

GENDER EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN HOUSEHOLD WORKERS: A STUDY OF SURAT CITY

By

Submitted by

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Abstract

Today, women's empowerment is one of the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century. Their standing has steadily evolved since the beginning of the twentieth century. The study discovered that women in India are generally less educated and, despite government efforts, are somewhat inferior to males in that respect. Women working in the informal sector are often illegal, inexperienced, low-paying, and do not get benefits, making them invisible to official statistics. Gender disparities occur in terms of educational and career opportunities. Women's domestic decision-making authority and freedom of mobility vary substantially depending on their age, education, and work position. Research indicates that women continue to accept unfair gender standards in society. This study examines the situation of women's empowerment of Household workers in Surat, India, shedding light on its difficulties and challenges.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Unorganised sector, household female worker

Introduction:

A woman is an unprecedented and unique part of society. Women are the backbone of society, yet today women suffer from inequality, torture, economic dependence, and other social evils. So, they need to be empowered.

The term "empowerment" has been used to express a variety of concepts and consequences. UN publications (UNDAW 2001; UNICEF 1999) show that the word is commonly used to promote certain policies and intervention techniques, rather than to examine them.

Empowerment, in its emancipatory connotation, raises questions about personal agency, linking action to needs, and resulting in major change at the community level. This concept extends beyond personal identity to encompass human rights and social justice.

Unorganised sector

The unorganized or informal sector is a key component of the Indian economy. The unorganized sector, also known as the informal sector or informal economy, encompasses economic activity and employment arrangements that are not governed or protected by official laws or organizations. It comprises a diverse variety of economic activities, businesses, and workers, many of which are tiny in scale, has limited access to legal protection and social security, and rely on family labour or informal arrangements. The informal economy employs more than 90% of the workers and accounts for over 50% of the national output. Many socially and economically disadvantaged people participate in informal economic activity. The Indian economy's rapid expansion over the last two decades has led to an increase in informality. There are signs of increasing interconnectedness between informal and formal economic activity. The informal economy has experienced increased vitality in terms of output, employment, and income. To achieve faster and more inclusive growth, we must prioritize the informal economy. Maintaining high levels of growth requires strengthening domestic demand among those involved.

An informal worker works without a documented contract, paid leave, health benefits, or social security. Table 3 illustrates the formalisation of the workforce from 2011-12 to 2017-18. In terms of employment, the unorganised sector employs 83% of the workforce, compared to 17% in the organised sector. The economy employs 92.4% of informal workers (those without a documented contract, paid leave, or other benefits). There are also 9.8% of informal workers in structured industries, illustrating the extent of outsourcing. These are possibly contract workers. In 2017-18, unorganised sector employment rose by 3.6 percentage points, while formal employment increased by 0.9 percentage points. There has been an upsurge in formal employment. This highlights the government's attempts to give social protection to workers in the informal sector.

Distribution of total employment (%)

Workers	2011-12			2017-18		
	Unorganised	Organised	Total	Unorganised	Organised	Total
Informal	82.6	9.8	92.4	85.5	5.2	90.7
Formal	0.4	7.2	7.6	1.3	7.9	9.3
Total	83.0	17.0	100.0	86.8	13.2	100.0

Source: Computed from NSS 68th unit level data on employment unemployment, 2011-12 and periodic labour force survey, 2017-18.

Characteristics of the unorganized sector:

1) **Informal Employment:**

Workers in the unorganized sector are often employed in informal arrangements such as self-employment, casual labour, or irregular work. They may not have official contracts, employment security, or social benefits such as health insurance and retirement.

2) **Small-scale Enterprises:**

Many unorganized sector firms are small-scale in nature, and frequently conducted by self-employed people or families. These businesses may function without official registration or legal recognition.

3) **Low Productivity:**

Because of restricted access to finance, technology, and market prospects, productivity levels in the unorganized sector are frequently lower than the official sector. This may result in poorer earnings and living standards for workers.

4) **Vulnerability and Precarity:**

Workers in the informal sector are more vulnerable to economic shocks such as demand variations, changes in market circumstances, and natural catastrophes. They frequently lack social safety measures and are more vulnerable to exploitation as well as neglect.

5) **Heterogeneity:**

The unorganized sector includes a diverse spectrum of economic activities, such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, services, and domestic work. It encompasses both rural and urban informal economies, with various levels of informality across sectors and locations.

6) **Contribution to the Economy:**

Considering its problems, the informal sector plays an important role in many economies, particularly in developing nations. It helps to create jobs, reduce poverty, and provide goods and services, particularly in sectors with limited formal employment prospects.

Ultimately, the unorganized sector is a complex and diversified part of the economy, distinguished by informal work arrangements, small-scale businesses, and limited access to official institutions and safeguards. Understanding and tackling the issues that unorganized workers and companies experience is critical to ensuring inclusive and long-term economic growth.

What is gender empowerment?

Gender empowerment is the process of allowing people, particularly women and girls, to take control of their lives, make their own decisions, and participate fully in social, economic, and

political realms on an equal footing with males. It entails confronting and reforming current power structures, norms, and discriminatory behaviours that perpetuate gender inequality and limit the possibilities for women and girls.

Gender empowerment includes the following key aspects:

1) Access to resources:

Gender empowerment requires equitable access to resources such as education, healthcare, land, credit, and technology. This involves removing barriers that impede women and girls from successfully accessing and using these resources.

2) Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment entails allowing women to actively engage in the economy as producers, labourers, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers. This might include increasing women's job possibilities, narrowing the gender wage gap, assisting women-owned enterprises, and granting access to financial services and markets.

3) Social Empowerment

Social empowerment aims to challenge societal conventions, prejudices, and discriminatory behaviours that restrict women's agency and autonomy. It entails encouraging gender equality in family and community relationships, confronting harmful traditional behaviours, and empowering women to lead and participate in social and cultural activities.

4) Political empowerment:

It is assuring women's representation and involvement in decision-making processes at all levels of government. This involves supporting women's political leadership, pushing for gender-responsive policies and laws, and removing obstacles to women's engagement in politics and the public sector.

5) Legal Empowerment:

Legal empowerment is ensuring that women have equal rights and protection under the law. This entails passing and implementing laws against gender-based violence, discrimination, and unequal treatment, as well as providing access to legal assistance and court systems that are sensitive to women's concerns.

6) Education and Awareness:

Gender empowerment entails creating awareness and encouraging education on gender equality and women's rights. This involves challenging gender stereotypes in school courses, supporting girls' education and literacy, and cultivating a culture that values gender diversity and inclusiveness.

Gender empowerment is critical for attaining sustainable development, fostering social justice, and ensuring human rights for all people, regardless of gender. It is a multifaceted process that needs governments, civil society, the corporate sector, and people to work together to address the core causes of gender inequality and create an environment conducive to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Empowering women means creating a society in which women can make decisions for their personal development and benefit as well as for society. Women empowerment seeks to increase and improve the social, economic, political, and legal powers of women so that women have equal rights and become self-reliant enough to claim their rights.

Household activity: Managing the heart of home life

In terms of social emissions and re-emissions, housework includes important economic activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, caring for children and the elderly, etc., and is an integral part of life and accompanies every stage of life. Before the economic and social analysis of housework activity, what is housework activity? What activities can it include?

Meaning of household activity

Housework is an economic activity in which a person performs various activities in a family or family home other than the household in which he/she resides for economic gain, according to the employment relationship between the householder and the householder. has different characteristics. This is why it is extremely difficult to compartmentalize and organize household economic activities. Generally, housework activities can include cleaning the house, washing clothes, cooking, taking care of young children, elderly, or sick members, etc. Domestic workers especially women take care of things that are most valuable to the family i.e. home, children, taking care of parents etc. This has made the work of millions of families successful and easy. A homemaker brings dignity and respect along with care. They are simple, dignified and a blessing for busy families, the elderly and the disabled. Nowadays when the number of women workers is increasing in various sectors of the economy, the help of unpaid domestic helpers is a blessing for these women workers, and only through their cooperation, they can concentrate enough on their business/job.

Workers engaged in various household activities for economic gain may be known by different names according to their nature and type of work such as Housekeeper, Dish, Clothes and Cleaners, Chauffeurs, Cooks Children's permanent They are known by names like Full full-time babysitter etc. Housekeeping workers can be permanent or part-time (part-time) also some of these workers live in the homeowner's house while some come and go from their own house. Domestic workers are employed only by oral and private agreement with the householder without any written contract.

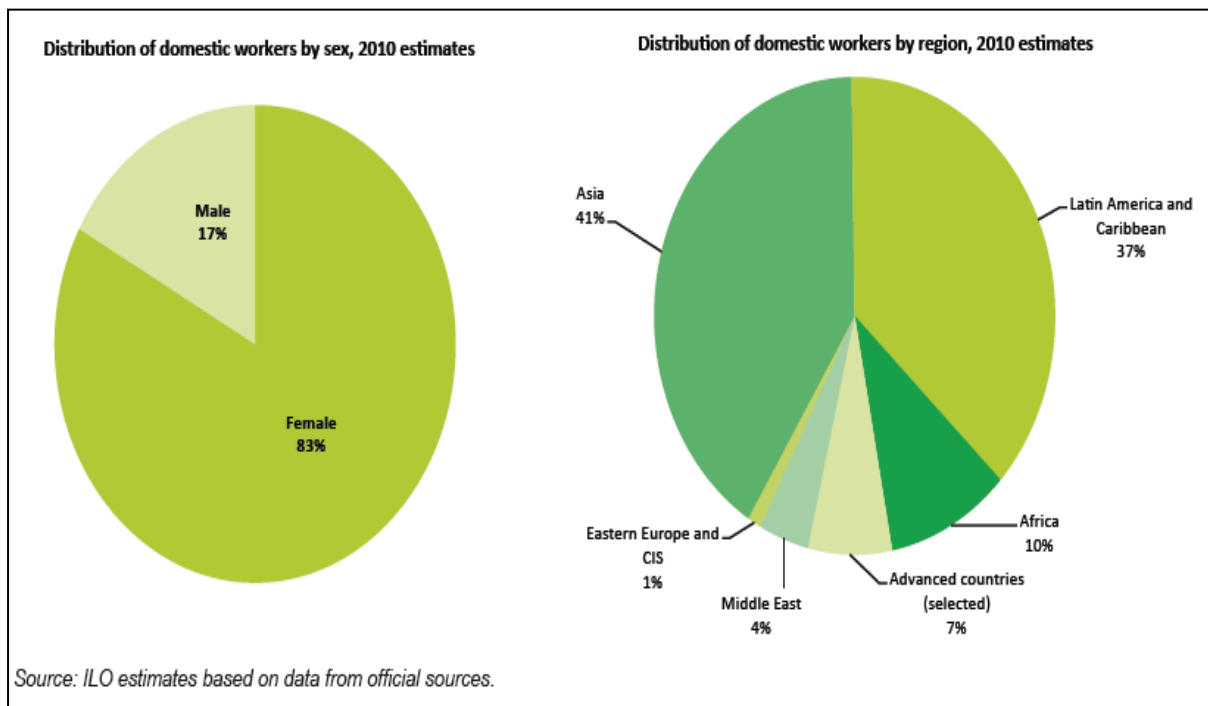
In modern times, women's participation in economic activities is continuously increasing. In the family, when women along with men go to work outside the home for financial gain, it becomes difficult for them to take care and responsibility for other members of the family. Also, it becomes difficult to meet the activities inside the house. Hence, the importance of domestic workers is increasing day by day. In big cities, there is also a registered office of domestic workers where the name, phone number, residential address etc. of the domestic workers are recorded in a book. When a person needs such a labourer, the liaison office takes

the labourer to work with the proper agreement, ie the contractor acts as an intermediary between the homeowner and the domestic labourer.

Although the service of women workers is more important than housework, they do not get social status (status) in almost all countries. Also, they enjoy very little legal protection or security compared to workers engaged in other activities. The fact is that even an estimate of the total number of such domestic workers in the country is not available despite many efforts. The main problem in this regard is that the workers do so many different types of work than domestic work that it is difficult to put them in a homogeneous group (ILO Report: Global and Regional Estimates and Domestic Workers). Although their work duties vary greatly, a common feature among them is that they work for a private family, and workers who work occasionally (and not to earn) do not fit the definition of 'domestic workers' [ILO Report (2010)].

The number of workers engaged in domestic work in different countries of the world (year 2010) is shown in Figure.

Caste and Region Expected Classification of Unorganized Sector Workers



It is clear from Figure that the proportion of female workers among domestic workers globally is very high (83%). However, there are large variations in this percentage in different countries. E.g. The proportion of female workers was 64% in Middle Eastern countries, 67% in Eastern European countries and 92% in Latin American and Caribbean countries. In the rest of the countries this ratio was 70% to 80%. Also, among the total number of female workers, the percentage of female workers employed in domestic work sector was 7.5% while the corresponding proportion among male workers was only 1%. In Latin America and

the Caribbean countries 26.6% work in domestic work, and in Middle Eastern countries 31.8% work in domestic work.

Estimates of the number of domestic workers in India vary greatly. On the one hand the mass media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) estimate their number to be around 9 crore, although no information is given on the primary source for this estimate. On the other hand, Palriwala and Neeta (2009) estimate that there are around 25 lakh domestic workers in India. Which was based on 'Household Survey'. The shortcoming of this estimate was that it only showed the number of paid care workers and did not include gardeners, door keepers, watchmen and other types of workers serving in various other household tasks. given in the given table.

Various activities of the housework sector	Number of workers	Number of females	Number of males
Housework/Servant	23,12,200	20,11,300	3,00,800
Cooks	1,23,400	89,300	34,200
Gardener	19,300	4,200	15,100
Watchman	1,35,700	7,000	128,600
Caretaker of children	87,700	62,800	24,900
others	15,28,400	7,80,600	7,47,800
Total	42,06,700	29,55,200	12,51,400
Percentage of domestic sector workers in total employment	1.0%	2.2%	0.5%

Source: ILO analysis of the micro-data of the 2004-05 Employment and Unemployment Survey (61st Round), National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) of India

The present study attempts to examine the economic and social empowerment of women involved in housework in Surat City. For this reason, a sample of 150 female household workers was chosen from Surat, one of the world's fastest-expanding cities. For this reason, a sample was chosen using the persuasive sampling technique. The relevant information was gathered from female workers and tested. After making the necessary adjustments, the questionnaire was utilized for categorization and analysis using SPSS.

First, an attempt has been made to check whether these women can keep their earnings from the hard work they earn throughout the day.

1) Right to own earnings

The following table presents information about whether these women can keep the money they earn by working hard throughout the day:

Information on depositor's earnings of female workers

Proportion of earning	Household female workers			
	Own have	With husband	With in-laws	With others
0% (do not keep)	2 1.3	94 62.7	142 94.7	149 99.3
1 to 30%	4 2.7	2 1.3	6 4.0	1 .7
30 to 60%	51 34.0	52 34.7	2 1.3	00 0.0
More than 60%	93 62.0	2 1.3	00 0.0	00 0.0
Total	150 100.0	150 100.0	150 100.0	150 100.0

From the above table, it is seen that out of women working in the housework sector 2.7% of women keep 1% to 30% of their earnings, 1.3% with their husbands, 4.0% with mother-in-law, and 0.7% with someone else. 30% to 60% of income is kept by 34.0% with self, 34.7% with husband, 1.3% with mother-in-law. More than 60% of their income is kept by 62.0% women and 1.3% by husbands.

2) Freedom of women workers to use their own money

In the present study, it was found that in response to whether housewives have to get permission from anyone at home to use their income, 75 (50.0%) women said that they never need to get permission from their husbands or any other family member. While 53 (35.3%) women need permission sometimes. Only 9 (6.0%) women were found to always seek permission. From this it can be said that housewives are mostly able to make their own financial decisions, this freedom of decision-making helps in manifesting women's empowerment.

3) Information on freedom of decision-making in the daily life of women workers

In the home of women workers working in the field, daily decisions are taken jointly by both husband and wife, which shows mutual agreement. In this study 19 (12.7%) women make decisions independently, in case of 10 (6.7%) women make daily household decisions made by their husbands, and 5 (3.3%) women make decisions after consulting other family members.

4) Helping women workers in making various household decisions

i. Economic Decision

"Women's empowerment means the freedom of women to make social, economic, and political decisions" In this regard, in this study, examining whether women workers are helped in making economic decisions at home, it was found that 134 (89.3%) of the total women working in the household women had a positive response that they are helped in making financial

decisions at home. These financial decisions include income, expenditure, saving, debt, investment, choice of occupation, etc.

ii. Social Decision

The human being is a social animal. Economic and social affairs are closely interrelated and interwoven with human life. After knowing the participation in economic decision-making among the women workers selected in the present study, the following information was obtained regarding their participation in social decision-making. 139 women workers in the housework sector said that they participate in making social decisions.

Out of the total number of women working in the household sector selected in the study, 126 (45.2%) women are assisted in making decisions on social occasions, 112 (40.1%) women on children's education, 41 (14.7%) women on child marriage.

5) Information related to marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth

It has been found that 9 (6.0%) women were married before 18 years of age. 81 (54.0%) women between the ages of 18 and 20, 44 (29.33%) women between the ages of 20 and 22, 10 (6.67%) women between the ages of 22 and 24, and 5 (3.33%) women above the age of 24 were married.

6) Information on the number of children of female workers

A very important question for married women when they are involved in economic activity is the upbringing of their children. 140 (93.3%) women out of 150 domestic workers have children. Among women who have children 36 (24.0%) women have one child, 81 (54.0%) women have two children, and 20 (13.3%) women have three children. The proportion of women with four children is 3 (2.0%).

7) Work during pregnancy

Things like how female workers planned their work and how many days they took off from work during pregnancy are very important. Regarding female workers who had children whether they went to work during pregnancy or not, it was found that the number and percentage of women working during pregnancy was 37 (24.7%).

While comparing the sex ratio in society, if the number of women is less than men which can be said to be a serious issue of social inequality. In the present study, when the selected women were asked "Whether your family members were happy when the first child was born as a baby girl," it was found that 97 (64.7%) of the women's family members were happy while the family members of 25 (16.7%) were not happy, but 19 (12.7%) women wished to have a boy as a child.

8) Regular medical checkups during pregnancy

Among the women working in the domestic sector, regarding various types of drugs taken during pregnancy, it was found that the proportion of women taking regular injections of TT was 38 (22.7%). The proportion of women taking iron, calcium, and

folic acid pills regularly was found to be 57 (32.0%), 40 (18.7%) and 21 (15.3%) respectively.

9) Family Planning

Family planning is an important tool for women's health and population control. Regarding whether the selected female workers have adopted family planning or not. It has been found that 118 women have adopted family planning.

10) Information on family planning adoption decisions of women workers

17.3% of housewives' women decided to do family planning by themselves 56% of women who took this decision from husbands 5.3% of women who adopted family planning due to some other persuasion. Overall, it appears that the family planning decision is taken more cases by the husbands of women workers.

11) Child Education

Examining the schooling of the children of the female workers selected in the study, it was found that among the female domestic workers, 55 (36.7%) female children were studying in government schools and 52 (34.7%) female children were studying in private schools.

It is found that out of 150 selected female workers majority of female workers 95 (63.3%) want their children to study up to higher secondary. Women believe that with more education, the future of children can be bright.

According to the traditional customs in Indian society, women have to shoulder the responsibility of housework. Women who work outside for financial gain also have household, child care, and elder responsibilities after working all day at the workplace. The situation seems to have improved in recent years but still a satisfactory condition has not been achieved.

12) Information on the exploitation of women workers

Among the women domestic workers included in the study, the proportion of women victims of mental abuse is 37.8%, the proportion of women who are victims of verbal abuse is 66.7%, the proportion of women who are subjected to overwork and low wages is 68.9%, the proportion of women who are victims of physical abuse is 6.7% and The proportion of women who were victims of repeated threats of dismissal was found to be 4.4%.

13) Effects of work on the health of women workers

The data shows that 89.9% of the negative effects of work are excessive fatigue. 52.5% 56.1% of women workers suffer from back pain due to work, 51.5% about hand and foot pain, 4.0% of women suffer from breathing problems, and 13.1% of women suffer from skin diseases. The negative impact on the health of women workers due to work can be considered a serious matter.

14) Future generation

Asking female workers whether this job is suitable for the future generation, it is found that according to 128 (85.3%) women in the domestic work sector, this job is

not suitable for their future generation. Every female worker wants to provide her child with a higher education and create a bright career.

Conclusion:

Women's empowerment aims at strengthening strengthen their spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, and economic capacities. Women's empowerment in India is influenced by several factors such as location (urban/rural), education level, social standing (caste/class), and age group. Women's empowerment policies are implemented at the national, state, and Panchayat levels in many areas such as health, education, economic opportunity, gender-based violence, and political engagement. Women's empowerment has become a top priority in the 21st century, both nationally and globally, especially in underdeveloped countries. Government actions alone will not suffice to meet this aim. Society must take action to eliminate gender discrimination and empower women to make their own decisions and participate in social, political, and economic life with equal rights.

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