

Working and Living Conditions of Workers in Unorganized Sector- A Review of Literature

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Abstract

Unorganised sector covers about half of the GDP of our country. This preponderance of unorganised workers occupies almost 90% of the national labor force. This sector is characterized by seasonal employment (in agricultural sector), contractual work, no social security and welfare legislations, no rights and minimum wages. Lack of skill and education, few new openings in organized sector, unawareness of legal rights, deficient work quality and terms of service draws the labor into the available vortex of the unorganised sector. Here they face problems like poor health conditions, substandard working life, harassment at work, inadequate and unequal wage structure, long working hours, poor housing facilities, lack of safety measures, atrocities on women workers and no proper education for children of workers. Government intervention in taking necessary steps at the legal and policy level for unorganised workers is required for improving their working and living conditions. In the present paper the researcher tries to make an attempt to understand the research related to the working and living conditions of workers in the unorganised sector and identify the gaps for further research.

KEYWORDS: Working and living condition, unorganised sector, Workers

An Overview

The term 'unorganised sector' has been defined by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) Government of India as the sector which "consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale or production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers" (Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector. Academic Foundation, 1 Jan 2008, p.1774). Easy entrance, local operations, ambiguous legal standing, ready requirement of labor, education and skill deficit, no fixed regulations of working hours or payment, poor rate of reparation, ignorance regarding and lack of possible government intervention and help characterizes this sector. Domestic helps, construction labor (migrant or otherwise), drivers, masons, carpenters, street vendors, incense sticks as well as beedi makers and several others are a part of this informal sector. Workers of the unorganised sector have lower job security and a poorer chance of growth and no leaves and paid holidays, they have lower protection against employers indulging in unfair or illegal practices. (Kulwant Rai Gupta (1 January 2009). Economics of Development and Planning. Atlantic Publishers & Dist. p. 746). This paints a dismal picture and the

endeavor here would be to explore more about the working and living of these workers with a view to understand existing research and the gaps therein.

Objectives

- ✓ To understand the areas of research carried out in connection with working and living conditions of workers in unorganized sector.
- ✓ To undertake an in depth study on working and living conditions of workers in unorganized sector.

Methodology

This study is based on secondary data. In this regard various libraries were visited and some online journals were reviewed.

Review of Literature

Jyoti Bharat (2008) conducted a study on Socio-economic status of the women domestic workers. This study was exploratory in nature and provided valuable insights into the working and living conditions of women domestic workers. There was no legal protection system. A two stage random sampling scheme was adopted in selecting the sample slums and Index Women as the first and second stage study units respectively. Secondary data collected from the Urban Local Bodies provided the database for sampling framework. The first stage of sampling included selection of the urban slums in the selected townships. Thirty slums from each of the five townships were selected randomly for the study. The second stage of sampling dealt with selection of the individual women domestic workers. Ten women per slum were selected randomly. The findings of the study will be useful in providing inputs for improvement in the working and living condition of domestic workers.¹

Nandal Santosh (2004) conducted a study on Women workers in construction industry in Haryana. Most of the workers in construction industry come from other states and constitute a higher percentage of female. The primary objective of this paper was to focus on the socio-economic problems being faced by a section of the female workers in the construction industry. They were actively involved in economic activities for survival, yet bearing and rearing of children remain their first responsibility. The study was conducted in six districts of Haryana (Rohtak, Sonapat, Bhiwani, Hissar, Panipat and Karnal) where the total number of employed workers was estimated to be 21,000.²

Mathew K. Tinu (2008) conducted a study on the role of social movements in organizing the unorganised sector workers LEARN, Dharavi. This study tried to detect the problems as well as the prospects entailed in systematizing the unorganised workers and recognize the part social movements can play in regulating the unorganised sector workers. The intention was to appreciate the troubles and tribulations of the unorganized workers in general and women workers in particular in the state of Maharashtra with Dharavi as the center of attention. Qualitative methodology of research was used to analyse the conditions of informal sector workers. This was conducted through interview methods, which helped in identifying the positive impact of unions on the workers. This also gave an insight into the obstacles faced by the unions in organising the informal sector workers. In addition to participant observation, newspaper articles, books, journals and various government reports were referred as secondary data.³

Sodadas Kumar Vijya (2011) conducted a study on the working and living conditions of stone quarry workers. This study attempted to discuss the problems faced by stone quarry workers in India. The study examined the hiring practices, compensation, the role of government and trade union in this sector. In this regard not much help is provided by the government and legal frame work of the country. The study was limited to the stone quarries in the area of Anakapalli mandal, Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh. A total population of 300 stone quarry workers was used for the study. It was a social survey research which used the random sampling method. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. The findings revealed that there was no clear employment relationship with either employer or contractor and the workers always remain uncovered by any labour legislation which regulates the terms and conditions of employment or social security schemes. Hence the requirement implementation of a comprehensive law becomes imperative to provide a better standard of living and to regulate their working conditions.⁴

Das Kabita , Das .B.K, Mohanty Subhransubala (2012) conducted a study on Social Security in Informal Sector. The aim of this paper was to know the degree of social security of the working women in the informal sector in Odisha. Keeping in view the objective of the study, a sample survey was conducted in districts like Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Cuttack. Accordingly 100 women from each district were randomly selected and supplied with structured questionnaire pertaining to their availability of social security measures taken by the Govt. of Odisha. Available data suggested that social security in the organised sector was steadily shrinking but the major concern was for informal sector which imposes a heavy cost on society in terms of jobs, income and health care.⁵

Paul G D Bino, Datta Susanta, Murthy R Venkatesha (2011) conducted a study on Working and Living Conditions of Mumbai Women Domestic Workers. Here primary data was collected from 1510 female domestic workers in Mumbai. Based on the findings, the need to create a comprehensive social security system for domestic workers in India, against the backdrop of working and living conditions of labour belonging to this occupational category was highlighted. The study covered themes such as basic demographic features, nature of services, work profile of the domestic workers, access to social security, consumption of edible items, consumption under PDS system, health, union awareness, time use, household assets and liability, habitat, attitude of domestic workers towards gender and domestic violence.⁶

Mukherjee Piu, Paul G D Bino, Pathan J.I (2009) conducted a study on the migrant workers' working condition in informal sector. The objective of the study was to understand their socio-economic status in urban India. The aim was to explore whether migration to urban areas had substantially altered their working and living conditions as also the labor market and human development issues. The study reviewed how the migrants survived the expected deficiencies and dispossessions and also the role of labor brokers in this arena. The research examined the seasonal construction workers and 'naka' workers in Mumbai and concluded that there was no social security and sustained human development.

Gaines Gaines, Head Jordan, Mokey Matthew, Potemski Amy, Stepansky Michael, Vance Amy(2006) conducted a study on working conditions of domestic workers in Montgomery country, Maryland. The objective of this research was to determine whether the working conditions of domestic workers are unfair and if so, the extent and magnitude of such problems. The goal of this study was to move beyond anecdotal evidence and provide the Montgomery County Health and Human Services committee with sound empirical data on domestic working conditions in order to inform public discussion of these issues and potential policy solutions. The findings of this study showed that there were substantive difference both among types of domestic workers as well as between domestic workers as a class and the general population of Montgomery country. Domestic workers are consistently divested of health, retirement and regularized leave provisions. Therefore, it is imperative to the improvement of domestic worker protections, rights, and welfare that this specific population is targeted for future research and analysis. However, should the country decide to take legislative action it may create mandated work standards.⁸

Tous Sophorn , Veasna Noun(2009) conducted Study on ‘Living and Working Conditions of Domestic Workers in Cambodia’. In Phnom Penh, the study on working conditions of domestic worker covered four districts and a total of 30 Communes. Information was collected from members of 9 Trade Unions. Main findings of the research were: Employing someone to undertake domestic households’ chores is a long time practice in Cambodia, associated with gender stereotypes on the traditional role of women in the household as caretakers and caregivers. Domestic work is still considered in the Cambodian culture as a form of servitude rather than as real “work”. The results of the study confirm the need for action to promote and protect the rights of domestic workers required.⁹

Kimera Musooka Moses (2010) conducted a study on ‘Dignity of Workers in Wakiso Town: Wakiso District’. The study contributed to the management theory and practice by establishing the thesis that regard for workers’ dignity by the tripartite partners (employers, employees and the government) is indispensable for the improvement of the workers’ conditions. The study was conducted to change the prevailing plight of workers. A combination of qualitative and quantitative method was applied and data was collected via interviews, questionnaires, observation and literatures review. The study relied on both secondary sources and government publications related to economic policy and labour rights. Data was summarized and coded into themes and sub-themes from which conclusions and recommendations were drawn. This study found that the lack of awareness, less salary, late payments, underemployment, violence against employees, dignity and rights, casualness, lack of freedom of association and poor working relations account for the poor condition of workers. Due to the limitation and the scope of the study, these issues are recommended for further research.¹⁰

Bairagya Indrajit,(2009) conducted study on “Measuring the Informal Economy in Developing Countries”. The goal of this study was to measure the economic importance of the informal sector in Indian economy by its share, growth and composition from the

year 1970 to 2006. Another objective was the measurement of efficiency performance of the unorganized sector.¹¹

Geetha K.T. (2010) conducted study on Women in Informal Sector-A Case Study.

This study was focused on different types of socio-economic problems of female workers in urban informal sector. The study was based on primary data collected. An interview schedule was administered to 100 female workers working in various activities in the informal sector in urban areas. Findings revealed that females in informal sector were overburdened with work and exploited. It was recommended that at the policymaker level, required policy should be prepared and appropriate steps should be taken to improve working and living condition of female workers in this sector.¹²

Remesh P. Babu(2012) conducted a study on ‘Rethinking Social Protection for India’s Working Poor in the Unorganised Sector’. This study gave importance to social security. The characteristics of unorganized sector were low wages, poor working/living conditions, seasonality of employment, contractual employment, lack of social security as well as welfare procedures, repudiation of rights and privileges. Consequently, the sector has developed into “a competitive and low cost device to absorb labour which cannot be absorbed elsewhere and any attempt to regulate and bring it into more effective legal and institutional framework is perceived to be impairing the labour absorbing capacity of the sector”.¹³

Kumar M. Dileep (2012) conducted a study on Inimitable Issues of Construction Workers: Case Study. Construction workers are available everywhere in all countries. The percentage of construction workers is more in developing countries like India as employment intensity is much higher in lower income countries than higher income ones. This study was conducted in 82 construction sites. Migrated construction workers faced some major problems like poor health condition, arduous working life, harassment, inadequate and unequal wage structure, long working hours, poor housing facilities, atrocities on women workers, lack of safety measures and proper education for children of construction workers. The study stressed on the need to create awareness of all labour rights and recommended proper intervention programme as well as proper implementation of labour law for this sector.¹⁴

Kundu Amit (2008) conducted a study on Conditions of ‘Work and Rights of The Female Domestic Workers of Kolkata’. This study focused on women working as domestic helps in private houses. The endeavor was to know about working conditions and rights of women domestic workers. The findings revealed that they were not getting facilities like timely salaries, overtime payment, public holiday, standard daily working hours and prior notice before dismissal from work. The study tried to cover all parts of Kolkata district and surveyed 300 part-time domestic workers as well as 100 full-time domestic workers and suggested that the Government of India should implement schemes, rules and rights for betterment of their working and living condition.¹⁵

Saha Debdulal (2008) conducted a study on ‘Conditions of Decent Working Life of Street Vendors in Mumbai’. This study was conducted to know the working condition of street vendors in Mumbai and the significant role of unions in affording a respectable

working life. The study was based on a sample size of 200 and was explorative in nature. It was found that street vendors faced problems like dependence on money lenders, persecution at the hands of local police and other authorities. Therefore, the need for trade union and different member based associations to come forward and take necessary action for these types of problems faced by street vendors was stressed.¹⁶

Rustagi Preet, Srivastave Priyanka, Bhardwaj Preeti, Saha Manojit, Vyas Anju, Shree Madhu (2003) conducted a study on 'Survey of Studies on Beedi Industry with Special Emphasis on Women and Child Labour'. Generally beedi making workers are contractual and home based workers. It was found that ninety percent of home based workers were female and children. Here they faced problems like low salary, untimely payment, health hazards, and working hours. This study focused on predominance of females and children in beedi industry, working and living conditions of females and children working in this sector, health issues arising from this sector, labour law and union for beedi workers.¹⁷

Dave Vandana (2012) conducted a study on Women Workers in Unorganised Sector. The study focused on female construction workers, agriculture workers and domestic workers. The objective of this study was to know the socio-economic, working and living conditions of workers. The multistage stratified random sampling technique was applied, data was collected from 350 female workers from urban and rural areas of 3 districts of Haryana namely Panipat, Kaithal and Kurukshetra. Workers faced problems like disparity in wages where female workers were paid less. Working hours were not fixed and harassment at work place was common.¹⁸

Rajasekhar D., J.Y. Suchitra (2006) conducted a study on Employment Security for The Unorganised Sector Workers in Karnataka. This study covered agriculture, construction and domestic workers of 4 districts of Karnataka. The objective of this study was to examine the requirement of employment security in unorganized sector and the problem faced by workers without employment security. It was found that inter and intra-sectoral heterogeneity among these occupational groups was the main factor for the policies aiming at ensuring their employment security. Results indicated that the same policy for all occupational groups of unorganized sector would not work as different groups have different problems.¹⁹

Nazir Saima (2008) conducted a study on 'Socio-economic Conditions of Females Domestic Workers Before and After Migration in Faisalabad City'. The study revealed the generality of domestic employees working in private residences and the predominance of females as domestic help. They faced problems like health expenditures, working at more than one place, no overtime payment or timely payment and no local holiday. The principle focus was to examine the work situation, compensation configuration and impact of "internal migration" and other aspects of this unorganized sector. Convenient random sampling technique was used for this study. Results indicated that they were not getting their salaries in accordance to the working hours. However, a clear connection between "internal migration and higher social, economic status, better living conditions and children education was found".²⁰

Conclusion: In India around thirty crore people are working in the unorganized sector and the number is on the rise. The meaning of unorganized sector, popularly known as unprotected sector, could be without regular source of income and working throughout the year. They constitute the fringes of society and are not getting a chance to be a part of the mainstream economy. From the above review of literature, it is observed that there is no legal protection system, bearing and rearing of children remains the first responsibility of women workers and there is not much help from the government and legal frame work of the country. Social security and sustained human development for workers of the unorganized sector are big question marks. A large percentage includes migrant workers. High rents and living expenses, low and irregular salaries, unequal wages for male and female workers, no overtime payment, no standard daily working hours, no public holiday and no prior notice for dismissal from work constitute some of their trials. The vendors face problems like dependence on money lenders, lack of dignity, delay in payments, underemployment, and violence against employees, oppression and maltreatment by local authorities. Poor relations between the employers and employees, discrimination at work, sexual harassment, poor health/medical care and denial of terminal benefits, torture and poor working conditions echo the common plight of workers in almost all spheres of this sector. More research is required in this area to suggest practical solutions to existing problems and on issues like social security and positive impact of unions and labour Acts on the workers.

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