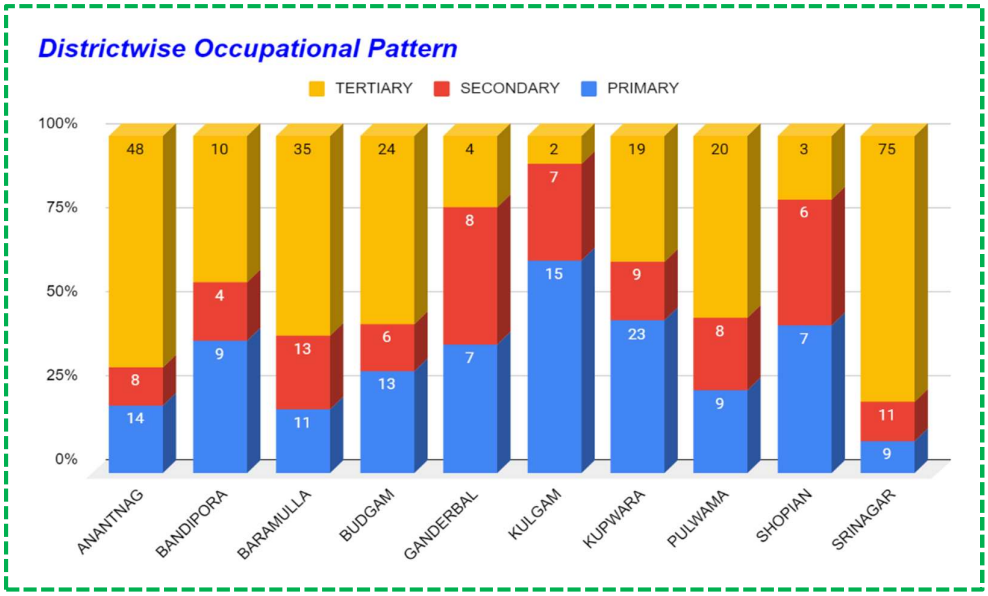

Fig 1 District-wise distribution of occupational pattern

Table 3 NIC Division level Mean & SD Classes

NIC Division	Standard Deviation Classes		
	<Mean (Low concentration)	**Mean to 1SD (medium concentration)**	**1 SD to 2 SD (High concentration)**
01 – 03	< 33 %	33 – 48.62 %	48.62 – 64.24 %
05 - 43	< 22.44%	22.44 – 33.08 %	33.08 – 43.72 %
45 - 99	< 44.56 %	44.56 – 67.6 %	67.6 – 90.64 %

The calculated values of mean and standard deviation for different NIC divisions are given in Table 3 and Table 4 depicts the concentration of females, sector-wise across the districts.

High-concentration districts involving Primary Sector

According to the field survey in Table 4, the highest concentration of female workers engaged in the primary sector is found in the Kulgam district, which means the average value of district Kulgam (62.5%) falls under the class i.e.>2SD. The latest data available to understand the occupational pattern district-wise with a gender perspective is the census 2011. The population of Kulgam consists of 82.80% rural residents, with agriculture serving as the primary livelihood for about 80% of the total population. Regarding gender distribution, 58.48% of cultivators in Kulgam are females, while 36.69% are males. According to the 2011 census, the number of female workers in the primary sector in Kulgam district exceeds that of males. Kulgam is naturally blessed with agro-climatic conditions conducive to both perennial cultivation in its lower regions and non-perennial cultivation in the higher areas, earning it the nickname "Rice Bowl" of Kashmir. Livestock, sheep rearing, and fisheries are important economic activities in Kulgam. The district boasts high-quality sheep and other animals due to the availability of summer pastures. With its diverse agro-climatic features and abundance of streams, particularly supported by Veshow Nallah, Kulgam has tremendous potential for developing the fisheries sector. Efforts have already been initiated to create these water resources for fish rearing, taking into account the feasibility of the resources. The fisheries sector in Kulgam plays a significant role in the state's economy, serving as a substantial income and employment generator. It stimulates the growth of several related industries, thereby contributing significantly to the overall economy of the state. According to the data collected from the e-Sharm website from 2021 to 2023, 10% of females registered as non-perennial cultivators, 5 % as Perennial cultivators, 1 % involved in sericulture, and 2% in fisheries compared to males (Table 4 & 5, figure 2, 3,4,5).

Medium concentration of districts involving the primary sector

Districts Bandipora, Ganderbal, and Kupwara have a medium concentration of female workers in the primary sector (Table 6). The average calculated for Bandipora is (39.13%), and Ganderbal (36.84%), Kupwara (45.1%). These values lie between Mean to 1 SD (33-48.62%). According to the census 2011, the main source of livelihood in the above-mentioned districts is agriculture where both genders play an important part in the overall economic development. In the Bandipora district, the total number of female cultivators involved both in perennial and non-perennial cultivation is 16.53 % as compared to males 23.94%. Comparing the present data from E-sharam 6% of females are registered as non-perennial cultivators, 2 % as non-perennial cultivators, 24% in fisheries, and 3 % in sericulture. In district Ganderbal, a similar situation was observed. 28.06 % of females were involved in cultivation and males 10.36 %. Looking at the present data, 6% of the females were involved in non-perennial activities, 2% in perennial activities,3 % in sericulture, and 8 % in fisheries. In the Ganderbal district women involved in handling fish products were relatively seen in numbers than the other districts. In district Kupwara, female cultivators outnumber males in the cultivation of both perennial and non-perennial crops. According to census, 22.99% were involved in cultivation, males 13.57%. Data from e-Sharam yields that Kupwara district is the third largest amongst the 10 districts in terms of the female workforce involved in the cultivation of both perennial and non-perennial crops. According to it, 19 % of females are involved in non-perennial and 11 % in perennial cultivation. 3 % in sericulture and 1 % in fisheries (Table 4 & 5, Figures 2, 3,4 & 5).

Low concentration of districts involving the primary sector

The districts Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Budgam, and Pulwama have a lower concentration of female employment in the Primary sector. According to the primary data (Fig 1) the average value for Srinagar (9.47 %), Anantnag (20%), Pulwama (24.32%), and Baramulla (18.64%). These values lie within the range of (> 30 %). All the mentioned districts score low for female participation in the primary sector. The secondary data reveals that these districts score higher in secondary and tertiary sectors. According to census 2011, in Srinagar district, 5.14 % are involved in the cultivation. The e-Sharam data reveals that 2 % of females registered themselves as non-perennial cultivators, 3% as perennial cultivators, 3 % in sericulture, and 13 % in fisheries. Similarly, in Anantnag district, 58.40 % of females are involved in cultivation (census,2011). The latest data records reveal that 16 % registered themselves as non-perennial cultivators, 11 % as perennial cultivators, 3% in sericulture, and 17 % in fisheries. In the district Baramulla, 17.29 % of females are involved in cultivation. e-Sharam data reveals that 12% registered themselves as non-perennial cultivators, 19 % as perennial cultivators 3 %in sericulture, and 17 % in fisheries (Table 4 & 5, figure 2, 3,4,5).

High-concentration districts involving the Secondary Sector

A high concentration of females in the secondary sector is in the Ganderbal, a sector that plays a significant role in the district's economy. The average value of Ganderbal is (42.11%). This range lies in the 1 SD to 2 SD (Table 4). It is the only sector with a high concentration of females in the secondary sector. Ganderbal is among the eight newly created districts that came into existence in 2007 by deleting areas of Ganderbal and Kangan from the erstwhile Srinagar district. The district's primary income comes from agriculture. However, the district of Ganderbal is on the path of industrialization. Despite topographical limitations, the industrial sector has been declared the primary vehicle for accelerating economic activity and employing unemployed youth. According to the census 2011, 14.62 % of the females were involved in household industries as compared to males whose participation is as low as (4.9 %). The latest data reveals, that from 2007-2019, 33 industrial units were registered in organized sectors, and 314 were registered in unorganized sectors, employing 1744 people (DIC report,2024). Both the units employ males and females. Since the latest exact gender-based employment data is unknown, nonetheless, the primary survey revealed that females employed in the secondary sector in the Ganderbal district are the highest.

Medium-concentration districts involving the Secondary Sector

The medium concentration of female workers is seen in only two districts i.e. (Kulgam and Pulwama). The average value for Kulgam is (29.17%) and Pulwama (37.5%). Both the values lie between Mean and 1 SD. According to the 2011 census, the position of Pulwama district as a solid industrial belt was weak. The data shows 3.20 % of females were employed in the secondary sector. However, the present scenario signifies that Pulwama district's Lassipora industrial belt is the prestigious Industrial Growth Centre providing employment opportunities for males as well as females. Pulwama has various small and medium factories employing about 3769 individuals (DIC report,2024). In the primary survey, females were observed engaged in food processing and packaging. In this district, two critical projects have been taken up for execution during the current year, namely, the Union Territory Entrepreneur Development Institute and the International Trade Centre at Pampore, Giving ample opportunities for employment to both genders. Besides having industrial dominance, Pulwama is also considered to be the largest milk-producing district in Jammu and Kashmir, where the majority of the females are found to be participating. In the district Kulgam, as per the latest report, the total number of organized and unorganized units in the district is 205, giving employment to 865 people. Kulgam, besides dominating the primary sector in female occupation, is also expected to be engaging females in handicrafts, a part of the secondary sector. The primary survey revealed that females were seen to be participating in handicrafts like *shawal making*, embroidery, *namda,* and *gabba making.*

Low-concentration districts involving the Secondary Sector

A low concentration of females employed in the secondary sector was found in Anantnag, Bandipora, Baramulla, Budgam, Kupwara, Shopian, and Srinagar i.e. the Mean is <22.44%. The average values of

these districts are (11.43%, 17.39%, 22.03%, 13.95%, 17.65%, 21.62%, and 11.58% respectively). These values lie in the range of (> 33 %). The primary survey revealed that the female workforce participation in the above-mentioned districts was more observed in the primary and tertiary sectors. According to the secondary data, the above-mentioned districts score higher in the tertiary sector as well as the primary sector as compared to the secondary sector. For example, in the districts Anantnag Srinagar and Budgam Female participation in the tertiary sector is recorded to be 17.02% and 40.14%, 35.59 % as compared to secondary sectors which is 6.42 and 10.82, 10.20 % respectively (census 2011). In the Districts like Bandipora, Kupwara, and Shopian, where handicrafts are seen as a significant employment-generating occupation, females especially surprisingly scored low. In Bandipora, 15 training Centres are presently operating in the district. Out of these, three (3) are run under the advanced training program wherein a trainee is paid a stipend of Rs 700/- per head per month, and twelve (12) centers are run under the Elementary training program, in which trainees are paid a stipend of Rs 500/- per trainee per month. Similarly, in District Kupwara, 28 centers are running under the same program to train young girls in different crafts like carpet, Sozni, Stapple, Gabba, Wood Carving, and Chain Stitch (DIC report,2024). However, the results show otherwise; the Handicraft sector has, however, suffered due to its very nature of being unorganized, with the additional constraints of low capital, poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence, and a poor institutional framework and a low amount of stipend paid to the girls to work. Personal investigations revealed that the amount paid to the girls does not meet their daily requirements, hence proving less motivating for them to join. In the districts of Baramulla and Shopian, the two occupations, i.e., handicrafts and food processing units, are not found in abundance. Female participation in both districts can be observed in the primary sector.

High-concentration districts involving the Tertiary sector

A high concentration of female workers is found in Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, and Budgam, with Mean Varies from 1 SD-2 SD (67% to 90.64%). As per the Primary survey, Srinagar district dominates the sector. Srinagar city, the only Metropolis of the J&K state, constitutes around two-thirds of the state's urban population and is two times larger than the second-largest city of the Union Territory Jammu & Kashmir. Srinagar unanimously serves as a regional center in the vast catchment. It is not only the largest urban center in terms of demographic size and areal spacing but also a rapidly growing city among all Himalayan urban centers (Yousuf et al., 2017). Srinagar city is composed of higher service sectors like tourism, trade and commerce, and employment in the government sector. According to the 2011 census, female participation in the tertiary sector is (81.96%) the tertiary sector which is the highest of all the districts mentioned above. It is seen that the high income in urban areas and low income in rural areas, in addition to the prevalence of specialized institutions in Srinagar district, acted as the pull and push factors for the city's economic development, thereby providing job opportunities in both the private and government sectors. The ELFS report 22-23 (Fig 6) suggests that Srinagar secures a first position in female employment in administrative services and a fair share of females employed in food processing and teaching professions. According to the secondary data, the district of Srinagar has the highest number of primary schools, high schools, middle schools, colleges, and universities in which female participation is dominantly seen. It also has the highest number of banks, which employ quite a fair share of females (DIC Report, 2024). The secondary reports suggest that Srinagar district has 350 educational institutes (Primary, high schools, Higher secondary). It has 88 colleges and seven universities. In terms of the health and banking sector, it has 26 banks and ten big city hospitals. district came into existence in 1979 before being a part of Srinagar district. The bifurcation was in tune with the efforts of the State Government to take the fruits of speedy development to all the corners of the state. Budgam, since ancient times, has been a place of beauty and abode of famous philosophers, saints, and poets. The past data reveals that women's participation in the tertiary sector in the Budgam district is high. For females, it is recorded at 35.59%, and for males, it is 47.23 %. The present scenario indicates that female participation in the tertiary sector (Health, education, and banking) is found. ELFS report 22-23 (Fig 6) indicates that female employment was observed in only three professions, i.e., Administrative services, teaching, and food processing, with the highest in food processing, followed by teaching. Budgam has one district hospital and two health centers. In terms of education, the district has 1,160 schools, which include (Primary schools, Middle schools, High schools, and Higher secondary). It has eight banks (DIC

report, 2024). The primary survey revealed that women actively participated in all these sectors; thus, a high concentration was observed in the district. Similarly, district Anantnag, being in the midst of the trade route connecting the valley with the rest of the states, has witnessed many cultural transformations from ancient times. The district provides employment opportunities for both genders. Therefore, shows a high concentration of females participating in the tertiary sector. The previous data suggests that 17.02 % of the females were employed in the tertiary sector. Comparing it to the ELFS report, female employment was found in only two professions: teaching and food processing. However, the DIC report, 2024 indicates that the Anantnag district has 1572 education centers, including (primary, High school, Higher secondary, and private). In terms of health and banking sectors, it has. It has one district hospital, five sub-district hospitals, and 12 banking units. In all these sectors, female employment was observed. District Baramulla is the region with the highest concentration of female work participation in tertiary sectors. Baramulla, founded by Raja Bhimsina in 2306 B.C., has an awe-inspiring past. It was the gateway of Kashmir, a place where visitors from around the world would come to Kashmir. Baramulla, with its unique blend of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities, lived in harmony and contributed to a rich composite culture. The Baroque Terracotta School of Hashikopora, a striking feature of Indian art, extended its influence from the Drang to Kanispora. During the Buddhist period, Baramulla was at the zenith of its glory, a famous valley city. Alberuni, a famous Arab scientist and traveler, described Baramulla as the prosperous trading center of the valley. The results from the secondary survey indicate that in the Baramulla district, female participation in the tertiary sector is only 5.71 %, whereas, for males, it is 46.41%. (census,2011). The ELFS report (Fig 6) suggests that the maximum concentration of female workers is found in teaching and food processing. However, in the present scenario, Baramulla has 1 district hospital, six subdistrict hospitals,1 PHC, and one mother and child care hospital where female participation was observed. Regarding education and the banking sector, the district has 604 schools, which include (High schools, higher secondary, private schools, and middle schools) and six banks (DIC report,2024). The primary survey revealed that both sectors showcased a fair share of female participation, highlighting the significant role of women in the economic development of the districts.

Medium-concentration districts involving the Tertiary sector

Pulwama district is the only sector with a medium concentration of female participation in the tertiary sector. The average is (54.05%), and the value lies between the Mean to 1 SD. According to the previous data, Pulwama district has a fair share of the female population engaged in the tertiary sector. Almost 33.52 % were involved in the tertiary sector (census 2011). ELFS report (Fig 6) suggests that female occupation was observed in three occupations, i.e. health, teaching, and food processing. However, the present study shows that the Pulwama district has a medium concentration of females engaged in the tertiary sector. If we look at the present scenario, it signifies that in terms of the number of schools. Hospitals and banks in the Pulwama district scores low. Pulwama district has employees in the industrial sector as compared to the tertiary sector (Discussed in the results above).

Low concentration-concentration districts involving the Tertiary sector

A low concentration of female workers in the tertiary sector was found in Bandipora (43.38%), Kulgam (8.33%), Kupwara (37.25%), and Shopian (18.75%) i.e. the value lies between < Mean 33%. Interestingly, the ELFS report indicates that in Kulgam district, female employment was observed in two professions: teaching and food processing. Similarly, Kupwara's report indicates that female employment was observed in three professions: health teaching and food processing. According to the ELFS report (Fig 6), Kupwara has the highest number of females employed in the health sector. In the Shopian district, the ELFS report indicates that female employment was observed only in the teaching sector. The results indicated that districts with a high to medium concentration of females engaged in the primary sector showed a low concentration of females in the tertiary sector. Similarly, districts with a high concentration of females in the tertiary sector showed a low concentration of females in the primary industry. District Kulgam, Shopian, and Kupwara have a concentration of females involved in the primary industry.

Table 4 District-wise occupational SD Class

Districts	NIC Division <> SD Class		
	01 – 03 (Primary sector)	05 – 43 (Secondary sector)	45 -99 (Tertiary sector)
Anantnag	< Mean (20%) Low Concentration	< Mean (11.43%) Low Concentration	1 SD to 2 SD (68.57%) High Concentration
Bandipora	Mean to 1 SD (39.13 %) Medium Concentration	< Mean (17.39%) Low Concentration	< Mean (43.38%) Low Concentration
Baramulla	< Mean (18.64%) Low Concentration	< Mean (22.03 %) Low Concentration	Mean to 1 SD (59.32 %) High concentration
Budgam	< Mean (30.23 %) Low Concentration	< Mean (13.95 %) Low Concentration	1 SD to 2 SD (55.81%) High Concentration
Ganderbal	Mean to 1 SD (36.84 %) Medium Concentration	1 SD to 2 SD (42.11 %) High Concentration	< Mean (21.05 %) Low Concentration
Kulgam	1 SD to 2 SD (62.5 %) High Concentration	Mean to 1 SD (29.17 %) Medium Concentration	< Mean (8.33 %) Low Concentration
Kupwara	Mean to 1 SD (45.1 %) Medium Concentration	< Mean (17.65 %) Low Concentration	< Mean (37.25 %) Low Concentration
Pulwama	< Mean (24.32 %) Low Concentration	< Mean (21.62 %) Low Concentration	Mean to 1 SD (54.05 %) Medium Concentration
Shopian	Mean to 1 SD (43.75 %) Medium Concentration	Mean to 1 SD (37.5 %) Medium Concentration	< Mean (18.75 %) Low Concentration
Srinagar	< Mean (9.47 %) Low Concentration	< Mean (11.58 %) Low Concentration	1 SD to 2 SD (78.95 %) High Concentration

District	Non-perennial	Male	Female	Female	Perennial	Male	Female	Female
Baramulla	98895	73617	25278	19%	17254	8822	8432	12%
Anantnag	84288	62744	21544	16%	41576	21258	20318	29%
Kupwara	99385	73982	25403	19%	16216	8291	7925	11%
Budgam	33640	25042	8598	7%	13213	6756	6457	9%
Srinagar	8033	59800	2053	2%	40453	20687	19767	3%
Pulwama	53303	39679	13624	10%	16022	8192	7830	11%
Kulgam	50581	37652	12929	10%	7305	3735	3570	5%
Bandipora	32380	24104	8276	6%	2949	1508	1441	2%
Ganderbal	18080	13459	4621	3%	2912	1489	1423	2%
Shopian	38025	28306	9719	7%	22241	11372	10869	15%
Total	**516610**	**38456 4**	**13204 6**	**100 %**	**143732**	**73490**	**70242**	**100 %**

Table 5 District-wise distribution of respondents involved in the primary sector (contd.)

Sericulture	Male	Female	Female %	Fisheries	Male	Female	Female %
126	87	39	3%	10856	9676	1180	17%
117	81	36	2%	9052	8068	984	14%
130	90	40	3%	791	705	86	1%
113	78	35	2%	4545	4051	494	7%
162	112	50	3%	8666	7724	942	13%
3666	2535	1131	73%	8629	7691	938	13%
42	29	13	1%	1058	943	115	2%
159	110	49	3%	15888	14161	1727	24%
175	121	54	3%	4949	4411	538	8%
311	215	96	6%	506	451	55	1%
5002	3459	1543	100%	**64940**	**57881**	**7059**	100%

Source Data extracted from the e-Shram website (2022-2023)

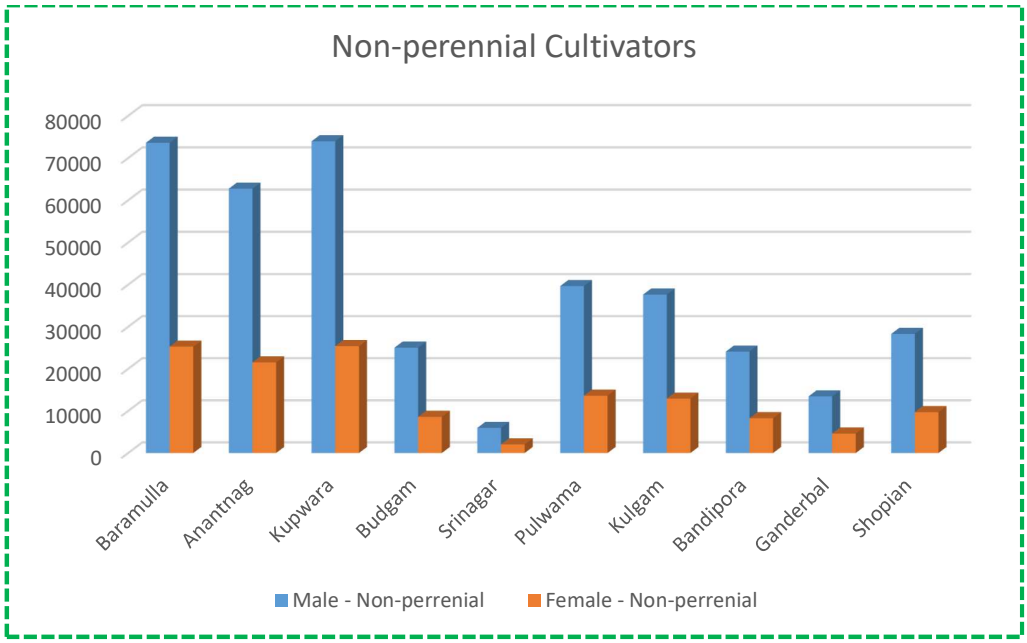

Figure 2 Graphical representation of gender-wise distribution of non-perennial cultivators

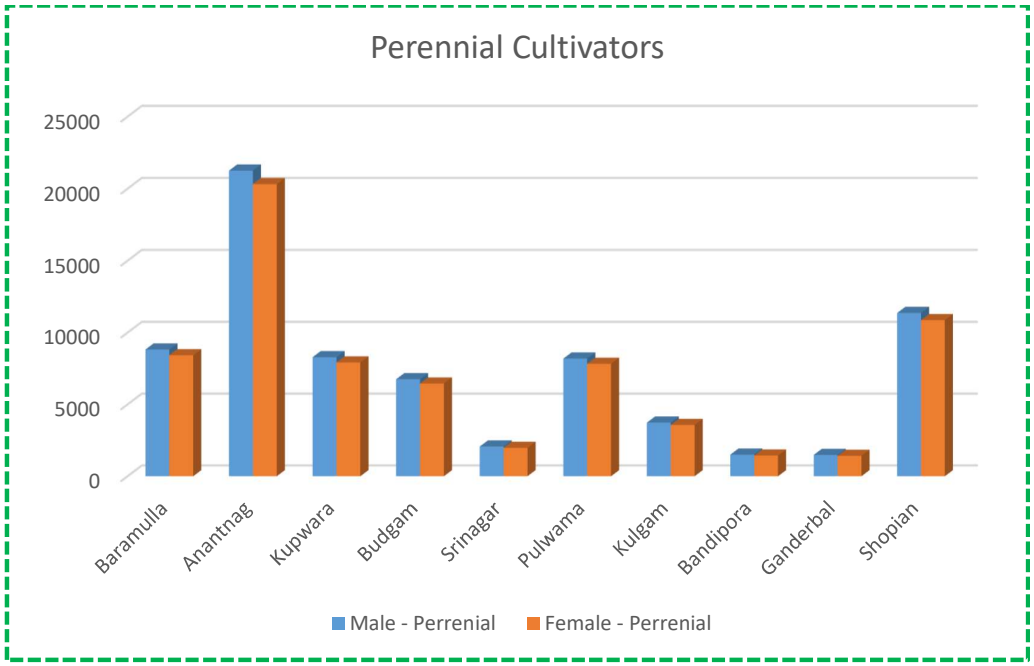

Figure 3 Graphical representation of gender-wise distribution of perennial cultivators

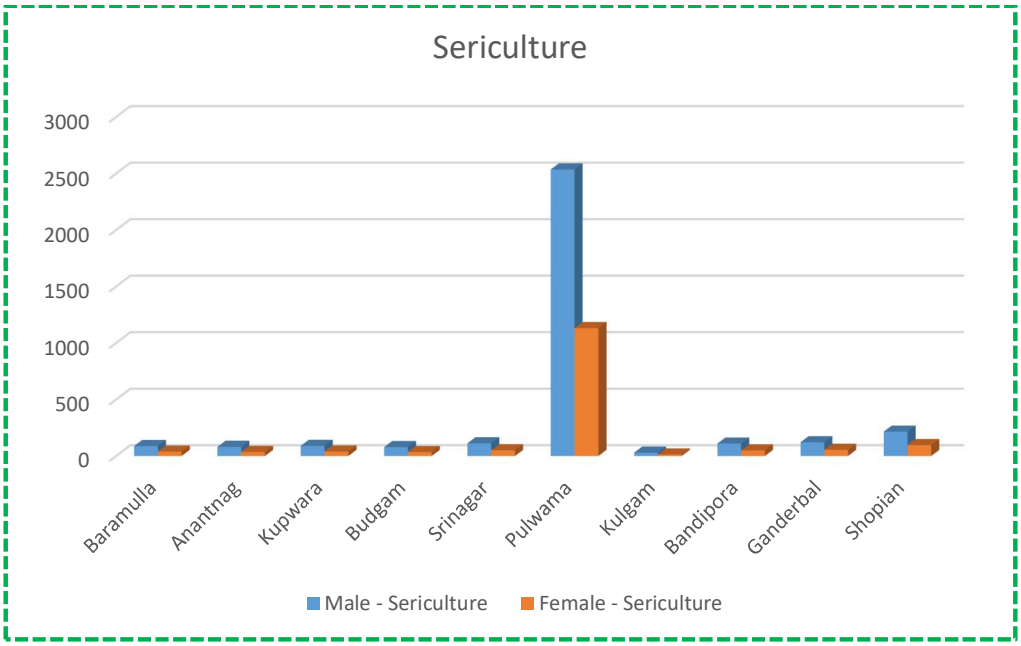

Figure 4 Graphical representation of gender-wise distribution of sericulture

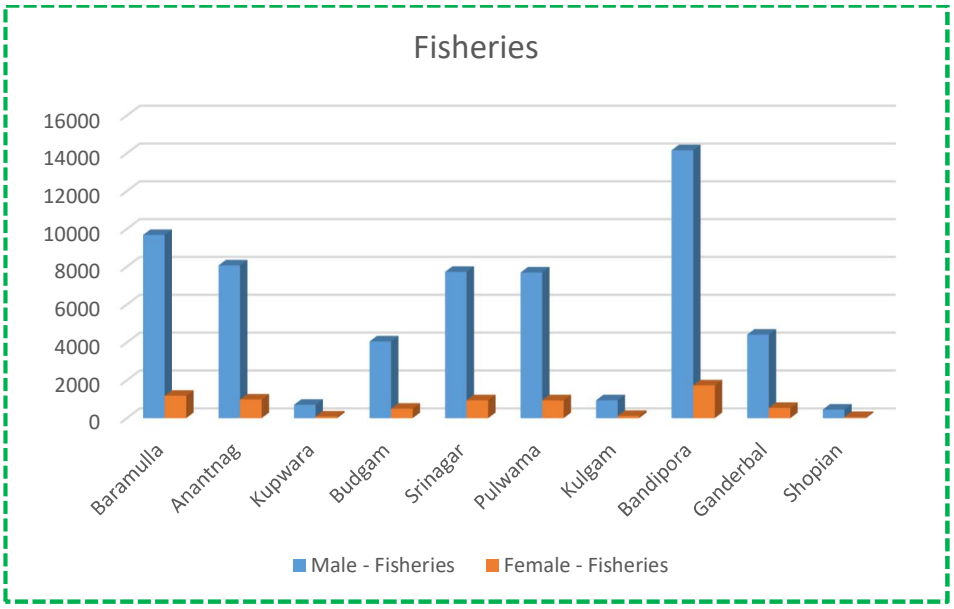

Figure 5 Graphical representation of gender-wise distribution of Fisherwomen (hanji)

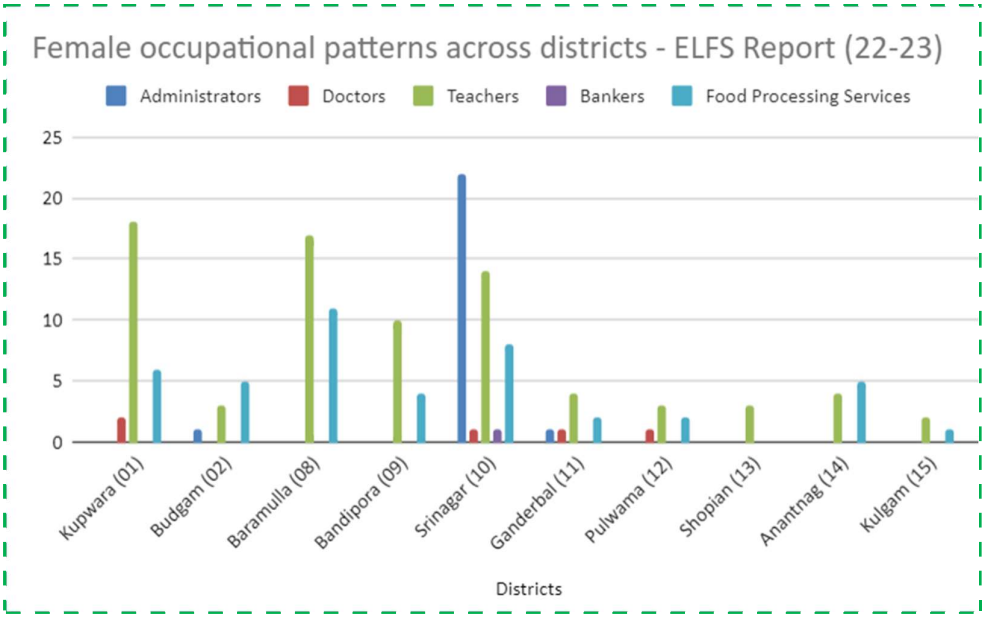

Figure 6 Female Occupational patterns as per ELFS Report 2022-24

Conclusion

The study on the occupational categorization of the female workforce in the Kashmir Valley provides a comprehensive analysis of the district-wise distribution of female employment across three sectors: primary, secondary, and tertiary, as per the National Industrial Classification 2008 (NIC-2008). By employing the standard deviation method to assess the degree of variation in occupational patterns, the research highlights significant disparities in female workforce participation across different districts.

In the primary sector, characterized by activities like agriculture, forestry, and fishing, the Kulgam district exhibits the highest concentration of female workers, with values ranging between 48.62% and 64.24%. Conversely, districts such as Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Budgam, and Pulwama show the lowest participation, with figures below 33%. This suggests that Kulgam relies heavily on primary sector activities, whereas the other districts have more diversified or advanced economic structures. The secondary sector, which includes manufacturing and construction, sees the highest female workforce concentration in the

Ganderbal district, with values between 33.08% and 43.72%. In contrast, districts like Anantnag, Bandipora, Baramulla, Budgam, Kupwara, Shopian, and Srinagar have low female participation rates, below 22.44%. This indicates that Ganderbal has a relatively more developed industrial base that engages a significant number of women compared to other regions. In the tertiary sector, encompassing services such as education, healthcare, and retail, the highest female workforce concentration is found in Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, and Budgam, with values ranging from 67.6% to 90.64%. On the other hand, Kulgam, Kupwara, and Shopian exhibit the lowest concentrations, below 44.56%. This pattern suggests that urbanized districts like Srinagar have a more robust service sector, providing ample employment opportunities for women. The findings emphasise a pronounced gender gap in employment across the districts of the Kashmir Valley. The variations in occupational patterns reflect the underlying economic structures and development levels of the regions. Districts with higher female participation in the tertiary sector tend to be more urbanized and offer better access to education and professional opportunities. In contrast, districts with a high concentration of female workers in the primary sector are likely more rural and dependent on traditional agricultural activities. In conclusion, the study highlights the need for targeted policies and interventions to address the gender disparities in employment across the Kashmir Valley. Efforts should focus on promoting female participation in the secondary and tertiary sectors, particularly in districts with low current engagement. Enhancing access to education, vocational training, and employment opportunities can help bridge the gender gap and foster economic growth and development in the region.

Limitations of the Study

In our investigation of female occupational patterns in the Kashmir Valley, we encountered a range of complex challenges that significantly hindered the collection of crucial data. The most prominent obstacle was the absence of comprehensive records and effective data-sharing mechanisms specific to the latest gender-wise occupational patterns in the study area. The only official data available is the census 2011, which only gives broad occupational categories and does not provide occupational data according to the NIC codes. The latest data available, i.e., ELFS, misses some districts as the sample size of the survey is very small. The periodic labor survey (ELFS) conducted by the Ministry of Labour only collects the data at the state level; hence, the data is not provided at the district level. This scarcity of information makes it exceedingly difficult to build a comprehensive understanding of the occupational patterns of the females in the Kashmir valley. Additionally, due to logistical constraints, the study was limited to a survey-based approach, which may introduce reporting biases. Researchers encountered a pervasive reluctance among the female respondents to engage in discussions while collecting the data. It was observed that the respondents belonged to the primary and secondary sectors. Despite these challenges, our research has the potential to significantly impact our understanding of gender-wise occupational patterns in the Kashmir Valley and can inform future policy decisions and interventions.

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