

A STUDY ON THE PLIGHT OF WOMEN WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL



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ABSTRACT

The fact that women are disproportionately represented in the lowest-paying, most precarious jobs in the informal economy is a clear indication that their labour is invisible. The informal sector, also known as the grey economy or the hidden economy, is responsible for the provision of employment and income without being subject to the regulation or control of the government or a social safety net (e.g., pension, fair wages, or unemployment insurance). Domestic workers are employed in private houses to perform a variety of activities. These services include sweeping and cleaning, washing clothing and dishes, grocery shopping and cooking, as well as providing care for children, the elderly, and the handicapped. Additionally, they provide services in the areas of gardening, driving, and security. Some people do this sort of employment while also living on the grounds of their employer.

keywords: Plight, Women, Workers

INTRODUCTION

The progress that women have achieved in terms of their health and education are not reflected in the economic sector in any appreciable way. In spite of targeted investments to assist entrepreneurial training, skill development, and access to financing in settings of development and high informality, the gender gap continues to exist. There is a rising awareness that the

institutions of society and economies itself are inherently unequal and act as barriers for women's access to social and economic opportunities. Specifically, there is a focus on the gender pay gap. Because of this awareness, it is vital to shed light on the frequently overlooked ways in which women are disadvantaged, as well as to purposefully modify how we perceive and value "women's labour." The fact that women are disproportionately represented in the lowest-paying, most precarious jobs in the informal economy is a clear indication that their labour is invisible. The informal sector, also known as the grey economy or the hidden economy, is responsible for the provision of employment and income without being subject to the regulation or control of the government or a social safety net (e.g., pension, fair wages, or unemployment insurance). It plays a significant role in the economies of many nations and is the primary source of income for more than two billion people throughout the world, of whom around 37 percent are women (ILO, 2018). Internationally, 63% of women are engaged in unpaid household labour, with the percentage being highest in South Asia (95%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (89%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (59%) and then globally by South Asia (95%). Informal labour performed by women encompasses the least formal and most precarious end of the employment continuum. Workers who are self-employed in unregistered or incorporated microenterprises are considered informal workers. Wage workers who do not receive benefits or social protection are also considered informal workers. These workers include many domestic workers, casual or day workers, subcontractors, and unprotected employees of informal businesses or formal firms (Bonner & Spooner, 2012). Slavery in its contemporary form is able to thrive in businesses such as domestic work, fishing, and others that are not adequately controlled due to a lack of collective labour monitoring on a global and regional scale (Klovborg, 2019). It's possible that women who work in informal settings for modest compensation are also on the informal and insecure end of the scale. Even if they have a better salary, they do not have any job stability or perks, despite the fact that their social capital has improved. Women all across the globe are increasingly occupying positions that fall under the category of unofficial workers. Even in more formal and safe work settings, women are still subject to exploitation in many trade unions. For instance, patriarchal exploitation of women employees is not addressed in many of these settings (Bonner & Spooner, 2012). Collective action has often been responsible for bringing about the changes that have been seen in both the working circumstances of women who are employed in informal settings and the experiences of women who are employed in formal settings.

Collective action may take numerous forms, ranging from those that are more official to those that are more casual in character. Regardless of the level of formality, collectives are crucial vehicles for bringing people together to represent themselves as a group, demand change, and hold leaders responsible for their actions. However, not all workers are able to profit from collective action. This is especially true for informal workers who do their duties in solitude and are not recognised as employees by either their employer or the state. Women are more susceptible in this category because they are more likely to work in the informal sector, and their social isolation might be caused by causes that are unrelated to the type of the work that they do.

ROLE OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

Domestic workers are employed in private houses to perform a variety of activities. These services include sweeping and cleaning, washing clothing and dishes, grocery shopping and cooking, as well as providing care for children, the elderly, and the handicapped. Additionally, they provide services in the areas of gardening, driving, and security. Some people do this sort of employment while also living on the grounds of their employer. Others may have part-time jobs, although in most cases they work for a number of different businesses. In most cases, women were the ones responsible for providing care and cleaning. There are a variety of reasons why women choose a career in the home sphere. Women who come from low-income homes or live in underprivileged neighbourhoods sometimes have limited access to work opportunities and may experience discrimination on the basis of their gender, caste or class, race or ethnicity. Because tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for children, the sick, and the old are nearly commonly considered to be women's labour, males practically never compete in this field. A lack of marketable skills and education levels that are below average are other factors. The rise in demand for domestic services may be attributed to shifting demographics as well as social and work patterns. These include women working outside the house, a decrease in the provision of care services by the public sector, and the dissolution of extended family support systems. Other women are able to enter the workforce since domestic help is quite inexpensive.

PLIGHT OF WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS

One of the most significant things that the women's movement has contributed is a better understanding of the role that domestic work plays in the reproduction of labour within

capitalist societies, both in the paid and unpaid spheres of the job. Questions such as, what exactly is the definition of domestic work? Is there any fruit to show for this labour? There has been a lot of discussion and argument over the question of what its worth and composition are within the context of the division of labour. 4 The nature of domestic work, which includes the fact that it is often unpaid, the high percentage of women who participate in this work, the fact that it takes place in the private space of a household, and the low percentage of women who participate in formal employment, are all factors that contribute to the fact that the work is largely unregulated and underpaid. It is interesting to consider the 14.4 percent contribution that domestic work made to the rise in job opportunities for women between the years 2000 and 2010, given the circumstances. According to the findings of the National Sample Survey conducted in India during the years 2004-2005, only around 24 percent of the urban female working population (aged more than 15 years) was employed, in contrast to the 79 percent of males who were worked. By 2009-2010, the percentage of urban women who were employed had dropped to 19 percent from its previous level. 5 It is estimated that about one in every seven women who enter the labour is employed in the domestic sector. This highlights the significance of domestic work as a source of subsistence for a significant portion of metropolitan households. The rural-urban movement might be considered, at least in part, as being fostered by this kind of profession. On the other hand, this would also point to the division of labour and the new opportunities for women in formal employment, particularly in the service industry like education, banking and finance, and information technology. In other words, this would point to the fact that women now have more chances to work full-time jobs. 6 The middle class on the ascent At the 100th International Labour Conference, the International Labor Organization (ILO) voted to approve the Domestic Workers Convention (C189) on August 16, 2011.

RESEARCH METHALOGY

It is essential to have information on the socio-economic profile of the women who work in the unorganised sector as well as their families in order to be able to evaluate their quality of life and define their living standards. In light of this, the current research gathered data on a number of socioeconomic variables, including personal information, family history, religion and caste background, educational levels, and the economic position of women employees, as well as other pertinent information. The socio-economic characteristics of women who work in the unorganised Sector is the topic that will be discussed in depth throughout this chapter. It's

possible that doing some research on the socioeconomic backgrounds of the unorganised women employees may lead to some intriguing findings.

Table 1 Distribution Of Women Workers By Age And Regions

Age Group	Overall	North					
		East	South	North	East	Central	West
18-25	16.1	21.5	20.9	11.6	13.4	15.8	21.5
26-30	23.2	20.7	25.1	20.9	26.8	22.9	20.7
31-35	21.6	16.7	15.5	31.1	18.9	21.7	16.7
36-40	20.8	24.7	18.4	23.2	24.4	19.8	24.7
41-50	13.4	13.9	12.9	10.3	12.2	14.6	13.9
51-60	3.9	2.4	4.0	2.3	4.3	4.3	2.4
Above 60 age	1.0	0.0	2.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

CASTE OF THE WOMEN WORKERS

In terms of the distribution of castes among working women, around 38.88% are classified as belonging to an OBC, followed by 29.78% from the General category, 21.72 % from the SC caste, and almost 10% from the ST caste (Table 3.4). It has been discovered that the proportion of SCs in the North and South is greater than in the other four areas, coming in at 24.20 and 28.30 percent respectively. This is a significant difference from the other four regions. As was to be predicted, the percentage of people who identify as STs is greatest in the North-East area (15.20%), followed by the East (12.10%) and then the West (11.60%).

Table 2 Distribution Of Women Workers By Marital Status

Status	Overall	North East	South	North	East	Central	West
Married	76.10	73.00	72.60	65.80	70.40	78.30	81.70
Un-married	20.10	23.10	23.00	30.80	25.25	18.45	15.08
Widowed	1.40	1.10	1.20	1.70	1.40	1.30	1.50
Divorced	1.80	2.50	1.60	1.00	2.50	1.70	1.40
Deserted	0.60	0.30	1.60	0.70	0.45	0.25	0.32
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

There is a correlation between the size of a family and its economic level, as well as the amount of housework that falls on the shoulders of working women. When there are many people living in a household, but only one or two of them are earning a living wage, and the rest of the people in the household are either jobless, elderly, or children, this may put a significant strain on the family's finances. The results of the survey indicate that, on average, there are 5.6 people living in each home, which accounts for 36.70% of all households (Table 3.6). The proportion is quite close to being the same in all of the areas. The percentage of households that include seven people or more ranges from 11.30 percent in the North to the maximum level of 16.21 percent in the West. The percentage of homes that have three to four people living in them is found to be greatest in the north, at 50.70 percent, and lowest in the south, at 42.20 percent. The percentage of households consisting of just one or two people ranges from 2.4 to 5.1 percent throughout the areas. If more children are the source of a big family size, then this points to a lack of knowledge of the need of family planning on the part of working women and the men who are married to them. It is necessary, as a result, not only to educate women and their husbands about the various methods of family planning, but also to encourage them to make use of those methods in order to have smaller families, which is beneficial for the well-being of both the individual household and the nation as a whole.

DATA ANALYSIS

In the unorganised sector, women may be found working in almost every industry imaginable, including agriculture, forestry, fishing, plantation management, construction, retail, bead making, bangle making, ceramics, embroidery, and stitching, to name just a few. The majority of the women either work as day labourers in agriculture, construction, brick manufacturing, or coir production; or they work as independent contractors in handloom weaving, basket weaving, and selling fish or vegetables. Some of the more recent economic endeavours include floriculture, the raising of poultry and animals, the production of garments, the processing of food and fish, etc. In fisheries, both marine and inland, women predominate in the activity of handling and processing fish, accounting for around 70 percent of the workforce. In the brassware business, women make up 50 percent of the overall labour. There are around 50 lakhs scrap collectors in the nation, according to the most recent estimates. People who are unable to read or write, have no skills, and come from the lowest of the poor are forced into this vocation. Beedi rolling is a significant source of income for many women; nonetheless, the work is low-paying and precarious, and it may have negative effects on one's health. It is estimated that there are 4.5 million women employed in the beedi industry in India, which accounts for 80% of the total workforce. In many primary food processing locations, a significant amount of the work is done by women using traditional methods. This accounts for a major share of the food processing that occurs in the unorganised sector. In addition, the informal or unorganised service sector is growing, which is leading to a significant increase in the number of options available to women. The fields of domestic service, education (including in-home tutoring), childcare, and health services have all seen significant increases in job prospects.

DISRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY OCCUPATION ACROSS REGIONS:

The total sample distribution of female employees is shown in Table 3, as well as the distribution of female workers in agriculture and non-agriculture, as well as the classifications of female workers within these two major groupings among regions. In general, the regions in the North and West with the largest percentages of working women are those located in the North and West, followed by the South (18.8%), East (16.2%), and Central (12.3%), and the North-East, which has the lowest proportion of working women, respectively (9.1 per cent) It has been discovered that the percentage of "own account employees" and "casual labour"

employed in agriculture is much higher than average, ranging between 18 and 21 percent in the North, East, and West. In the other areas, such as the NorthEast, South, and Central, the percentage ranges anywhere from 10.9 to 16.2 percent. It is stated that the percentage of women who are employers in fields other than agriculture is between 18 and 23 percent in the east, north, and west. In the remaining areas, it ranges from a low of 4.2 percent in the Central to a high of 12.5 percent in the South. The percentage of women working as helpers in HH companies is largest in the West (26.2%), followed by the West (24.5%). The percentage of women working in this capacity is lowest in the North-East, and it ranges between 13 and 16 percent in the North, Central, and East. This group is identified as being the most troubled since they are the employees who get the least amount of compensation in relation to the quantity of labour that they do.

Table 3 Distribution Of Unorganized Woman Workers By Occupation And Region (Per Cent)

		Agriculture	Non Agriculture				
		Working as own Account worker/ causal labour	Employer	Working as own account worker	Working as helper in HH enterprises	Working as regular salaried/wage employee	Working as Casual labour
Overall							
North	22.1	18.7	23.6	19.3	12.6	36.4	8.6
Central	12.3	12.9	4.2	13.8	15.6	7.4	21.4
East	16.2	21.4	30.4	15.4	14.9	12.1	16.5
West	21.6	19.8	18.3	22.4	24.5	20.8	9.5

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South	18.8	16.2	12.5	21.5	26.2	12.0	30.8
North East	9.1	10.9	10.9	7.6	6.1	11.2	13.2
Total	100.0	22.0	1.7	37.1	15.1	23.0	1.0

According to the available data, about 22.0 percent of the women working in the unorganised sector are employed in agricultural labour. The remaining 78% of them are engaged in labour that is not related to agriculture. Within the realm of non-agricultural work, approximately 37.1 percent of women are employed as workers on their own account, followed by 23.0 percent of women who are employed as regular salaried employees, 15.1 percent of women who are employed as helpers in domestic enterprises (without salary or wages), and only 1.7 of them are employed as employers. Because of the consistent nature of their work and the reliability with which they are paid, regular salaried and wage workers are often seen as being in a better financial position than those in the other categories. The percentage of employees fitting this description is greatest in the North (36.4%), followed by the West (20.8%) among all areas. In the other parts of the country, it ranges from a low of 7.4 percent in the Central area to a high of 12 percent in both the East and the south. Casual employees are also dissatisfied with their jobs, do not get the compensation they are owed, and are a particularly exploited group, particularly women, who continue to be at a disadvantage for being low-end workers with little to no skills that may provide them negotiating strength. The region with the biggest concentration of these employees has been found to be the South (30.8%), followed by the Central region (21.4%), while the other regions have between 8.6% and 16.5 percent. The following analysis will be broken up into two sections for your convenience. The first half of this study discusses employment in relation to a variety of socioeconomic factors, while the second portion discusses income in relation to a variety of socioeconomic factors.

DISRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY OCCUPATION & INCOME:

It was discovered that the income of women employees varied depending on the profession, and that overall, around 29 percent receive a meagre income of up to Rs. 2,000/- a month, and that 60 percent make between Rs. 2,001/- and Rs. 5,000/- per month. Only 11.3% of women have a monthly income of between 7000 rupees and 10,000 rupees. Only 2.5 percent of workers bring in more over Rs.10001 a month in income (Table 4). Regarding the monthly revenue received by own account workers or casual workers in agriculture, a pattern that is almost identical to the one seen was found. Also in the

non-agricultural sector, women workers earning up to Rs. 2,000/- make up between 24 percent of women who work as employers and 32.2 percent of women who work as regular paid or wage employees. In a same vein, around sixty percent of women from all other categories earn between two thousand and seven thousand rupees per month. The remaining about twenty percent of women have monthly earnings that are more than Rs. 7001-.

Table 4. Distribution Of Unorganized Woman Workers By Occupation And Monthly Income Group (Per Cent)

Monthly Income Group	Overall	Agriculture	Non Agriculture				
		Working as sown Acccout worker/ casual labour	Employer	Working as own account worker	Working as helper in H H enterprises	Working as regular salaried/wage employee	Working as Casual labour
Upto 2000	29.1	27.2	24.0	29.2	28.1	32.2	25.4
2001 to 3000	28.7	28.0	31.2	28.8	27.6	29.9	28.6
3001 to 5000	22.2	23.6	22.7	22.4	23.1	19.8	23.5
5001 to 7000	11.3	12.2	11.6	10.9	11.8	10.7	13.8
7001 to 10000	6.2	6.5	6.4	6.4	6.7	5.4	6.5
10001 to 15000	1.8	1.9	3.2	1.7	1.9	1.4	1.9
15001 to	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.3

o 20000.							
20001 & above .	0.3	0.2	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

CONCLUSION

There are a multitude of challenges that women who work in the unorganised sector have to contend with. Women in the workforce confront a number of significant challenges and limitations linked to their jobs, including a lack of continuity, instability, pay discrimination, bad working relationships, and an absence of medical and accident care, amongst other issues. It is common practise to abuse female labourers in both rural and urban settings, and this exploitation may take either a horizontal or vertical form. It is time to confront the problems and have a conversation about the kind of policy reforms and institutional changes that are necessary for the liberation and empowerment of rural women who work in the labour force. The working conditions and living conditions of women who are employed in the unorganised sector are interdependent and cannot be separated. Poor working conditions are the consequence of inadequate infrastructure and a lack of fundamental services. It is very necessary to make changes and improvements to the working conditions of the women who are employed in the unorganised sector.

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