

## **Causes of Women Labour and Earnings in Urban Informal Sector: A Case Study of Aligarh City**

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### **Abstract**

Women labour is an important segment of the total labour force in India. Women represent 50 percent of the total adult population and one third of the labour force of India. They perform nearly two-third of all working hours and receive only one-tenth world income. Women work longer hours than men in every country. More than 90 percent of the working women in India are engaged as wage labourers in the unorganised sector, many of them belong to the economically poor, socially backward and oppressed section of the society. Most of them bear the brunt of poverty, homelessness, underemployment and destitution. Many of these women workers are primary earners for their families. The objectives of the study are to examine the causes of women labour participation in the informal services. This paper focuses on the household, socio-economic, health, problems, vulnerabilities and working conditions of female labours of Aligarh city. The study is mainly based on primary data collected through field surveys. Questionnaire based interviews of household have taken in different wards of the city. Out of 70 wards 7 wards are randomly selected. The various information on 350 sample female workers in the informal sector has been gathered from extensive survey of field investigation. Analysis shows that the conditions of female labour are poor and they are facing many problems, such as low wages, long working hours etc.

**Keywords:** Women Labour, Causes, Income, Problems

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### **Introduction**

T. S. Papola in his study differentiates formal and informal sectors based on mode of production defined in terms of use of wage labour as one of such basis. He defines informal sector as ‘a segment of the economy having certain characteristics, which lead to unfavourable conditions for the growth of enterprise and activities in this segment’. To him wage is the only variable which has the greater advantage to bring distinction between two sectors. He includes, in a broad sense, independent workers, casual workers working for households, shops, eating houses and repair units in manufacturing sector in the informal sector.<sup>1</sup>

The informal sector is generally characterized by a great deal of heterogeneity and low earnings. Studies have found that the labour market in India is segmented with the workers having better education and skills, taking up

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1. Papola, T. S. (1981), *Urban Informal Sector in a Developing Economy*, Vikas Publications, New Delhi.

formal, permanent jobs while the illiterate and unskilled end up in contract and casual work.<sup>2</sup> Employment opportunities in the formal sector are shrinking.

Informal sector is typically characterized by low productivity, low earnings, poor working environment, long hours of work and unproductive handling of hazardous substances, without proper societal recognition and effective social security provision.<sup>3,4</sup>

Breman (2001), has argued that the process of informalisation of the urban economy is essentially a process of exploitation, marginalization and exclusion.<sup>5</sup> Female labour is the most neglected class in India.

Women labours are familiar with the informal sector. Informal sector is characterized by longer working hours, low earnings, irregular employment and unsafe working conditions. They are illiterate. They have no alternative employment opportunities. Female labour workings in the informal sector are unsecured and backward socio-economically, educationally, politically and in other aspects.

In Aligarh city, women labour working in informal sector as Domestic Labourer, Washer Women, Tailor, Embroidery Worker, Lock Labourer, Petty Retail Traders, Construction Workers, Rag Pickers etc. Socially a large number of women labourers belong to the backward caste. They are unorganised and can not fight for their rights.

Many of these women workers are primary earners for their families. Their earnings are necessary for sheer survival. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to find out the problems associated with the process of women work participation as well as the manner in which working women's lives in the informal sector in Aligarh city.

The objectives of the study are to examine the causes of women labour participation in the informal services. An effort has been made to reveal the socio-economic conditions of women workers in the district. It has also been tried to examine the general nature of working conditions of women workers, their special problems and how they combine wage work with domestic responsibilities.

While they possess no skills and training. As the number of female workers in the informal sector has gone up considerably, there is every possibility of more and more economic activities in this sector. In Aligarh city women labour are mostly unskilled, semi-skilled and illiterate. So, they are exploited in several ways, they work longer hours, paid low wages, irregular payments, misbehavior of the employer etc.

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2. Quadeer, J. and Roy, D. (1989), 'Work, Wealth and Health: Sociology of Worker', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 17, No.5-6.
  3. Ambalavanan, V. and Madheswaran, S. (2001), 'Social Protection for Urban Informal Sector Workers: Micro-evidence from Erode District, Tamil Nadu', *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol. 44, No. 4.
  4. Unni, J. and Rani, U. (2001), 'Social Protection for Informal Sector Workers', *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol. 44, No. 4.
  5. Breman, J. (2001), 'An Informalised Labour System: End of Labour Market Dualism', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 52.

**Study Area:**

Aligarh city is located in between 27° 29' latitude and 78° 36' east longitude and lies at a distance of 130 km to the south east of Delhi on Delhi-Kolkata railway line and Grand Trunk Road. According to census 2001, the total area of Aligarh city is 33.98 sq km. with a total population of 6, 69,087 persons of which 3, 56,725 (53%) were males and 31, 12,362 (47%) females. Of the total population 54% were literates of the total literates 59% were males and 41% were females.

Total working population of the city was 169,711 of which 90% are male and 10% are females. The city is divided into 70 wards. Which spread over two distinct parts-the old city and the civil lines. The morphology, occupational distribution, social and living conditions of both parts is distinct. The civil lines area is developed in terms of infra structure facilities than the old city. Which is congested, characterised with over population, open drains, kachcha roads, traffics jams, poor water and electricity supply.

**Objectives:**

1. To study the family structure of women labour.
2. To examine the educational status of women labour.
3. To examine the causes of women labours in different types of work.
4. To examine the economic conditions of women labour.
5. To study the problems faced by women labour in informal sector.

**Data base and Methodology:**

The study is mainly based on primary data. Out of 70 wards of the city 7 wards are randomly selected. From each wards 50 households are selected for conducting surveys. Primary data has collected through the field surveys by the questionnaire based interviews with the residents of different wards of Aligarh city. The field work was done during 2014.

**Different Types of Women Labours in informal sector in Aligarh City:**

R. Kumar (2000), in his study found that out of the total work-force of women, 94 percent are in the unorganized sector and only 6 percent are employed in the organized sector.<sup>6</sup>

Among women employed in the unorganized, informal sector 80.1 percent are employed in agricultural occupations and 19.9 percent are in the non-agricultural occupations. Again out of the total female workforce,

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6. Kumar, R. (2000), Encyclopedia of Women and Development Series, Women and Development, Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, pp. 35-36.

only 2.7 percent engaged in the industrial sector and 3.3 percent was found with services and profession. Amongst the women workers in the urban areas, 80 percent are employed in unorganized sector.<sup>7</sup>

Women are predominantly employed in the labour intensive, unskilled in unorganized sector with less security and facilities, with partial nature and lower wages. The common feature of the work performed by women in unorganized sector is that they are low paid and undervalued. It has been noted that women’s earnings as compared to men’s reflect an earnings gap in India, the gender gap in earnings and the persistent payment for low wages in job where women are employed.



Fig: 1

Data related to the types of women labour in Aligarh city in fig: 1 shows that out of the total surveyed household, 26.286 percent women work as domestic labour, 18.571 percent work as washer women, 4.571 percent are construction labour, 11.714 percent are tailor, 9.714 percent are embroider, 20 percent engaged as lock labourer and remaining 9.144 percent work as petty retail traders.

Table: 1

Variables		Percentage
<b>Age</b>	16-25 Years Age Women	27.43%
	26-35 Years Age Women	18.29%
	36-45 Years Age Women	31.71%
	46-55 Years Age Women	13.71%
	>55 Years Age Women	8.86%
<b>Educational Status</b>	Primary	12.57%
	Junior Secondary	3.14%
	Secondary	3.14%
<b>Family Structure</b>	Single Parent Family	6.29%

7. Chopra, V. (2001), “Employment and Occupational Structure of Women in India in (Ed.), Murthy, S. (2001), Women and Employment, RBSA Publications, Jaipur, pp.1-22.

<b>Variables</b>		<b>Percentage</b>
	Nuclear Family	43.43%
	Extended Nuclear Family	15.14%
	Joint Family	25.43%
	Extended Joint Family	9.71%
<b>Causes</b>	Poverty	50%
	Illiteracy	5%
	Unemployment	9%
	Lower Wages	25%
	Large Family	3%
	Vulnerability	3%
	Migratory Conditions	3%
	Other Causes	2%
<b>Problems</b>	Lower wages	99%
	Longer Working Hours	80%
	Irregular Payment	71%
	Work in Worse Conditions	83%
	Live in Poor Housing Conditions	100%
	Dual Responsibility	87%
	No Time for Children	74%
	No Time for Rest and Recreation	97%

**Age of the Women Labour:**

The given table: 1 illustrates the age structure of women labour in different wards of Aligarh city. About 27.43% women labour have 16-25 years age, nearly 18.27% women labour have 26-35 years age, about 31.71% women labour have 36-45 years age, about 13.71% women labour have 46-55 years age, about 8.86% women labour have >55 years age.

**Marital Status of Women Labour:**

Data pertaining to the marital status of women labour in Aligarh city shows that out of total surveyed women labour, 25.71 percent are unmarried, about 67.71 percent are married, nearly 2.29 percent are divorced and about 4.29 percent are widow.

**Educational Status of Women Labour:**

Education always plays a vital role in the socio-economic and cultural development of any society. Hence there exists a high positive co-relation between the level of educational attainment and the socio-economic standards of community life.<sup>8</sup>

According to J. Kumar and Sangeeta, a woman has to play three roles in the course of her life. Each of these roles expects some duties from her. It is only with the help of education that she would be able to do them successfully. The first duty of a woman is to be a good daughter. The second duty is to be a good wife and third duty is to be a good mother. Education teaches a woman what she should be. It also teaches her how she should do it to be a good daughter, a good wife and a good mother.<sup>9</sup>

The low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families' lives and on their country's economic development. Illiterate women have high level of fertility and mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential and little autonomy within the household. A women's lack of education also has a negative impact on the health and well being of her children.<sup>10</sup>

Educational status of women labour in Aligarh city is given in table. It shows that out of total women labour about 16 percent are literate and remaining 84 percent are illiterate. Out of total literate women 12.57 percent are educated upto primary level, 3.14 percent are educated upto junior secondary level and 3.14 percent are educated upto secondary level. The literacy rate is very low among women labour. The main cause behind the illiteracy is poverty.

#### **Family Structure of Women Labour:**

Family structure is the way that a household or family is set up with. The traditional family is the one living jointly and inclusive of members from different generations. An extended family is one, where married sons and brothers live together and they continue to have joint property and share income. The nuclear type of family is the one, in which the group consists of a male, his wife and their children.<sup>11</sup>

The study demonstrates the family type of women labour in Aligarh city. About 6.29 percent women labour have single parent family, whereas nearly 43.43 percent women labour have nuclear family, 15.14 percent have extended nuclear family, about 25.43 percent have joint family and nearly 9.71 percent women labour have extended joint family.

#### **Causes of Women Labour:**

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8. Shandily, T. K. and Khan, S. A. (2006), Retrieved from, [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/8069/6/06\\_chapter%201.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/8069/6/06_chapter%201.pdf).
  9. Kumar, J. and Sangeeta, (2013), Status of Women Education in India, Education Confab, Vol. 2, No. 4, p.164.
  10. Velkoff, V. A. (1998), Women of the World: Women's Education in India, International Programs Centre, Vol. 98-1, p.1.
  11. Bahadur, A. and Dhawan, N. (2008), Social Value of Peasants and Children in Joint and Nuclear Families, Journal of the Indian Academy, Vol. 34, pp.78-80.

There are several causes which pushes women to enter into the labour market. The study clearly represents that about 50 percent women work because of poverty, 5 percent women work because of illiteracy, 9 percent women work because of unemployment, 25 percent women work because of lower wages, 3 percent women work because of large family, 3 percent women work because of vulnerability, 3 percent women work because of migratory conditions and 2 percent women have others causes of work. Though, poverty is a major cause of women labour.

#### **Problems Facing by Women Labour:**

The study illustrates that women labours are facing several problems at the working place and at their homes. About 99 percent women labours are getting lower wages, 80 percent women labours work longer hours, 71 percent women labours are getting irregular payment, 83 percent women labours work in worse conditions, 100 percent women labours live in poor housing conditions, 87 percent women labours have dual responsibility, 74 percent women labours have no time for children and 97 percent women labours have no time for rest and recreation.

#### **Housing Status of Women Labour:**

The study is showing the housing status of women labour in different wards of Aligarh city. Out of total women labour 59 percent have their own houses and remaining 41 percent live in rental houses. About 32 percent women labour live in pukka houses, nearly 59 percent live in semi-pukka houses and about 9 percent live in thatched houses.

The data show that the housing conditions of women labour are very poor. About 68 percent women labour live in worst conditions. Mostly they have not separate kitchen and bathroom facility. They use their single unventilated living room for sleeping, cooking food and bathing as multipurpose room.

Cooking is usually done inside the room under inadequate ventilation with biomass such as dried cow-dung, fire wood and kerosene etc., releases smoke and fills the entire living room during cooking but occupants prefer to remain inside the unventilated living room. Which badly affect the health of the inhabitants or occupants and finally leads to chronic illnesses.

Today electricity has become a significant requirement of our life. Houses without electricity become dark. Labours use electricity for only lightning of the houses. Some of labours have ceiling fans, television, fridge, iron, mobile etc. so they need electricity for these electronic gadgets. Some of them have electricity connections in their house and some do not have. About 44 percent have electricity connections in the houses and 56 percent have no electricity connections. These women labour reported that they have taken electricity from her neighbours and they pay minimum amount of money to them every month.

One of the basic elements of quality of life is safe drinking water. It is an accepted fact that 80 percent of all illnesses are caused due to unhealthy sanitary conditions and unsafe water supply. Most of the poor labour households fetch drinking water mainly from the municipal water taps of that area because they do not have access to private water tap connections.

Some of the poor labour households have private water tap connections inside their homes. About 34 percent women labour reported that they have tap water connections or hand pump inside the house. About 66 percent women labour go out and bring water from public municipal tap water connections. They stand in queues and wait for many hours.

**Average Income of Women Labour:**

Women are likely to earn less than men for the same type of work even in traditionally female occupations. Family responsibility is still very much assigned to women when they have to combine child raising activity with work activities. Women are required to find a solution for balancing these two roles.<sup>12</sup>

Unorganised sector provide employment to 96.33 percent of women workers. So, far as working condition is concerned, it is far from satisfactory as the method of wage payment and retrenchments are all arbitrary.<sup>13</sup>

Low income women workers especially in the informal sector, form one of the most vulnerable groups in the Indian economy. The reasons for their vulnerability are (a) irregular work (b) low economic status (c) little or no bargaining power (d) lack of control over earnings (e) need to balance paid work with care for children and homework (f) little or no access to institutional credit, training and information and (g) lack of assets. Unequal gender relations assume a very important role in defining their insecurities.<sup>14</sup>

Average Income of women labour in Aligarh city in fig: 2 is showing that about 15.14 percent women labour receive less than 1000 rupees per month, about 29.43 percent women labour receive 1001-1200 rupees per month, 24 percent women labour receive 1201-1400 rupees per month, about 12.29 percent women labour receive 1401-1600 rupees per month, about 11.71 percent women labour receive 1601-1800 rupees and nearly 7.43 percent women labour receive more than 1800 rupees per month.

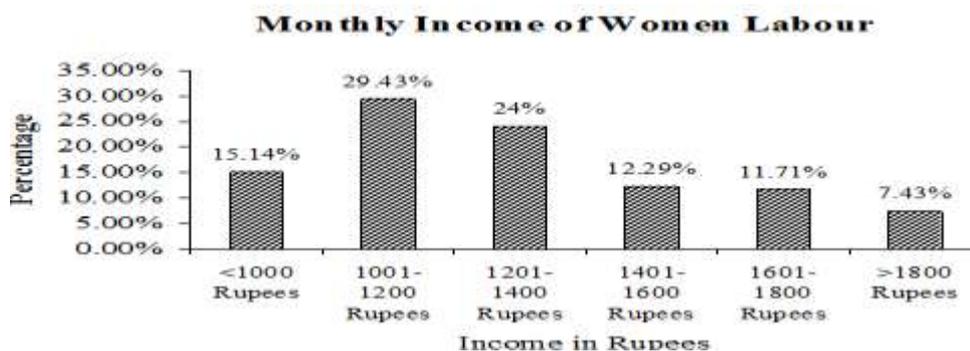


Fig: 2

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12. Rao, D. P. (2011), Status of Women in Education, Employment and Social Exclusion, Serial Publications, New Delhi, p. 206.  
 13. Kumar, S. (1989), "Women Workers in Unorganised Sector in India", Yojana, Volume 33, No. 22.  
 14. Varshney, S. (2011), Role of Women in Informal Sector, Economic Affairs, Vol. 56, No. 2, pp.179-183.

**Average Hours of Work:**

Average number of working hours of women labour is high in comparison to the men, women working more and paid lower wages because of gender discrimination in the informal sector. The employers are exploited them by longer working hours and meagre wages.

The number of hours they have to work is normally more than permitted by law. Medical and maternity benefits are conspicuously absent. Women are not only insecure in employment but are also discriminated in wage payments.<sup>15</sup>

Many of these women workers are primary earners for their families.<sup>16</sup>

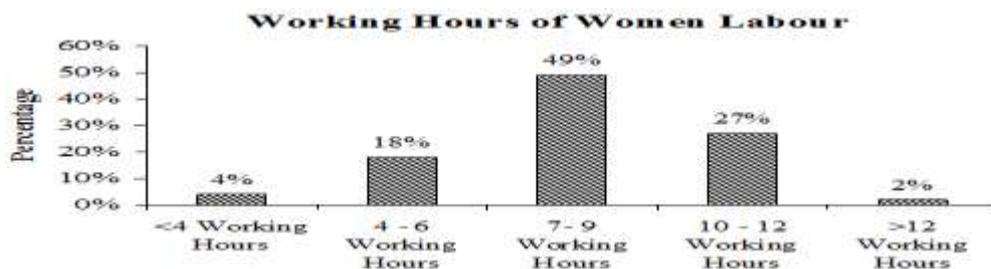


Fig: 3

The fig: 3 shows that 4 percent women labour work less than 4 hours, nearly 18 percent women labour work 4 to 6 hours, about 49 percent women labour work 7 to 9 hours, about 27 percent women labour work 10 to 12 hours and 2 percent women labour work more than 12 hours.

**Conclusion and Suggestions:**

Poverty is the main cause which stricken women to work in the worse conditions of informal sector for their survival. They are the deprived, indigent, unfortunate and underprivileged section of the society, live in the pathetic and pitiable conditions. They have more responsibilities, stress and tensions in their life. Women labours play dual roles, inside their homes and outside their homes. They manage their home and family responsibilities at one hand and manage their employee work on the other hand. The women respondents reported that they are getting low wages by working longer hours and their employers always give him late payments. They do not have medical and maternity benefits. They are not only insecure in employment but are also discriminated in wage payments.

1. Law should be enacted for the regulation of hours of work, conditions of work and identification of areas of employment where women labour would be prohibited.
2. Providing vocational skills training to the women according to their age group.

15. Kumar, S. (1989), "Women Workers in Unorganised Sector in India", Yojana, Volume 33, no. 22.

16. [http://www.ndpublisher.in/Last\\_Issue/EA/11\\_Economics.pdf](http://www.ndpublisher.in/Last_Issue/EA/11_Economics.pdf).

3. Provide financial support and income generating opportunities to the families of women labour.
4. Reduce poverty by increasing employment opportunities and education opportunities for adults.
5. Government should enforce law to remove the discrimination of working hour and wages of adult female and male labours.

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5. [http://www.ndpublisher.in/Last\\_Issue/EA/11\\_Economics.pdf](http://www.ndpublisher.in/Last_Issue/EA/11_Economics.pdf).
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