



# INFLUENCE OF CO-WORKERS AND IMPACT OF JOB IN SOCIAL STATUS AMONG WOMEN FACTORY WORKERS IN INDIA

**Prasanna Venkatesan V.**

PhD Scholar, Department of Psychology, MAHARAJA AGRASEN HIMALAYAN GARHWAL UNIVERSITY, Uttrakhant, India.

Email: mynameisprasanna@gmail.com

## Abstract:

Workplace relationships significantly influence employee behaviours and attitudes particularly in countries like India where people interact and get influenced by peers. This study examines how the attitudes of few co-workers shape the perceptions and job satisfaction of other women employees in industrial setup. I have conducted among 156 women workers in two factories of same management and manufacturing similar kind of products near Chennai. This research investigates the presence of Conformity Bias and its impact on workplace satisfaction and perceived social status of these employees. The findings suggest that women employees are vulnerable to peer influence, particularly from dissatisfied co-workers, resulting in conformity in attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, employment is positively correlated with enhanced social status and self-esteem of women in India as it provides the power of earning and support to the family. The study highlights the importance of maintaining a positive and supportive work culture to safeguard the psychological wellbeing and promote independent decision making among women workers.

**Keywords:** Women employees, Conformity Bias, Women workers, social influence, peer influence, job satisfaction, social status, organizational psychology, behavioural psychology

## Introduction:

Participation of women in the workforce of developing countries like India is steadily increasing. This provides social empowerment and financial independence for women. Countries like India is witnessing the traditional norms of women workforce is changing rapidly. But, workplaces are a part of social ecosystems where the workers spend a considerable time and they are constantly influenced by their colleagues. Peer influence can significantly influence perception, job satisfaction and morale of workers.

This study is focussed in the understanding that ‘social influence’ is an important factor in shaping an individual’s cognition and behaviour at workplace. Conformity Bias is of particular interest, that leads individuals to align their thoughts, opinion and behaviours with others of a group. Workers often operate in teams in factory setting and interact with other team members. In this setup, the chance of frequent interaction and influence is high. Especially women workers are more relationship-oriented and empathetically aligned in group contexts.

The study is focussed to investigate:

- (a) the influence of co-workers among women factory employees’ attitudes,
- (b) the presence of conformity bias, and
- (c) the perceived impact of employment in social status of women.

## Objectives of the Study:

- To evaluate the influence of co-workers on women employees in industrial settings.
- To investigate the presence of Conformity Bias in shaping opinions and attitudes at workplace.
- To examine how employment impacts women workers’ perceived social status.

## Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This research draws from few psychological theories to support its objectives:

### Social Influence Theory

**John C. Turner. (1991)** explains that people conform to group norms to gain acceptance and avoid conflict. Such conformity is often intensified in cross-culture societies.

The book **Social Exchange Theory** (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), explains, ‘workplace relationships are shaped by perceived fairness and reciprocity, affecting satisfaction and engagement’.

**Equity Theory** developed by J. Stacy Adams in 1965 states that ‘employees are motivated by fairness in the workplace, by comparing their inputs and outputs to those of their co-workers’.

### Self-Categorization Theory (SCT)

**Turner et al. (1987)** study developed the Self-Categorization Theory by John Turner and colleagues at the University of Bristol explains how people adopt behaviours that align with their social group to maintain a cohesive identity.

**Gender Role Theory** developed by Eagly & Wood, in 1991 explains that ‘social expectations about women’s roles influence how they react to group dynamics and authority structures’.

**Kim, Moon, and Shin. (2019)** A study conducted by Kim, Moon, and Shin in 2019 on “Justice Perceptions, perceived insider status, and gossip at Work: A Social Exchange Perspective” reveals that employee attitudes and behaviours are significantly influenced by perceptions of justice in the workplace. Social Exchange Theory states that while perceived injustice may lead to negative or retaliatory activities, employees respond to fair and supportive treatment from their company and supervisors with positive work behaviours (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In this regard, Kim, Moon, and Shin's (2019) study offers valuable insights into how views of justice impact a particular and frequently disregarded behaviour.

**Journal of Business Research. (2019)** The authors of the study "Justice perceptions, perceived insider status, and gossip at work: A social exchange perspective" investigate the relationship between employees' gossiping activities and their perceptions of organizational and supervisory justice. The study uses the social exchange framework to support its claim that employees have a stronger sense of insider status—a psychological state in which they are recognized and appreciated as essential members of the organization—when they believe that the company and their managers are treating them fairly..

**Kim Sundtoft Hald. (2018)** studied ‘Social Influence and Safe Behaviour in Manufacturing’ among 570 electronics factory workers across seven Chinese factories. His study examines how managerial and peer safety norms shape worker behaviour. They found that the awareness of peer adherence to safety procedures strongly predicted individuals’ own compliance. Rules set by the supervisors increased this effect, illustrating conformity bias mechanism, ‘workers conform to perceived group safety behaviours to align with managerial expectations’. This proves the role of peers and leaders in enhancing the safety in workplace.

These frameworks jointly suggest that women in factory settings are highly susceptible to the emotional and attitudinal states of their colleagues, especially in peer-dominated environments.

## Methodology:

### Participants and Setting

The study involved 156 women workers from two factories located near Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Both factories are under the same corporate management but operate independently at a 20-kilometre distance.

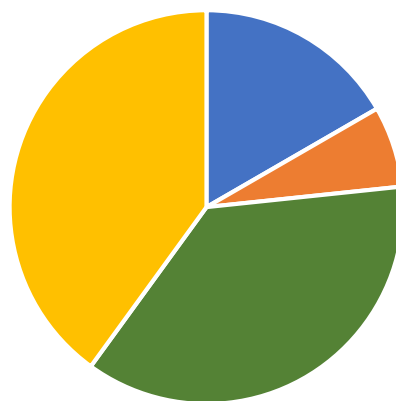
- Factory 1: 55 respondents
- Factory 2: 101 respondents

### Instrumentation

A questionnaire with 30 questions in Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was administered. There were questions placed in random to get the answers for;

- Perceived safety
- Job satisfaction
- Social respect
- Peer influence

## Classification of Questions



■ Self awareness                      ■ Influence of Colleagues  
 ■ Influence of Superior              ■ Influence of Management

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was high, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82.

### Procedure

The survey was conducted among female employees in two factories near Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. Respondents were divided into groups and they were asked to complete the survey with the supervision of a surveyor to ensure minimal peer influence during the response process. Each group of respondents were asked to complete the survey in subsequent batches without leaving time for them to interact with other respondents who completed the survey.

The responses were analysed using Microsoft Excel. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a score of 0.82, indicating high reliability.

### Reliability of the Instrument:

The reliability of the instrument (questionnaire) is tested through Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) by the formula;

$$\alpha = (K/k-1)*[(S2y - \sum S2i)/S2y]$$

k – number of questions (30)

S2y – total score of each individual = 138.74

S2i – sum of individual variants = 29.43

$\alpha$  should be 0 to 1, close to 1 means more reliable the data is.

$$\alpha = (30/30-1)*((138.74-29.43)/138.74) = 0.82$$

The Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is 0.82 and thus the instrument is more reliable.

### Results and Interpretation:

#### Influence of Co-workers

There were a few Respondents in Factory 1 openly expressed their dissatisfaction on mandatory things like wearing Personal Protective Equipment. Such disengaged Respondents were only 5 but were able to influence many others with their opinion. Their influence displayed a noticeable trend. In this factory, peer dissatisfaction led to reduced job satisfaction among neutral employees. Peer opinion heavily impacted individual perception of management, safety, and engagement. This supports the presence of Conformity Bias.

#### Perception of Social Status

Average score of Factory 1 and Factory 2 collected in batch 1 and 2 respectively is as mentioned below.

F1 batch 1 average score	F1 batch 2 average score	F2 batch 1 average score	F2 batch 2 average score
4.7	4.24	4.48	4.725

A majority of respondents reported a positive change in their social status due to employment. On the statement “My social status has improved after joining here,” the average ratings were:

- Factory 1: 4.47 / 5.00
- Factory 2: 4.60 / 5.00

This indicates a robust perception of empowerment and societal acceptance. Development of SIPCOTs and SEZs are playing important role in shaping the socio-economy of semi-urban and rural India.

### Comparative Engagement

Factory 2, where overall morale and leadership engagement were reported as stronger, had higher job satisfaction and employee engagement scores. Even though there were few points brought out regarding their comforts and menopause management, there expressed them in an assertive way. The Respondents were happy about the leadership and management. Even though the Factory 1 and Factory 2 are under the same management and are geographically separated by 20 kilometers, there is a noticeable difference in employee morale and engagement. This reinforces the importance of leadership.

### Discussion:

The findings validate the study’s core hypothesis: **Conformity Bias** is prevalent among women factory workers. A few disengaged workers can unintentionally influence the perceptions of others, leading to broader dissatisfaction of the employees. This supports Turner’s (1991) theory of **Social Influence** and aligns with **Self-Categorization Theory**, where group perception override individual judgment.

Moreover, the data reinforces the empowering effect of employment among women employees. Respondents feel more respected and valued, both in the workplace and in their communities. This reflects Eagly & Wood’s (1991) perspective on evolving gender roles due to workforce participation.

### Implications and Recommendations:

**Team Climate Monitoring:** Regular assessments of team morale should be conducted to identify potential sources of negativity.

**Mentorship Programs:** Optimistic and talented mentors to be appointed to neutralize the spread of dissatisfaction.

**Empowerment Workshops:** Regular training programs focused on positive thinking, goal setting and assertiveness to the employees can reduce blind conformity.

**Leadership Training:** Factory leadership should be trained in emotional intelligence and strategic leadership to proactively manage team sentiment.

**Reward Systems:** There must be a reward system for positive behaviours. This can help shift group norms toward a more supportive climate.

### Conclusion

This study contributes to the understanding of social influence and conformity bias in industrial workspaces, particularly among women. The findings highlight how peer opinions significantly shape individual perceptions, sometimes undermining genuine satisfaction. However, the positive influence of employment on women’s social status remains an encouraging finding, reinforcing the need for inclusive, empowering work environments.

Future research could explore the role of organizational communication, leadership style, and cultural norms in shaping conformity patterns across different industrial sectors.

### References:

1. Turner, J. C. (1991). “Social Influence”. Open University Press.
2. Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). “Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review”. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 874–900.
3. Adams, J. S. (1965). “Inequity in Social Exchange. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*”, APA Press, Vol. 2, pp 267–299.
4. Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (1991). “Explaining sex differences in social behavior: A meta-analytic perspective”. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(3), 306–315.
5. Scott, B. A., & Colquitt, J. A. (2007). “Organizational justice: A fairness-based perspective”. In J. Barling & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behaviour: Volume I – Micro Approaches* (pp. 235–256). SAGE Publications.
6. Kim Sundtoft Hald (2018). “Social Influence and Safe Behaviour in Manufacturing”. *Safety Science*, Vol. 109, pp 1-11.
7. Kim, Moon, and Shin (2019). “Justice Perceptions, perceived insider status, and gossip at Work: A Social Exchange Perspective”. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 97, pp30-42.