

Stress Management among Women Workers in Informal Sector in Kanyakumari District

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Abstract – The informal sector was historically recognized as an opposition to formal economy, meaning it included all income earning activities beyond legally regulated enterprises. However, this understanding is too inclusive and vague, and certain activities that could be included by that definition are not considered part of the informal economy. As the International Labour Organization defined the informal sector in 2002, the informal sector does not include the criminal economy. While production or employment arrangements in the informal economy may not be strictly legal, the sector produces and distributes legal goods and services. The criminal economy produces illegal goods and services. The informal economy also does not include the reproductive or care economy, which is made up of unpaid domestic work and care activities. The informal economy is part of the market economy, meaning it produces goods and services for sale and profit. Unpaid domestic work and care activities do not contribute to that, and as a result, are not a part of the informal economy.

Keywords: Stress management, women workers and Informal Sector.

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INTRODUCTION

The informal sector, informal economy, or grey economy is the part of an economy that is neither taxed nor monitored by any form of government. Unlike the formal economy, activities of the informal economy are not included in a country's gross national product (GNP) or gross domestic product (GDP). The informal sector can be described as a grey market in labour.

The spectrum ranges from self-employment or unpaid family labor to street vendors, shoe shiners, and junk collectors. On the higher end of the spectrum are upper-tier informal activities such as small-scale service or manufacturing

businesses, which have more limited entry. The upper-tier informal activities have higher set-up costs, which might include complicated licensing regulations, and irregular hours of operation. However, most workers in the informal sector, even those are self-employed or wage workers, do not have access to secure work, benefits, welfare protection, or representation. These features differ from businesses and employees in the formal sector which have regular hours of operation, a regular location and other structured benefits.

Women tend to make up the greatest portion of the informal sector, often ending up in the most erratic and corrupt segments of the sector. In developing countries, most of the female non-agricultural labor force is in the informal sector. Major occupations in the informal sector include home-based workers and street vendors, which both are classified in the informal sector.

In India, women working in the informal sector often work as rag pickers, domestic workers, coolies, vendors, beauticians, construction laborers, and garment workers. Female representation in the informal sector is attributed to a variety of factors. One such factor is that employment in the informal sector is the source of employment that is most readily available to women.

The stress is a feeling of tension, which is both physical and emotional and is caused by physiological, psychological and environmental demands. Stress related to work environment is known as *occupational stress or job stress*. The variables which cause stress in a person are known as stressors. The feeling of job stress can take many forms. In one sense, it can occur within the teaching profession when teachers begin to feel that the daily tasks of their job are ever growing.

Today's technically super advanced life with lots of stress and strain hardly provides any congenial atmosphere for any thinker to think, any policy maker to do constructive farming of policy and above all any to teach with sincerity and

dedication. The daily interaction with pupils, co-workers and the incessant and fragmented demands of the teaching in general, often lead to over whelming pressures and challenges which further lead to stress and strain.

OBJECTIVES

The important objectives are

1. To know deeply about the informal sectors and categories of women workers in informal sectors.
2. To analyze the problems faced and stress experienced by women working in informal sectors in Kanyakumari district.

METHODOLOGY

The study is confined with both primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected through a well structured interview schedule. Direct interview was also conducted among 50 women workers in Kanyakumari district. The secondary data have been mainly collected from the books, journals, magazines, and also from the internet.

SAMPLING DESIGN

In order to study the job stress among women workers in informal sectors 50 workers including beautician, construction workers, tailors, coolies and vendors are selected as samples using convenient sampling method.

STATISTICAL TOOLS USED

The collected data were analyzed with the help of various statistical measures such as *Percentage, Garrett ranking technique and Chi-Square Test*.

The formula used for Garrett ranking method is

$$\text{Percent position} = \frac{100(R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_{ij}}$$

The formula for Chi – square is

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

HYPOTHESIS

On the basis of the objectives of the study, the following null hypothesis was developed for the purpose of the present study.

Ho: There is no relationship between the problems and the level of stress experienced by the respondents.

CATEGORIES OF WOMEN WORKERS IN INFORMAL SECTOR

Rag pickers

Rag picker is a person who salvages reusable or recyclable materials thrown away by others to sell or for personal

consumption. There are millions of waste pickers worldwide, predominantly in developing countries. The global population of urban dwellers is expected to double between 1987 and 2015, with 90 Percentage of this growth occurring in developing countries. The United Habitat Report found that nearly one billion people worldwide live in slums, about a third of the world's urban dwellers.

Domestic workers

The domestic work has brought higher incomes to many women and their families it is still far from decent work being characterized by long working hours, low wages and hardly any social security. Domestic workers are more vulnerable than other kinds of workers because they are not officially classified as workers at all and are therefore not covered by laws that apply to workers.

Coolies

Women coolies basically do the job of loading/unloading of packages being received at railway stations to warehouses and from warehouses/ go downs to further distribution centers.

Vendors

This is the most scattered category, which includes women engaged in selling different types of commodities, like broomsticks, cane baskets, utensils, petty cosmetics, bangles, vegetables and those running roadside tea stalls, etc.

Beauticians

A large number of women are employed as beauticians. A large portion of the beauty saloons/parlours fall under the unorganized sector and are characterized by informal employment.

Construction labourers

The construction industry provides direct employment to at least 30 million workers in India but recent expansions has resulted in a higher number: trade unions estimate that there were roughly 40 million migrant construction workers in India in 2008. Women work mainly as unskilled workers.

Garment workers

The garment industry is a subsector of the textile industry and also generates many jobs for migrant workers. India's readymade garment exports increased significantly as a share of total exports. The women work as helpers to male/female tailors (called as masters). These workers include those involved in knitting clothes/woolens.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN IN INFORMAL SECTOR

A large number of women from rural areas migrate to cities and towns all over India. Most of these women and girls are illiterate and unskilled. They work in inhuman

conditions in cities as their living standard is extremely poor. It is a recognized fact that there is still no society in the world in which women workers enjoy the same opportunities as men. The major problems faced by the women in informal sector are:

Lack of education

Illiteracy is the biggest problem because they do not get time to educate themselves. In childhood, they have to start working early which do not allow them to go school.

Insufficient skill and knowledge

Majority of female do not have proper training and skills aligned to their task. This result is excessive stress and inefficient working.

Exploitation of the female labour

Female worker are more vulnerable to exploitation by employer. They can be easily threatened of their job for indecent favours.

Insecure job

Absence of strong legislation controlling the informal sector makes the job highly insecure in this sector.

Non sympathetic attitude of employer

Temporary nature of employment in this sector does not allow the bond between the employee and employer to establish and become strong.

Extreme work pressure

Female are overworked, they work twice as many hours as worked by their male counterpart. In agriculture sector the condition is the worst. When measured in terms of number of tasks performed and the total time spent, it is greater than men.

Irregular wage payment

There is lack of controlled processes in unorganized sector which results in to untimely payment of wages to the workers. When it comes to payment to female, it is even worst.

Wage discrimination

Female do not get similar payment to the male for same work.

Seasonal employment

Many of the unorganized sector industries are seasonal. These industries includes fruits processing, pickle making, agricultural sector, construction sector etc. They have to fetch another employment when there is no work during offseason.

Physical problems

The working conditions are not healthy. Work place is not ergonomically designed. This results into workers facing fatigue resulting physical problems. Female workers are mostly on such tasks where they need to remain in one

Sl. No.	Problems	x^2 value	Table value	Inference
1	Extreme work pressure	8.62	9.488	Accepted
2	Irregular wage payment	3.303	5.99	Accepted
3	Wage discrimination	23.14	9.488	Rejected
4	Insecure job	32.86	15.51	Rejected
5	Exploitation of the female labour	9.21	9.488	Accepted

position such as agriculture. This results on to severe problems such as backache and knee-ache.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Problems of women in informal sector

The following Table indicates the important problems faced by the women in informal sector. The ranks assigned by the respondents are converted into scores using Garrett ranking technique.

Problems of women in informal sector

Sl. No.	Self handling strategies	Garrett Score	Rank
1	Moving from the place	51.77	II
2	Share with family members	55.73	I
3	Prayer	57.88	IV
4	Try another job	49.44	V
5	None	53.57	III
6	Others	48.12	VI

Source: Primary Data

It is inferred from the above table that the extreme work pressure scores high and holds the first rank, the irregular wage payment and wage discrimination holds the second and third rank respectively in the problems faced by women workers in informal sectors in the study area.

Analysis of stress experienced by the respondents due to the various problems faced by them

A comparative analysis was made by adopting chi-square test to find out the relationship between the problems faced by the women workers and stress experienced by them. It was presented in the below tables:

Source: Computed Data

From the above table it is inferred that the problems such as extreme work pressure, irregular wage payment and exploitation of the female labour are dependent to the level of stress experienced by the respondents and the problems such as the wage discrimination and insecure job are independent to the stress experienced by the women workers in informal sector.

STRATEGIES TO MANAGE STRESS

The women workers follow some strategies to cope with the stress experienced by them. It is also analyzed and presented in the below table.

Strategies to manage stress

Sl. No.	Problems	Garrett scores obtained	Rank
1	Lack of education	39.84	X
2	Insufficient skill and knowledge	41.94	VIII
3	Exploitation of the female labour	51.71	V
4	Insecure Job	52.32	IV
5	Non sympathetic attitude of employee	50.34	VI
6	Extreme work pressure	52.13	I
7	Irregular wage payment	53.01	II
8	Wage discrimination	53.12	III
9	Seasonal employment	49.77	VII
10	Physical problem	40.16	IX

Source: Computed Data

It is inferred from the above table that share with family members scores high and holds the first rank. Moving from the place and they do nothing to cope with the stress experienced holds the second and third ranks respectively in the self handling strategies followed by the respondents to cope with the stress experienced by the respondents.

SUGGESTIONS

The following are the important suggestions made by the researcher for the welfare of the women workers in informal sector.

- Women workers should be educated and make them aware about their rights and legislative provisions.
- It is very much essential to create awareness among women workers about the institutional support available to them to protect their rights.
- A comprehensive law is needed to protect the rights of women workers.
- Any kind of exploitation including sexual harassment of women workers is to be prevented and stringent action needs to be taken against the wrong doer.
- There should be proper regulation of unorganized sector industries, which ensure job security, healthy work environment and at least minimum wages, maternity and child care benefits.

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