

Working Women in the Unorganised Sector in Delhi: An Epistemological Inquiry through Anthropology Application

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Abstract

This paper critically analyzes the condition of working women in the unorganised sector in Delhi, by detailing out different sets of challenges they face in their respective professions. However, significant research gaps remain in high areas such as the discourse of power, the lack of documentation from a phenomenological perspective, and the exploration of agency and resistance. The research uses various range of key methods, including ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, phenomenology, and feminist epistemology. These methodologies uncover the axis of power that influences decision-making processes in the everyday lives of women. Furthermore, the ontological turn has provided deep walled insights into the diverse everyday experiences and different sets of challenges faced by women in the unorganised sector. The paper also includes a comprehensive literature review that explores existing research on the unorganised sector. However, this paper critically analyses these issues through an epistemological inquiry grounded in anthropological applications. It presents a fine blended epistemology of ground realities faced by women in the unorganised sector and offers innovative social policy suggestions to address these everyday challenges effectively.

Keywords: Epistemology, Ontology, Unorganised Sector, Phenomenology

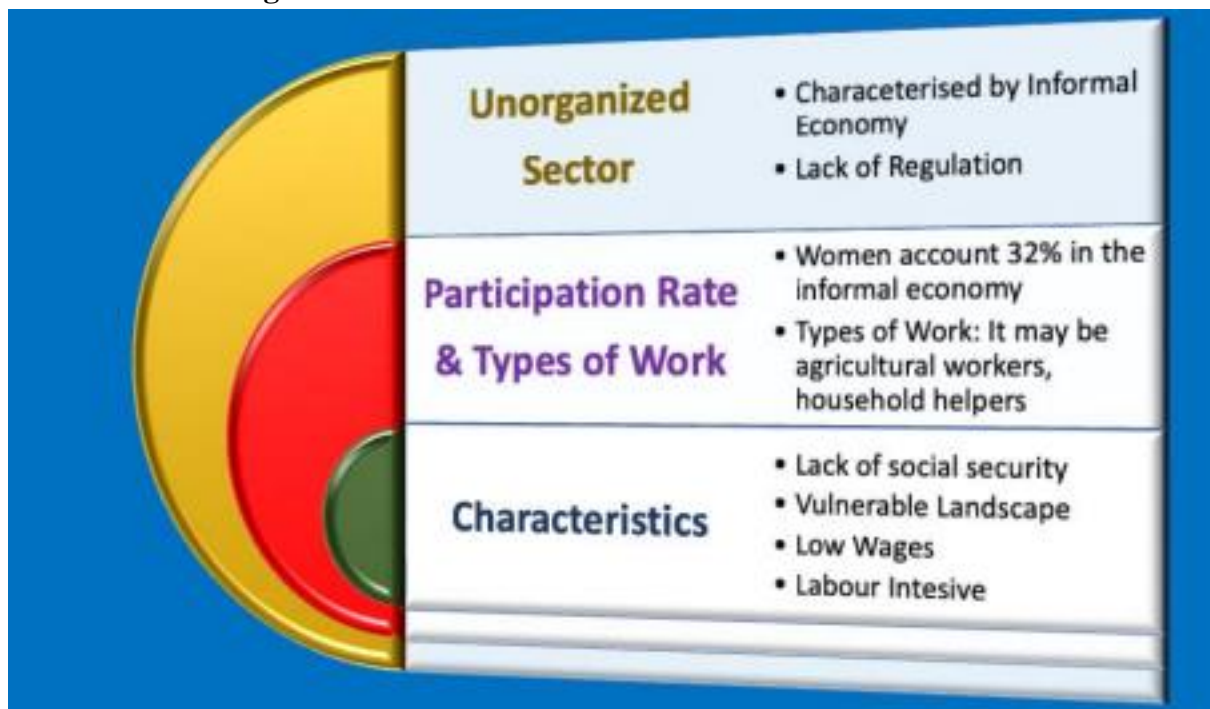
Introduction

The informal economy employs over 95% of female workers. In the majority of countries, there are more women working in this field than men. At least twenty percent of women working in the informal economy are paid on a casual basis (Chen, 2001). Women usually have more career options in the unorganized sector in third world countries. Informality is hard to measure and define, and there are geographical differences in interpretations of the term. However, women choose their profession in the informal sector due to many factors such as poverty, domestic violence, and self-independence. Furthermore, I have provided a brief context of Women Working in the Unorganised Sector in Delhi. Hence, this research unpacks critical intricacies of their everyday experiences. Additionally, this research would shed light on their challenges, which include wages, working conditions, skills, health & sanitation facilities. Women who work in the unorganized sector—which includes a broad range of industries and occupations like domestic work, street vending, agricultural labor, and informal manufacturing—are the subjects of this discussion. Although this phenomenon is common worldwide, developing nations experience it to a greater extent. Due to their lack of official recognition, insufficient labor laws, low pay,

and restricted access to social security benefits, women in this industry frequently confront a variety of difficulties. The majority of female employees in the unorganized sector lack formal occupational training and are illiterate; they are forced to continue working in this unorganized sector (Sarkar & Anil, 2005). Gender discrimination reproduces a landscape of characteristics such as inequality, pay gap, and many other associated elements.

This paper uncovers the everyday challenges faced by working women in the unorganized sector in Delhi through different key methods. It has found numerous kinds of challenges faced by women. Power dynamics plays a crucial role in the decision making process. However, it also provides social policy interventions and empowerment techniques.

Characteristics of Unorganized Sector



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Research Gap

It examines how much the educational system has tried to prepare women for work or self-employment in the informal economy(Leach,2016). There is still a significant epistemology gap regarding the intersections of gender and other associated elements of marginalization, including caste, class, and geography, despite the invaluable information provided by the current literature on women in the unorganised sector about their working circumstances and socioeconomic struggles. Thus, to in-depth investigate how intersecting identities affect women's access to employment options, working conditions, and social safeguards within the unorganised sector, research that employs an intersectional perspective is necessary. While a substantial amount of research has been done on women employed in the unorganized sector, there are still many important gaps that need to be filled. However, important themes found in this systematic assessment of the literature include intersectionality, agency and resistance, power discourse, and the lack of phenomenologically informed documentation. Although these themes offer insightful theoretical background, they frequently fall short of capturing the many advantages and

difficulties these women face in their line of work.

Agency and Resistance : Although research recognizes that women in the unorganized sector demonstrate agency and resistance, it doesn't go into great detail on how this agency shows up in their day-to-day jobs. Women are frequently portrayed in the literature as helpless objects of structural forces, with little attention paid to the ways in which they can resist, adapt, and gain agency in their workplace environments.

Discourse of Power : However studies on the unorganized sector frequently examine the ways in which power relations affect women's livelihoods and everyday experience. Decision-making procedures and daily encounters are impacted by how power is perceived, both overtly and covertly. It is unclear, meanwhile, how women deliberately navigate these geometries of power to carve out places of influence and autonomy in their workplaces.

Lack of Documentation from the critical lens of Phenomenology: A critical perspective through which to view women's lived experiences in the unorganized sector is provided by phenomenology. Research that documents these women's everyday lives, emotional landscapes, and personal narratives through phenomenological approaches is scarce, despite its potential. Such records are necessary to give a more thorough grasp of their advantages and disadvantages.

Literature Review

Leach 2016 : It has recognized the significance of this sector to women. It evaluates the track record of formal and informal education in giving women the skills they need to compete with men for jobs and comes to the conclusion that both have largely failed to help women land skilled, well-paying, and stable jobs, leaving them in large numbers in subsistence-level work in the unorganized sector.

Duguid & Weber 2019: The progress women have made in the fields of education and health are conspicuously lacking in the economic sphere. Despite targeted investments to promote entrepreneurship training, skill development, and financing access in developing and highly informal environments, the gender gap persists. The fact that social and economic systems are unfair and restrict women's access to social and economic possibilities is being increasingly acknowledged. This information necessitates shedding light on the frequently overlooked areas in which women face disadvantages as well as purposefully changing the way that we define and value "women's work."

Hill, 2001 : In developing nations, resource-based techniques like the microcredit movement are currently dominating strategies for work-life reform among workers in the informal sector. This policy framework is based on a few liberal presumptions regarding the behavior of the individual and the connection between economic development and human behavior. According to this article, these presumptions are incorrect when it comes to the economic activities of workers in the informal sector.

Drawing from Axel Honneth's (1995) work, an emphasis on the intersubjective conditions of labor and economic development offers a different perspective on the work-life experience of marginalized people and suitable interventions for economic and social stability.

Aims and Potential Value of Anthropological Investigation

Aims

To study their everyday experience of women working in the unorganized sector in Delhi

To study gender discrimination in terms of their education, lower wages and fewer job avenues

To suggest social policy intervention and empowerment technique

The objective of the proposed anthropological study is to offer a thorough comprehension of the lived experiences, socio-cultural dynamics, and structural limitations that women in the unorganized sector encounter in the informal sector in Delhi, India. The inquiry aims to shed insight on the intricate working conditions of this group and the wider implications for social and economic growth.

Key Methods

Ethnographic fieldwork: However to understand insights into the challenges, goals, and daily lives of women working in the unorganized sector. In order to comprehend how these practices and informal norms affect women's agency and well being, anthropologist also look at the power dynamics and informal norms that exist within these groups. Hence, ethnography fieldwork helped us to uncover fine intricacies of power dynamics and agency. It has provide

Participant observation : Anthropologists can examine social interactions, power dynamics, and cultural practices inside these women's work contexts by actively engaging in their daily activities and routines. By observation, I found some layers of everyday power dynamics which are embedded in the unorganised sector. Hence, women have to face different structures of vulnerabilities. Hence, these untold narratives have been observed through non verbal communication.

Interview : It is possible to gather insightful qualitative information about the viewpoints, experiences, and perceptions of women workers, employers, legislators, and other stakeholders by holding scheduled interviews with them. Hence, it can provide deep insights and knowledge about their everyday struggles. Their narrative has provided different nuances of everyday challenges.

Phenomenology : The German philosopher Edmund Husserl has given the term "phenomenology" (1859–1938). Within the framework of philosophical investigation, phenomenology developed in response to queries concerning the nature of perception, consciousness, and the connection between subjectivity and reality. It has been found a profound insight of the subjective realities, lived experiences of women in Delhi's informal sector—including their challenges, goals, and fortitude in the face of adversity—by utilizing the phenomenological technique. Hence, being a researcher can investigate the intricacies of lived experience of women. Furthermore, it can unpack the critical intersectionality of gender and challenges with respect to the informal sector. Hence, their lived experience consists of many elements such as the axis of power, agency and resistance.

Feminist Epistemology: A feminist epistemological paradigm, which prioritizes women's experiences, power matrix, voices, and agency in research, is one that anthropologists may choose to embrace. This method emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend how power dynamics, gender dynamics, and structural injustices affect women's lives and careers in Delhi's informal sector. In order to deconstruct gender norms and advance social justice, researchers that use feminist epistemology may place a high value on collaborative research partnerships, participatory methodologies, and the amplification of women's stories.

However, I have chosen four key anthropological research methods that would uncover the finely blended intricacies of challenges faced by women working in the unorganized sector. This would provide in-depth epistemologies of power dynamics, landscape of vulnerabilities, and lack of social protection. These methods would be able to elucidate grassroots epistemologies within the study area.

Discussion

Challenges faced by Women in the Unorganized Sector

Women working in the unorganized sector have a lack of sanitation facilities at their workplace. Due to these challenges they are vulnerable to chronic diseases. However, the absence of legal safeguards including guaranteed minimum wages, maternity benefits, and healthcare entitlements is common among women employed in the unorganized sector. They are thus exposed to a landscape of vulnerability which includes financial instability and exploitation. Women are more vulnerable to gender discrimination at their respective workplace. Hence, Gender discrimination is a common occurrence for women working in the unorganized sector, which leads to lower earnings, fewer job possibilities, and unsafe working conditions. Women in the unorganized sector face various vulnerabilities, including poverty, wage gaps, and restrictive gender norms, leading to uncertainty and instability in their lives. Furthermore, women working in the Unorganized sector have lack of access to basic education due to generational poverty, gender discrimination and socio-cultural background. However, Women working in the unorganized sector have a lack of skills which includes technological gap and soft skills.

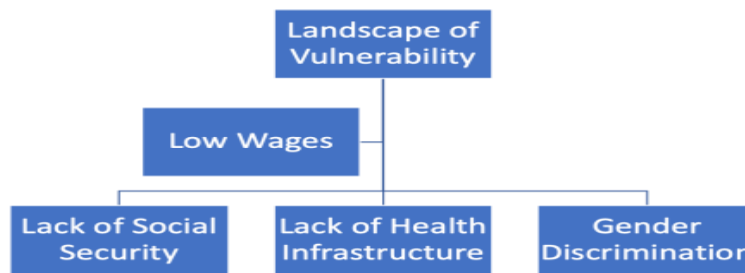
As feminist epistemology method has provided how power dynamics has influenced their everyday experience and decision making practice. Hence, their decision making practices have been influenced by male head of the family. However, their landscape of vulnerability has been created due to lack of education & technical skills and lack of social security which makes them empowered in the avenues of decision making process. Power dynamics of gendered landscape has played a crucial role in the everyday experience and decision making process. However, it has been found by intensive field work that social and cultural vulnerabilities have been created by structures of societies. There have been different kinds of reasons associated with restrictive gender norms. The underlying structure of patriarchy and gendered society influence at their workplace as well as home.

However, phenomenology of women has not been documented in the literature. Their lived experience of varied kinds of restrictive gender norms such as job choice restrictions, place based restrictions and timings restrictions has produced closed walled subjugated epistemology. Hence, their everyday experience has a tangible effect on their emotions which has not been documented.

However, ethnography has helped document their economic challenges, structural inequities, agency and resistance. It has been found that different layers of vulnerabilities have been created by society. This vulnerability poses different kinds of problems in their respective personal and professional lives. Their ontological turn in their everyday experience has produced different sets of challenges such as decision making dependency, in-access to resources and landscape of vulnerability such as exposure to risk and safety.

Additionally, it has been found that using these essential key methods have unfolded many nuances working women's challenges which includes gender discrimination, unequal pay, lack of social protection schemes.

Flowchart of Landscape of Vulnerability



Source : Created by Author

Anticipated Anthropological Insights

Intersectionality : Kimberlay Crenshaw(1980s era) coined the term intersectionality to understand the multiple edge sword of discrimination against women.The study is expected to shed light on how women's experiences in the unorganized sector are shaped by intersecting identities including gender, class, caste, and ethnicity, which affects their access to opportunities, resources, and social recognition.

Importance of Informal Networks :Anthropological investigation has the potential to reveal the importance of unofficial networks and camaraderie among female laborers, encompassing mutual aid schemes, group action tactics, and community-driven endeavors targeted at tackling shared predicaments.

An Epistemological Inquiry through lens of Anthropology Application

Social Policy Interventions: Anthropological insights can design the blueprint for policy suggestions. Hence, these social policies can address contemporary challenges such as working conditions, daily wages and education. However, the chosen methodology aims to uncover the intricacies of challenges faced by women in the unorganized sector. In conclusion, anthropological insights can serve as a major catalyst for designing policy interventions.

Strengthening Social Security

Because they frequently do not have access to basic social security benefits, women working in the unorganized sector are more susceptible to dangers to their health and finances. Comprehensive social security programs that cover health insurance, maternity benefits, pension plans, and unemployment benefits must be put into place. We can give these women a safety net that improves their general well-being and helps them get through times of economic difficulty by making sure they have access to financial support when they need it.

Improving Training and Education

Access to education and training is essential for empowering women and enhancing their economic opportunities. Women in the unorganized sector can benefit from specialized training programs designed to meet their requirements by improving and gaining new skills that will open up work prospects and increase pay. These programs should ensure that women have the skills necessary to succeed in a variety of occupations by covering a wide range of subjects, from advanced vocational training to basic literacy and numeracy.

Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure

Women working in the unorganized sector are disproportionately affected by the lack of proper healthcare infrastructure and facilities. It is imperative to upgrade medical facilities and make sure that these women

can access them. This includes expanding the number of primary health centers, offering mobile clinics, and guaranteeing the reasonable cost of healthcare services. In addition, particular attention should be paid to preventative healthcare practices including routine physicals and immunizations, as well as maternity and child health services.

Encouraging Inclusivity and Gender Equality

Establishing an environment in the workplace where women can promote gender equality and inclusivity. In order to guarantee that women have equal opportunities for progress and fair treatment, policies should be put in place to avoid discrimination and harassment.

Promoting Interaction Amongst Stakeholders

Addressing the problems faced by women in the unorganized sector requires effective cooperation between a range of parties, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, employers, and employees. Establishing forums for communication and collaboration can aid in the creation of programs and policies that are sensitive to these women's real needs. It is possible to guarantee that the concerns and opinions of female employees are taken into consideration by holding frequent consultations and feedback sessions.

Establishment of Skills Center

Establishing skill centers in each district is advised to guarantee that women always have access to chances for skill development. These facilities ought to provide a wide range of training courses and programs to meet the various demands of women working in the unorganized sector. By offering customized training programs, these centers can assist women in improving their employability and adjusting to the needs of a changing labor market.

Creation of Job Opportunities in Every District

One of the most important ways to lower the obstacles to employment for women is to create jobs near to where they reside. The main goal of policy should be to persuade regional companies and sectors to employ women from the unorganized sector. Companies that encourage female employment and provide flexible work schedules that take into account.

Empowerment Initiative : Thorough use of methodologies such as ethnographic fieldwork, observation, in-depth interviews, phenomenology, and feminist epistemology can uncover the ground reality and core truths. These key methods enable understanding of the aspirations, challenges, and respective needs of women working in the unorganized sector. Additionally, anthropological investigations can provide a holistic spectrum of empowerment initiatives such as skill development programs, access to microfinance, and leadership training. These initiatives can bring about change in their lives.

Therefore, I propose the following initiatives at various locations in Delhi, India: Capacity Building, Empowerment, and Problem Technique. This approach would make them more self-reliant, enhancing their purchasing power parity.

Explanation of the Technique:

Capacity Building: Anthropological investigation uncovers many challenges faced by women. Hence,

capacity building programmes such as Entrepreneurship training, education and literacy training, literacy workshop to the beneficiaries. Hence this initiative would make them empowered and self-reliant.

Empowerment: Empowerment entails giving people the ability to take charge of their lives, make wise choices, and act to transform their positionality. Hence, empowerment can be achieved through many instruments of initiatives such as leadership programs, access to resources, and social support networks.

Problem Solving: Systematic approaches to locating, evaluating, and resolving difficulties or problems are known as problem-solving procedures. Hence, initiating Participatory problem-solving workshops, action research, and community-based problem-solving initiatives would enhance problem-solving ability. These initiatives would lead to the journey of women empowerment.

Advocacy & creating awareness among people: Within Delhi's unorganized sector, anthropological research can support advocacy campaigns that support labor rights, challenge gender inequity, and advance social justice objectives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through immersive ethnographic fieldwork, feminist epistemology, phenomenology, observation and interview, this anthropological investigation aims to shed light on the respective challenges and strengths of women working in Delhi's unorganized sector. Gender discrimination in their respective professions reproduces a landscape of pay gap, lack of social security, lack of education and many other associated elements. It provides policy intervention for women. However, anthropological investigation can fetch grassroots epistemologies which include the power dynamics, positionality, and grassroots coarse truth.

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