

A Comparative Study of Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in Unorganised Sector: A Case Study of Surat

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Abstract:

A large proportion of the total labor force in India and most other developing nations is employed in the informal sector. This sector is also known as the 'unorganized sector'. In recent times, the study of this field has become very important not only in economics but also in sociology and psychology. Female laborers make up the majority of India's unorganized workforce. According to the Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), about 97% of female workers are employed in the informal sector. The unorganized industry offers several job opportunities. These include home-based work (e.g., rolling papads and beedis, stitching, traditional painting), self-employment (e.g., selling vegetables), employment in household enterprises, small units, on land as agricultural workers, labor on construction sites, domestic work, and many other forms of casual or temporary employment. In certain families, the male spouse's earnings are insufficient to maintain the family, or there is no male partner at all. In both cases, the female partner is compelled to become the breadwinner for the family. In such instances, female workers have multiple obligations. They must balance caring for their family with working to support themselves. The education level in backward areas is really poor. Among these, the female education level is significantly lower. Since childhood, they have been required to assist with home chores or compelled to labor, and they have not had the opportunity to attend school. They fail to obtain better occupations. The current study attempts to comprehend the research on the working and living conditions of workers in the informal sector, as well as to identify needs for future research.

Key Words: Unorganised sector, informal sector, women workers

Introduction:

According to the definition used by NSSO (National Sample Survey Organisation, 2004-05) in India, the informal sector includes all unincorporated proprietary and partnership enterprises. However, as per the definition given by NAS (National Accounts Statistics), the unorganized sector also includes the above-mentioned enterprises besides cooperative societies, trusts, and private and limited companies. Thus, the informal sector can be considered as a part of the

unorganized sector. In practice, the term informal sector is not used in India's weekly statistics by NAS. It uses the same terms organized and unorganized sectors. In many studies, the two phrases informal sector and unorganized sector are used interchangeably.

There have been many uses of the term for the unorganized sector. Such as the informal economy (Furman and Furman, 1973), the secret or hidden economy (Simon and Witte, 1982, Hoston, 1987), the black economy (Dilnot and Morris, 1981), the underground economy (Gutman, 1977), the virtual or unreal economy. (Frey, Wake, 1982) and the informal economy (McCrohan and Smith, 1986). Commonly used terms such as invisible, hidden, submerged, unauthorized, unregistered, clandestine, or clandestine (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992).

Definition of unorganized sector

According to **K. Hart (1973)**, The unorganized sector is a part of the urban labor force, including self-employed (excluding professionals and technical persons), small-scale enterprises, domestic servants, unpaid household work, casual workers, certain cottage industries, the textile industry in the case of Surat, and most units of the diamond industry, including industrial workers, construction workers, petty shopkeepers, hawkers, footpath or roadside vendors, country goldsmiths, moneylenders, etc.

National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) as defined by the National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganized Sector are all unregistered private firms owned by an individual or more than one family member and engaged in the production and sale of goods or services. Also, if less than 10 workers are employed in such a firm then such sector can be termed as an unorganized sector. The workers working in this sector are in unorganized form and are not provided by the employer with the social security provided to the permanent workers and other benefits provided to the workers in the organized sector.

Informally employed individuals aged 15 and over make up 61% of worldwide employment, accounting for 2 billion workers (see table). Informality rates are higher in low-income nations.² Informality accounts for 90% of employment in developing (low-income), 67% in emerging (upper-middle and lower-middle), and 18% in industrialized (high-income) nations.

Percent of Informal Employment and its Components in Total and Non-agricultural Employment by Sex and Country Income Group, 2016

	Total employment				Non-Agricultural employment			
	World	Developed	Emerging	Developing	World	Developed	Emerging	Developing
Informal employment	61	18	67	90	51	17	59	73
Men	63	19	69	87	53	18	61	70
Women	58	18	64	92	46	17	55	78

In the informal sector	52	15	57	81	41	13	48	59
Men	54	16	59	78	44	15	51	53
Women	48	13	52	85	36	12	42	66
In the formal sector	7	3	8	5	8	3	9	10
Men	7	3	7	6	8	3	9	13
Women	7	4	8	3	8	4	9	6
In household*	2	0	3	3	2	0	2	5
Men	2	0	2	3	1	0	1	3
Women	3	0	4	4	3	0	3	6

Note: Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures (informal employment in the informal sector, in the formal sector, in households). * Includes paid domestic workers employed by households and producers of goods for their own consumption. Source: ILO calculations based on household survey micro datasets.

Men and Women

Informal work employs more males than women globally (63 vs 58%), in developed nations (19 vs 18%), and in emerging countries (69 vs 64%). However, in developing nations, the number of women workers who work informally (92 percent) is significantly greater than the percentage of male workers (87 percent). In 56% of nations, more women than men work in informal employment. Men have a greater percentage of informal work than women in rising nations with big populations like Russia and China, resulting in lower global averages.

Objectives of the study

- 1) 1) To study the social and economic situation of women workers engaged in the construction sector and domestic work activities of Surat city.
- 2) 2) To study the health and education-related issues of women engaged in these professions.
- 3) 5) To make a comparative study of various economic and social aspects of women workers working in the construction sector and domestic sector. Also to check the change in their social status.

Sample selection

Due to the non-availability of information on the total number of women workers working in unorganized sector construction activity and housework activity in Surat city, the sample has been selected using the non-probability sampling method. The selection of the sample has been done using the "Convenience Sampling Method" About 300 women workers have been selected for the study. 150 female workers have been selected from workers engaged in construction activities in the unorganized sector and 150 female workers from workers engaged in housework activities.

The present study has used both primary and secondary data. The questionnaire has been used as a tool for collecting primary data.

Analysis

1) Age group classification of women workers

Age group-wise classification of women working in housework and construction sector is as follows.

- Household female workers

Among the total 150 domestic women included in the study, women below the age of 20 years were not included. 16.0% were between 20 and 30 years of age. The percentage of women in the age group of 30 to 40 years was 47.3%. The proportion of women between the ages of 40 to 50 years was 28.0%, while the proportion of women aged 50 years and above was found to be 8.7%. Thus, it is found that the maximum number of female workers are in the younger age group i.e. 30 to 40 years of age.

- Construction female workers

Out of the total number of women engaged in construction activities included in the present study, the number of women below 20 years of age was 4 (2.7%). 67 (44.7%) women were between 20 and 30 years of age. The percentage of women in the age group of 30 to 40 years was 35.3%. The proportion of women between 40 and 50 years of age was 16.0%, while the proportion of women aged 50 years and above was found to be 1.3%. It has been found that most female workers are young i.e. 20 to 30 years of age. The average age of female workers employed in the domestic and construction sectors is 40 and 32 years, respectively, indicating that female workers in the construction sector are comparatively younger in the sample.

From the above analysis, there is a high proportion of young women in the construction sector, as construction activity is a traditional profession in which children come to work with their parents and as they reach a certain age, they are employed in the same sector. While housewives work only a few hours a day, their children do not come with them.

2) Caste-wise classification of women workers

Out of the total women doing housework, 16.0% belonged to Scheduled Caste, 22.0% ST, 33.3% OBC and 28.7% General Caste. Thus, the highest number of women belonged to the OBC caste.

Among the total women working in the construction sector, 50.7% were Scheduled Caste, 21.3% ST, 10.7% OBC and 17.3% General Caste. Thus, the largest number of women belonged to Scheduled Caste.

3) Native Place

People migrate to get better employment opportunities.

Information on the origin of women workers

Native place	Household female workers	Construction Female workers
Surat District	102 (68.0%)	71 (47.3%)
Other district of Gujarat state	29 (19.3%)	33 (22.0%)
Other States	19 (12.7%)	46 (30.7%)
Total	150 (100.0%)	150 (100.0%)

In terms of origin, female domestic workers are predominantly from Surat district, while the proportion in the construction sector is lower, and there is a higher proportion of women workers who have migrated from other states.

4) Education

The education information of the women selected in the study is presented in the table below.

Education level of female workers

Education Level	Household female workers	Construction female workers
Illtreat	36 (24.0%)	88 (58.7)
Primary	74 (49.3%)	50 (33.3%)
Secondary	35 (23.3%)	12 (8.0%)
Higher Secondary	05 (3.3%)	00 (0%)
Total	150 (100.0%)	150 (100.0%)

Among the women engaged in both types of occupations, the proportion of women who have received primary education is in the housework sector at 49.3% and 33.3% in the

construction sector. The illiteracy rate is higher in the construction sector than in the domestic sector because as construction is a traditional occupation, children often go to work with their parents and join them after a certain age, hence their level of education is low.

5) Residence

90 (60%) of the total women housewives live in their own houses. While 55 (36.7%) women live in rented houses. 5 (3.3%) women were found to be living in a house owned by someone else.

Among the total women construction workers, 61 (40.7%) women live in their own houses. While 17 (11.3%) women live in rented houses. 72 (48.0%) women were found to be living in some other type of household. Thus, temporary accommodation is provided for these women in other types of accommodation i.e. on the site where the work of the contractor or builder is going on or in an open space near it.

6) Infrastructural facilities

The proportion of housewives having access to facilities like toilets, bathrooms, sewage systems, electricity, and water is 94.7%, 84.0%, 86.0%, 98.7%, and 100% respectively. Among women working in the construction sector, the percentage of women receiving these facilities was 70.8%, 56.9%, 25.0%, 62.5%, and 94.4% respectively. From this, it can be said that the amount of these facilities received by construction women is lower than that of housewives. Because during the study it has been directly observed that most of the women involved in the construction sector live temporarily where the work (site) is going on. So, they get less of such facilities. Certain fixed units for toilet and bathroom facilities are provided to housewives. Apart from the fact that the number of these units is less compared to the number of workers living there, the condition of these units is also very dirty.

7) Problems in the accommodation of women workers

Bad roads (13.33%), waterlogging (12.67%), filth (16.0%), and pollution (6.0%) were found to be the most important problems at the place of residence of women working in the domestic sector. Apart from this noise pollution-related problems like noise (8.0%), and traffic (14.67%) have been observed. Most of these problems are related to urbanization.

Bad roads (46.5%), waterlogging (62.3%), filth (78.9%), and pollution (26.3%) were found among the problems faced by women associated with construction activities at their place of residence. Besides noise-related problems like noise (42.1%), traffic (18.4%) has been observed.

Comparing the mobility problems faced by women working in both sectors, it is found that these problems are more common among construction women than among domestic workers, the study found that construction women mainly live temporarily where the work is going on and therefore there. They must face more such problems.

8) Economic Situation

- Monthly income

Monthly Rs. Number of women earning 1500 or less in housework sector is 8 (5.3%). However, no female worker in the construction sector has such a low income. In the housework sector, Rs. 84 (56.0%) women earn a monthly income between 1500 to 3000, while only 19 (12.7%) women workers in the construction sector in the same income group. The income bracket with the largest number of women workers working in the construction sector is Rs.4500 to Rs. 6000. In which 55 (36.6%) women workers are included. Besides Rs. 6000 to Rs.7500 and above Rs.7500 are the two highest income groups with 28 (18.7%) and 34 (22.7%) female workers in the construction sector respectively. In contrast, only 4 (2.7%) and 5 (3.3%) female workers in the domestic sector are found in these two higher-income groups.

- Expenditure

Among housewives whose total family expenditure is Rs. 5000 less than 19 (12.7%), women spending between Rs.5,000 to 10,000 is 54 (36.0%). The number of females spending Rs.10,000 to 15,000, Rs.15,000 to 20,000, and Rs.20,000 to 25,000 was found to be 41 (27.3%), 31 (20.7%), and 4 (2.7%) respectively. While the highest number of women spending more than Rs.25,000 is found to be 1 (0.7%).

Looking at the family situation of construction women, the number of women whose total family expenditure is less than Rs.5000 is 22 (14.7%), while the number of women who spend between Rs.5,000 to 10,000 is 61 (40.7%). The number of females spending Rs.10,000 to 15,000, Rs.15,000 to 20,000, and Rs.20,000 to 25,000 was found to be 34 (22.7%), 23 (15.3%), and 10 (6.7%) respectively. While the number of females spending more than Rs.25,000 is found to be 0 (0.0%). That is, none of the women selected in the sample among construction women has a family expenditure of more than Rs.25,000.

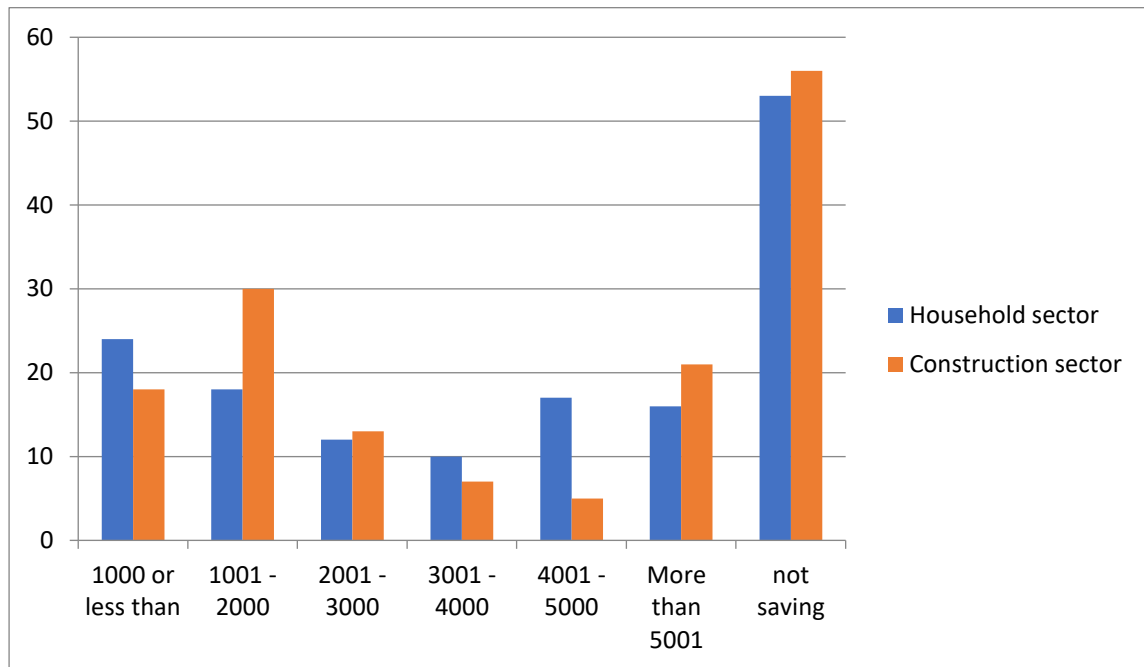
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A comparative study of the average expenditure of women working in the domestic and construction sectors shows that there is a difference in the expenditure pattern of women in both sectors. Housewives spend more on food, education, rent, and entertainment than women in the construction sector, while women in the construction sector spend more on clothing, social events, medicine, and other expenses.

- Saving

Out of a total of 150 women engaged in the housework sector; 97 (64.5%) women save. Among them 24 (16.0%) women save Rs.1000 or less per month, 18 (12.0%) women save Rs.1001 to 2000 per month, 12 (8.0%) women save Rs. 3000 to 2001, 10 (6.7%)

women save Rs.3001 to 4000, 17 (11.3%) women save Rs.4001 to 5000 and 16 (10.7%) women save more than Rs.5001. While 53 (35.3%) women do not save.



Regarding the female workers working in the construction sector, 94 (62.7%) of the total 150 females save. Among them 18 (12.0%) women earn Rs. 1000 or less, 30 (20.0%) women Rs.1001 to 2000 per month, 13 (8.7%) women Rs.2001 to 3000, 7 (4.7%) women Rs.3001 to 4000, 5 (3.3%) women Rs. Females save Rs.4001 to 5000 and 21 (14.0%) females save more than Rs.5001. While 56 (37.3%) women do not save. Female workers do not keep their savings in gold-silver, share-debentures, or post. They do not invest their savings in formal sources of savings due to a lack of literacy and confusing processes. Most of the women are close relatives, contractors and very few women keep their savings in banks

- 9) Out of the total of 300 women selected in the sample; 257 women do not send money to their home country. Out of the 43 remittance women, 37 women workers are from the construction sector. While the number of women workers in the domestic sector is comparatively less.

10) Debt

- Out of a total of 150 women doing housework, 109 (72.7%) women do not have any kind of debt. Among those who have debt, 19 (12.7%) women have interest-bearing debt and 22 (14.7%) women have interest-free debt. Similarly, out of a total of 150 women engaged in the construction sector; 102 (68.3%) women do not have any type of debt. Among those who have debt, 40 (26.3%) women have interest-bearing debt, and 8 (5.3%) have interest-free debt. Housewives can borrow without interest. Thus, the number of female workers who owe interest including interest is more than double in the construction sector (40) than in the domestic sector (19).

- A major source of debt for women working in the construction sector is their contractors. While housewives, the main debtors are their relatives/friends/owners.
- Limited family income and illness were found to be the main reasons for indebtedness among women working as housewives and construction workers. In the domestic sector, its proportion is 21.95% and 31.70% respectively. In the construction sector, this proportion is 12.50% and 31.25% respectively. Also, among female workers in the construction sector, the proportion of female workers who incur debt on marriage is high (35.42%).

11) Women's empowerment

- In response to whether housewives must get permission from anyone at home to use their income, 75 (50.0%) women said that they never need 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.

The picture is different in the construction sector. 48 (32.0%) of women in the construction sector are always forced to seek permission from their husbands or family members to use their own money, and this proportion is more than five times that of female domestic workers. 63 (42.0%) women working in the construction sector must seek permission at some point. While 39 (26.0%) women never need to get permission from their husbands or any other family members. And this proportion is only half of the proportion of women working in the domestic sector. From a comparative study of these statistics, it can be said that women involved in the construction sector cannot make their own financial decisions, which stifles their economic, social, and mental development.

Comparatively, housewives are more independent in deciding how to use their income than women working in the construction sector.

- freedom of decision-making in the daily life of women workers
134 (89.3%) of the total women working at home and 138 (92%) of the women engaged in the construction sector 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.

12) The average age at marriage for female workers in the domestic and construction industries was 19.94 years and 19.19 years, respectively. The distinction between the two appears negligible at first glance.

13) Children

Among housewives 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%). Among women working in the construction sector, 43 (28.7%) women have one child, and 51 (34.0%) women have two children.

17 (11.3%) women have three children. The number of women with four children was found to be 4 (2.7%).

Thus, the percentage of women who meet the ideal criteria of two or fewer children is found to be 78.0 and 62.7 of women working in housework and construction sector respectively.

14) Family planning

118 women among housewives have adopted family planning, while among women working in the construction sector only 61 women are reported to have adopted family planning. Thus, there is a big difference in the attitude towards adoption of family planning in these two groups.

15) Children's education

Among female domestic workers, 55 (36.7%) female children were found to be studying in government schools and 52 (34.7%) female children were studying in private schools. Among female workers working in the construction sector, 50 (33.3%) women's children are studying in government schools and 5 (3.3%) women's children are studying in private schools.

It is found that out of a total of 300 female workers most of the female workers 124 (41.33%) want their children to study more than higher secondary. However, the majority of them are female workers from the domestic sector. Out of most women 271 (90.33%) women believe that more education can make the future of children brighter.

- 16) The biggest reason for joining the domestic work sector was found to be the poor financial condition of female workers (42.5%), followed by high earnings (39.6%). 13.0% of women believe that household responsibilities can be handled along with housework. 2.9% of women have this hereditary occupation. 1.0% of women say that other jobs can be done along with housework.

The biggest reason behind joining the construction sector as an employment is the poor economic condition of female workers (39.6%). This is followed by legacy occupation (33.2%) followed by higher earning to improve standard of living (15.8%). The proportion of women workers who joined the sector due to other reasons such as persuasion of friends and relatives, not liking to stay at home and acceptance of work due to marriage, etc. are reported as 1.5%, 15.8%, 2.5%, and 4.0% respectively.

- 17) Among women who are victims of abuse among domestic workers, the proportion of women who are 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 overworked and underpaid is 68.9%, the proportion of women who are victims of physical abuse is 6.7% and frequent dismissal. The proportion of women who were victims of threats was found to be 4.4%. These percentages were found to be 3.6%, 21.4%, 62.5%, 8.9%, and 14.3% respectively among women working in the construction sector.

- 18) According to 89.9% of women in the housework sector and 84.1% of women in the construction sector they feel more tired. The prevalence of back pain among female workers due to work was 52.5% in the housework sector and 56.1% in the construction sector, and the percentage of hand and foot pain in the housework and construction

sector was 51.5% and 60.7% respectively. 4.0% and 29.9% of female workers in the housework and construction sector with respiratory problems and 13.1% and 5.6% of female workers with skin diseases respectively.

Conclusion

In the sample, various aspects of the life of women workers in both the selected sectors like age, caste, origin, marital status, education, economic factors like income, expenditure, savings, debt, etc., their social factors like participation in family socio-economic decisions, marriage, Aspects like maternity, children, health, etc., occupational matters like working hours, wages, non-monetary benefits, other facilities, their future expectations, etc. are described and analysed in detail. Women workers often must balance both outside jobs (with or without violence) and domestic responsibilities. Despite having the same productivity and efficiency as men, they confront salary discrimination, bad working conditions, and instability.

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