

EMPIRICAL STUDY OF FEMALE WORKERS OF INFORMAL SECTORS IN DELHI AND THEIR WORK PROFILE

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ABSTRACT

There has been increasing informalization of activities through well-established linkages between formal and informal activities and organized and unorganized sector. For faster growth and inclusiveness there has to be emphasis on the informal sector and its development specially women through addressing needs of skill, technology, dignity of workforce, social security, infrastructure and marketing. A clear policy is imperative for non-agricultural jobs engaging female workers with emphasis on quality of jobs. This paper describes the profile like nature of work, industry of work, working conditions, hours of work, work related benefits. Secondly, it also estimates the persistence of Informality in female workers of the informal sector. The study has adopted a descriptive method of research and investigational approach with sample size of 359 respondents. The paper brings forward that in the informal sector of Delhi, self-employment among female workers belonging to adolescence and as adult women workers remains the main choice of the work As far as working hours are concerned the younger females work longer durations as compared to women more than 19 years as they are engaged

in taking care of children, sick adults, domestic chores, etc. Despite working at home, they seek gainful engagement in the informal sectors as per the time they could devote to contributing to the family economically. Poverty, inadequate family income, meeting demands of bad habits of male members, tradition for women to work is the major persisting reasons for their working in the informal sector.

Keywords: *Women workers, informal sector, work profile*

INTRODUCTION

India's GDP growth rate has increased significantly (Economic survey, GOI 2019-20. 2020-21). There has been increasing informalization of activities through well established linkages between formal and informal activities and organized and unorganized sector. (National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector, NUCES 2008). For faster growth and inclusiveness there has to be emphasis on the informal sector and its development through addressing needs of skill, technology, dignity of workforce, social security, infrastructure and marketing. Women are an integral part of the Indian workforce especially while working in

the informal sectors. The overall female workers in India are 149.8 million and female workers in urban areas are 28.0 million (Source: census, 2011). Out of these 149.8 million female workers, 8.5 million are workers of household Industry and 43.7 million are classified as other workers. According to the 4th Annual Employment Unemployment Survey (2013-14), worker population ratio (WPR) for female workers in rural areas is 35.1 per cent as compared to 17.5 per cent in urban areas and labour force participation rate (per 1000 persons) in different groups according to Usual Principal Status Approach for Delhi is 16 females in age group 15-17 years, 132 females in age group of 18-29 years and 101 females in age group of 30 years and above. Whereas according to the 5th Annual Employment Unemployment Survey (2015-16) under Usual Principal & Subsidiary Status (UPSS) approach. It is 30.2 per cent in rural areas and 14.8 per cent in urban areas. Self-reliant, AtmaNirbhar Bharat with inclusiveness shall be achieved when focus is laid on Informal employment, sectors and activities. Therefore this clearly throws light that a clear policy is imperative for non-agricultural jobs engaging female workers with emphasis on quality of jobs. This paper describes the profile like nature of work, industry of work, working conditions, hours of work, work related benefits. Secondly, it also estimates the persistence of Informality in female workers of the informal sector.

METHODOLOGY

The study has adopted a descriptive method of research and investigational approach. A structured questionnaire was developed based on literature review and research objectives. The

descriptive research brings forward the work profile of female workers and is ex post facto in nature. It describes various factors like nature of work, industry where employed, duration of work, etc. The author has limitations and no control over the variables like existing working conditions, demand for women workers, characteristics, category of work involved in, etc. In the context of experimental design the extraneous variables are controlled through homogeneity of the group of female workers categorized on the basis of age as adolescent female workers (15 – 18 years) and adult female workers 19 years and above. The universe of study comprises all the females working in the informal sector of Delhi metropolitan city. The direct survey was conducted using questionnaires and corroborated with observations for working conditions at place of work. The universe of study comprised all the female workers working in the informal sectors of Delhi like domestic help, construction site, export houses, self-employed, working in home based industries, utensil barterers, rag pickers, street vendors, etc. The sample was drawn as mentioned below:

Data was collected from Women aged 15 years to 18 years and 19 years and above working in the informal sector. Informal Sector: “The unorganized sector consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers”. Informal worker/employment: “Unorganized workers consist of those working in the unorganized sector or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits provided by the employers and the workers in

the formal sector without any employment and social security benefits provided by the employers” (NUCES 2008) National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector.

Further, the Multi staged stratified convenience sampling method was used to draw the required sample. The Sample size Distribution N= 68 for adolescent females and 291 for adult female workers for the purpose of study: To overcome the constraints of firsthand information the middle women, agents, local community leaders were also engaged at each residential and/or place of work.

INDUSTRY OF WORK

The main factor which is resultant of females being demanded and employed is that the informal sectors are directly within purview of plethora of labour laws and if any these are minimally applicable to tiny and small enterprises. Though the women are significantly employed in informal sectors and comprise 96 percent approximately of the total unorganized workforce. In Fact the government as a largest employer has on its rolls the services of 41.39 lakh women with no security of any kind and are supposed to receive Rs 100 per day (Dhawan 2011), Rana (2009). Table 1 depicts 18.9 % of female workers are self employed, 18.1 % are working as domestic help, 7.8 % are working in home based industries, 14.4 % are working in laundering and utensil bartering,

18.4 % are engaged in construction works and 7.2 % are working in export houses. Amongst the adolescent women 25% are self employed, 20.6% are domestic help, 11.8 % are working in export houses, 8.8% each in construction and home based industries, 7.4 % in laundering, 5.9% as safai karamcharis and only 4.4 % in utensil bartering but now prefer embroidery works as well (Times Insight Group 2011). Whereas the Adult women with better physical potential 20.6% are opting for construction industry as it is comparatively better paid, domestic help 17.5% and self-employed 17.5% are next sought after by young women as they have to look after their household as well. 9.6 % in laundering, 7.6% in home based industries, 6.2 % in export houses and only 5.5% each in utensils bartering and as safai karamcharis. The overall inclination divulges that most sought after industry/ or category by female workers wanted to be self-employed (18.9%) as it gives them great flexibility and autonomy to manage their time and work. Domestic workers (18.1%) is the second preferred option by female workers as it is safe for them and no effort is required for skills acquisition or enhancement. The construction industry (18.4%) allures them with its payments but only females with good physical strength or those who are working along with their male members of the family and are young are opting for it.

Table1: Distribution of Industry of Work of Female adolescent and adult Women Workers Working in the Informal Sector of Delhi.

Sector of work where Female worker is engaged	Adolescent female(15 – 18 years) N=68 (18.9 percent)	Adult women worker(19 and above years) N=291 (81.1 percent)	Total N=359 (100 percent)
Domestic	14 (20.6)	51 (17.5)	65 (18.1)
Construction	6(8.8)	60 (20.6)	66 (18.4)

Export Houses	8 (11.8)	18 (6.2)	26 (07.2)
Home based Industries	6(8.8)	22 (7.6)	28 (07.8)
Utensils Bartering	3 (4.4)	16 (5.5)	19 (05.3)
Self Employed	17 (25.0)	51 (17.5)	68 (18.9)
Laundering	5 (7.4)	28 (9.6)	33 (09.1)
Safai Karamcharis	4 (5.9)	16 (5.5)	20 (05.6)
Others (please specify)	5 (7.4)	29 (10.0)	34(09.5)

WORKING CONDITIONS

The physical working conditions have been described with respect to light, ventilation, toilets, drinking water, place for rest, lunch break, place for eating, first aid available, social security, clean surrounding and environment, physical assault, commuting facilities, legal protection, etc.

Table 2: Working Conditions at place of work (Physical and Qualitative profile).

Working conditions : Physical	Female worker 15 years and above) N=359 (adolescent and adult combined)	
	Yes	No
Light	261 (72.7)	98 (27.3)
Drinking water	224 (62.4)	135 (37.6)
Sufficient Ventilation	154 (42.9)	205 (57.1)
Place to rest	(42.9) 86	273 (76.0)
Separate toilet facilities	(24.0) 124	235 (65.5)
First Aid	(34.5) 48	311 (86.6)
In between breaks	(13.4) 166	193 (53.8)
Physical/psychological abuse	(46.2) (6.7)	335 (93.3)
Sexual abuse	24 (6.7)	335 (93.3)
Cleanliness at place of work	135 (37.6)	224 (62.4)

Note: Parentheses indicates Percentages

With respect to the physical working conditions, it is alarming to note that 37.6 percent of the respondents do not have drinking water facilities at the place of work. 76 percent brought forward that they do not have any place for rest at work or a common area, 65.5 percent of respondents were devoid of separate toilet facilities at place of work. 57.1 percent approximately do not have adequate ventilation at place of work. Almost 86.6 percent do not even have access to first Aid in case of emergency or unforeseen contingencies. Despite working for long hours 53.8 percent of the respondents reported that they do not get in between breaks. Further, the cleanliness at the workplace has always been an area of great concern because they are either surrounded by the raw material, waste cuttings, packing material, tools and jigs. This is so because of the high rental value or high cost of warehousing etc. 62.4 percent of the respondents does not find hygiene at the workplace. Electricity has always been a crunch at Delhi with high demand and exorbitant cost of its authorized availability. Therefore people resort to malpractices like tapping from main lines, unauthorized connections, meter tampering, etc. Despite all these efforts more than 27.3 percent of the respondents still do not have light facilities at the place of work and are reported to be working in daylight or dim lights having a negative impact on their eyes. The sensitive factor in case of females being sexual, physical and psychological abuse, was confirmed and reported by 6.7percent.

Analysis has further brought forward that the industry/ sector providing employment to the female workers of the informal sector on comparison of Industry of work of adult and adolescent women (15 years and above, N = 359) at present and when she was a child (less than 14 years,) there is no significant difference. This indicates that the women continue and prefer to remain in the industry where she has developed her skills and contacts of the informal sector. The main benefit is that these acquired skills when retained enhance their productive capacity, efficiency thus more returns.

Variable	Currently young women and When young women was a child (N=359)
Industry of work	Chi square $\chi^2 = 1214$, $p > .05$, Not Significant

WORKING HOURS

Hours of economic engagement is another important aspect that determines the demand for these women in the informal sectors is the long hours of work they put in. These employers prefer the females because of tedious, time consuming, patience requiring, unaware of legal statutes, difficulty in getting male labour for the same wages, efficient and even work for long hours without overtime remuneration. These women workers work much more than the permitted hours and are given no time for rest, earned leave or other benefits.

Table 3: Distribution of Female Workers and Hours of Work Done by Them

Working Hours Per day	Adolescent women (15 – 18 years) N=68 (10.9)	Young women worker 19 years and above N=291 (46.5)
1 – 4 hours	18 (26.5)	36 (12.4)

5 – 8 hours	23 (33.8)	132 (45.4)
9 – 12 hours	27 (39.7)	119 (40.9)
More than 12 hours	-	4 (1.4)

Table 3, further reveals that amongst the adolescent females (15 – 18 years), 39.7 percent are working for 9-12 hours per day. 33.8 percent adolescent females are working for 5-8 hours per day. There has been persistence with respect to working hours in the informal sectors in Delhi (Rana2009). The female workers of 19 years and above, show a different pattern in context of time duration devoted for work. It has been brought forward that 45.4 percent are working 5 – 8 hours per day because of the domestic and family responsibilities and compulsion of taking care of daily chores. In fact Pal (2000) has brought forward that these women even work 15 – 16 hours per day with reasonably low payment and under payment as compared to men. Rao and Husain (1987) have found in their study that these women work long hours after getting up early and doing complete domestic chores, and then they get on to work in the export houses.. Bhatt found that the hours of work varied from part time work of four to five hours to an extended fifteen hours a day. The earnings for Zari workers in Delhi were as low as Rs 3 for eight hours of work and Re 1 for lace makers. Bhatt (1987), Manohar and Shoba(1983) have found similar hours of work with minimum of one hour to maximum of twelve hours per day further varying from respondent to respondent by one to hours only.

NATURE OF WORK

These women although engaged in various sectors and in diverse productive activities, they have different nature of work. Nature of work has its own problems, difficulties, terms and conditions, benefits, source of providing employment etc.

Table 4: Nature of Work of Female Workers Working in the Informal Sector of Delhi.

Nature of Work of Female Workers Working in the Informal Sector of Delhi.					
Female workers	Part time workers	Regular workers	Casual workers	Piece rate workers	Total (N=359)
Adolescent women (15 – 18 years)	16 (23.5)	14 (20.6)	13(19.1)	25 (36.8)	68 (18.9)
Young women worker 19 years and above	73 (25.1)	36 (12.4)	76 (26.1)	106 (36.4)	291 (81.1)
Total	89 (24.8)	50 (13.9)	89 (24.8)	131(36.5)	359 (100.0)

The above statistics (table 4) reveal a large percentage i.e 18.9% of adolescents (15-18 years) are working in the informal sector of Delhi. Out of this 23.5% are working as part time workers, 36.8% as piece rate workers, 20.6% as Regular workers and 19.1% as casual workers. Whereas

out of 81.1 % of Adult female workers 36.4% are working on piece rate, 26.1% are working as casual workers, 25.1% are working as part time workers and 12.4% are regular workers. The overall trend reveals 36.5 % of total female workers are piece rate workers, 24.8% are part time workers, 24.8% are casual workers and only 13.9 % are regular workers. With respect to the regular Women Workers, in spite of having a regular nature of work are deprived of benefits which are generally enjoyed by workers of organized sectors and are at many times penalized also. These workers get work through someone who knows them or introduces them to the workforce. Those who seek work on their own are usually residents of the locality and known to people around.

The study also revealed that 86.6 percent of females do not get any medical benefit or facility. Leave aside the facility of medical leave they don't even have access to first aid. It is only in 13.4 percent cases the first aid was available. But when analysed the difference of facility across the categories of women it was found not to be significant (Chi square $\chi^2 = 2.051$, $p=0.5$). With respect to leaves (festivals, government holidays, paid leaves only 67 females ie 18.7 percent of the respondents get either of the leaves and 292 ie, 81.3 percent of the respondents do not get any type of leave. In fact, of these 60.4 percent do not get leave even during festivals and is highly significant across the categories of women workers ((Chi square $\chi^2 = 21.52$, $p=.05$). Rather the women workers are more pressurized with work during festival season. This is acceptable to these women because of high demand and associated incentives in cash and kind they offer their services.

SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN INFORMAL SECTOR

With the female workers of the informal sector from low income strata and a significant number just on margin, it becomes mandatory for the women to contribute to family income and production without which they cannot survive. Even in families where there is no economic compulsion, women do work to avoid a life of dependency, up keeping the traditions, craftsmanship, and contributing their skills to family and the society.

Table 5: Depicting the distribution of the reasons for work in the informal sector.

Reasons for Work	Adolescent women (15 – 18 years) N=68 (18.9 percent)		Adult women worker 19 years and above N=291 (81.1 percent)		Total N=359 (100.0 percent)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Poverty	61 (89.7)	7 (10.3)	267 (91.8)	24 (8.2)	328 (91.4)	31(8.6)
Inadequate family income	54 (79.4)	14 (20.6)	273 (93.8)	18 (6.2)	327 (91.1)	32 (8.9)

Death of earning member	34 (50)	34 (50.0)	155 (53.3)	136 (46.7)	189 (52.6)	170 (47.4)
Death of earning member	11 (16.2)	57 (83.8)	23 (7.9)	268(92.1)	34 (9.5)	325 (90.5)
Tradition in family for women to work	45 (66.2)	23 (33.8)	210 (72.2)	81 (27.8)	255(71.03)	104 (28.97)
To meet demand of male members (addiction/ Bad habits)	35 (51.5)	33 (48.5)	171 (58.8)	120	206 (57.4)	153 (42.6)
Habitual workers	37 (54.4)	31 (45.6)	174 (59.8)	117 (40.2)	211 (58.8)	148 (41.2)

Note: Parenthesis indicates percentage

Table 5 reveals that in spite of the poverty eradication drive, it still stands on the top priority (92.7 per cent) for women seeking employment in the informal sectors because of poverty. If it is the case of these females working as a girl child, poverty as reason has been brought forward by 93.6 percent of the respondents. Family traditions and skill contribution craftsmanship, inadequate family income, etc are the other reasons for seeking employment in these sectors. Another important factor which pushes women to work is the bad addictions and habits of the male members (57.4.0 per cent). Here the male members spend their earnings on alcohol, drugs, smoking, womanizing, and leaving the family to fend for themselves. The woman being responsible for children and domestic front seeks employment anywhere for any remuneration and other exploitable factors in order to earn two square meals.

Table 6 depicts that, reasons for seeking employment in maximum respondents is poverty, bad addictions and habits of male members and the traditions and family involvement. Further, low wages, efficiency, discipline, responsibility and hard work add to their disadvantages as far as employment in these unorganized sectors are concerned. A labourer/worker mainly works for wage earning. The monthly earnings of women workers are usually low. Each nature of work has its own problems, difficulties, terms and conditions, benefits, source of providing employment etc. The employers prefer women because they are submissive, docile and less demanding. Women workers in comparison to male are subjugated. Ultimately it's the poverty, which in spite all poverty eradication drive still stands on the top rank for women seeking employment in the unorganized sectors and continues even after a decade to show the same pattern when compared to the previous study (Jawa 2000, Rana 2016)

Table 6: Crosstabs between Female Workers and when they were child with respect to Reasons for Work.

	Significance of Reasons for Females working at present in Informal sector (N= 359)
Significance of Reasons for working when females of Informal sector were a child	
Poverty as a Reason for Work	Chi square $\chi^2 = 71.43$, ** - significant at .01 level

Inadequate family Income as a Reason for Work	Chi square $\chi^2 = 16.49$, ** - Not significant
Family Debt as a Reason for Work	Chi square $\chi^2 = 217$, ** - significant at .01 level
Death of Earning member as a Reason for Work	Chi square $\chi^2 = 53.71$, * Not significant
Tradition in family for Women to Work as a Reason for Work	Chi square $\chi^2 = 242.71$, ** - significant at .01 level
Meeting Demands of male Members as a Reason for Work	Chi square $\chi^2 = 188.80$, ** - significant at .01 level
Habitual Workers as a Reason for Work	Chi square $\chi^2 = 238.71$, ** - significant at .01 level

Table 6 depicts the distribution of female workers of the informal sector when she was a child and now as adolescent or adult workers. Poverty, family debt, meeting demands of male members of the family, tradition of girls to work has been a significant reason to enter the informal sector as a worker. Meeting the demands of the male members of the family has emerged to be one of the main reasons for the work across all the generations be it the child, young women or the elder. The situation is graver in Northern India due to the patriarchal system and male dominance prevalence. Therefore the women have always been used in some way or the other to meet and fulfill the habitual demands. Further there has been significant difference in this aspect whether she is a child, and elder women or young women. It's because the male relationship changes from father or brother to husband and then the sons. Inadequate family income and death of earning members has not been significant reasons for females to enter the workforce of the informal sector.

CONCLUSION

In the informal sector of Delhi, self employment among female workers belonging to adolescence and as adult women workers remains the main choice of the work. the working conditions like light, ventilation, access to clean drinking water, etc were reported as unhealthy and poor by the majority of the workers. As far as working hours are concerned the younger females work longer durations as compared to women more than 19 years as they are engaged

in taking care of children, sick adults, domestic chores, etc. Despite working at home they seek gainful engagement in the informal sectors as per the time they could devote to contributing to the family economically. Poverty, inadequate family income, meeting demands of bad habits of male members, tradition for women to work is the major persisting reasons for their working in the informal sector. Significant number of cases of sexual harassments has been reported at place of work but with silent voice.

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