



# Patriarchal Inclination Being An Impediment To Gender Equality And Women Welfare:

Special reference to workplace inequality among unskilled labor force in Chennai

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## ABSTRACT

India has been exhibiting a rather promising and trend setting growth trajectory for all the nations across the globe over the past few years. The technological and scientific advancements are off the roof and portends a favorable environment for India in all respect. The growth centric plans of the Indian economy are supposedly effective but only for the upper echelons of the nations. Celebrating the achievements also calls for looking at the inadequacies and filling in the gaps. Among the oppressed the women have been the most substantially affected in terms of social and cultural imbalances. There is no denial of the fact that there has been a colossal evolution of the condition of women from what it was 20 or 30 years ago. But this growth has been showing signs of falter since the past few years where the policies have become presumptuous of already attaining its goals of equality and development. The main cause for the dwindling development can be rooted to the patriarchal norms and gender inequalities still existent in the contemporary era of egalitarianism. With much efforts put in to bring women out of the shackles of the household chores and drudgery, the quest to make them independent in all respect is still an ongoing one when it comes to education and employment. Women frequently experience disparity and inequality in workplaces in the form of pay scale differences, delayed promotions, sexual harassments etc. This article is an attempt to critically analyze how male dominance and supremacy has played a crucial role in staggering the growth of women in various spheres of life even with innumerable schemes and policies adopted for their progress

**Key Words:** Patriarchy, inequality, unskilled, gender gap and women empowerment.

## INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy may be simply defined as a structure or a system which gives more prominence or weightage to the male figures, naturally leading to the condescension of the other genders patronizing them in all domains. This practice of obstinate bigotry or misogyny could have been rubber-stamped in the early eras where men were out, supposedly hunting food for the family while women stayed at home taking care of the other members and cooked for them. But in this 21<sup>st</sup> century it's an absolute ignominy to still beguile the women into believing that the household chores are still their liability to be borne.

Women empowerment cannot be truly achieved until and unless this prejudice comes to a standstill and the governing bodies take huge steps in pushing the undermined communities to the forefront. As per the reports of the World Bank, only close to 50 per cent of the women are employed in the formal sectors where as almost above 80 per cent of the men are prevailing in the same sector. Simultaneously women also have to go through the constant struggles to get hikes or promotions compared to their male compeers' hand in hand with the high levels of competitions.

As a result of this conventional institution still being put into use by many of the leading giants in the market, women impetuously jump-on into the jobs in the informal sector where the competition is very less, so is the pay and other benefits. As per the reports of the International Labor Organization, around 82 per cent of the women population in the Indian labor markets are still chained in the informal sector. Deprived of the basic pay or any other allowances a huge proportion of these female workers have to at times do the same jobs that men do, at an abruptly lesser wage.

A primary inducement to this condition of the women may be traced back to the fact that most of the girls are deprived of basic education mostly in the rural areas and are taught that their only aim in life should be to get married to a man and take good care of the family. Educated women reach heights. The government should accept that it's their fundamental duty to ensure all the children irrespective of their gender are brought into the formal schooling systems and provided with basic education. It also calls for an extra effort to induce the female children to enroll into schools and get as far as they wish to in attaining knowledge.

There can be equivalent efforts put in to educate the men and male children that they should always ensure that fair and non-discriminatory opportunities are given to all people regardless of their gender. This issue becomes a very complicated one to tackle down because it calls for a complete social and psychological remodeling of the mindsets of the people that just policies and programs won't suffice. No matter how much funding goes into addressing this issue, it won't mend this primitive condition as long as the people as a whole decide to bring about a change. This paper is an effort to analyze the existence of patriarchy in the informal sector and scrutinize the reasons leading to the same.

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

**T. Adisa (2019)** stated that women's aspirations to achieve work life equality are often frustrated by: (a) the male dominance and excessive subordination of females, (b) domestic and gender-based division of labor, and (c) higher patriarchal proclivities among men. The strongly patriarchal mindset among men does not only pose huge difficulties for women in terms of achieving work life balance, but also portrays women as passive recipients of gender inequality. At the intersection of work and non-work obligations, while men focus more on their work duties and do almost nothing at home in terms of domestic work, women participate fully and actively in both aspects of life. Women are traditionally expected to look after the home, including any care responsibilities therein. This is an ideological tool of patriarchy, which makes the achievement of work life balance difficult, particularly for working women. The mindset of men,

concerning role distribution in the family is gender-biased.

**Diwan, Ischac et al. (2017)** have argued that education has a triple effect: it encourages female labor force participation because of the larger income that skills command; it leads to a reduction in the level of patriarchal values held by the woman, reducing her dis-utility of working outside the home; and it improves her bargaining power, which is important in countries where the variance of cultural values held by citizens is large, particularly along educational and generational lines. They have also found that economic structure matters, especially the size of the civil service and that an expansion of work opportunity for women that leads to higher wages allows women to negotiate their participation much more.

**Tabassum Naznin et al. (2021)**, elucidated that many gender-related barriers and biases have declined over the years but gender stereotypes continue to create problems in the progress of women's careers. The availability of opportunities for the career progressions of women continues to be negatively affected by gender stereotypes. The World Economic Forum (2017) suggested that an average gender gap of 32.0 per cent existed in four areas, namely, 'Economic Participation and Opportunity', 'Educational Attainment', 'Health and Survival' and 'Political Empowerment'. Women continue to experience high levels of pressure from their jobs, and they have been found to experience high levels of mental ill-health when they utilize an interpersonally oriented leadership style in male-dominated industries.

Gender-specific behavior demotivates and demoralizes women in the workplace. In organizational settings, negative beliefs about women's performance or efficacy may damage their aspiration for career advancement. Gender stereotyping owes its origin to the gendered division of labour whereby the means of production and distribution is controlled by men within a patriarchal social, economic and cultural structure. The way people are brought up, causes stereotypes. It could be difficult to change stereotyped thinking which is embedded from childhood. Women are perceived due to stereotypical expectation as incapable of being successful when they do manly work. When women do in fact succeed, disconfirming the stereotype, evaluators tend to devalue women's performance by interpreting the same behaviour differently depending upon who the actor is.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For centuries women have been subjected to unequal treatment and disparaging conduct from the ostensibly superior gender – male. This has not just led to men looking down on the women but also women detesting themselves for coming out of the vicious circle of stereotyping. The social stigma of women taking care of her family has been preserved and spread across over the years, creating a sense of guilt for the women who start achieving milestones in their professional lives that they have succeeded at the cost of their family. But this is the scenario with the educated or women employed in the white-collar sector.

The condition of the women in the informal sector is a different sphere altogether. Most of them would have ended up doing the jobs in these sectors due to financial stress in the family or due to lack of education to function in the organized sector. But how have the patriarchal norms affected the condition of women in the informal sector? Do the women employed in the informal sector feel that they have equal rights as their male coevals? Most of the formal sectors calls for a platform where the women are treated with equality and dignity and it's ensured that the women know their rights and entitlements. But the major challenge when it comes to the informal sector is that most of these women are exploited by keeping them ignorant about their prerogatives.

Through this paper the main issues faced by women in the informal sector especially due to the patriarchal norms existing in the workplaces are to be investigated upon.

## OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the paper are as follows:

- To critically analyze the plight of women and the factors steering gender inequality in the informal sectors with main emphasis on patriarchy and misogyny.
- To suggest action plans to be established so as to eradicate the male chauvinistic milieu in the workplaces and boost women participation in the labor force.

## METHODOLOGY

The research will focus on individuals in Chennai and adopt both qualitative and quantitative methodology. A thorough investigation through a combination of a structured online survey and face-to-face interviews with participants will be conducted to attain scrupulous results. To ensure inclusivity in the chosen sample, both online and offline approaches will be utilized. The offline method aims to reach individuals who may lack access to online platforms. The collected responses will be organized, analyzed, and interpreted to draw conclusions. The survey instrument, a questionnaire, is tailored to collect data on participants' demographic and psychographic profiles, encompassing details like name, age, gender, education, and occupation. Furthermore, secondary data will be gathered from diverse sources such as academic journals, newspapers, annual reports, and online repositories. The focus group of the study would be women belonging to the age bracket 25- 55 working in the informal sectors in the Chennai region.

Furthermore, a hypothesis would be instituted to understand if there exists any relation between the patriarchal norms and the condition of women in the informal sector.

**NULL HYPOTHESIS (H0):** There is no significant relation between patriarchal milieu and the working atmosphere of women in the informal sector.

**ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS (H1):** There is significant relation between patriarchal milieu and the working atmosphere of women in the informal sector.

## MODEL DESCRIPTION

As per a report published by the International Labor Organization (ILO), 82 per cent of the women in India are employed in the informal sector which is slightly higher than the proportion of men working in the aforementioned sector. This implies that there is a higher proportion of women who have lesser scope of binding a safe future for themselves and their families due to lack of pension or any social security schemes. It also throws light into the fact that there is high probability that a substantial number of elderly women will end in a worse situation than the elderly men.

Women are presumed to be the natural caregivers whereas men are taken to be the breadwinners. This social stigma has kept women from coming out of their homes and building names and dignity for themselves for centuries. But when they finally started stepping out of their homes, they got caught up in the circle of the informal work, paying them less wages and giving them low security. This meant that in spite of working and earning, most of the women were still subjected to discrimination and stagnation due to almost no labor laws or protection against harassment in the informal sectors.

The major informal sectors where women are employed include the roadside vendors, ragpickers, agrarians, housemaids, construction workers etc. But most of the Indian households are still strongly devoted to the idea that the sole responsibility of the household chores still rests with the women alone, which doubles up the burden on them to go out and seek a respected job after fulfilling the humongous household scutwork. Even in the informal sector the quantum of harassment both physical and mental, that the women have to go through are overwhelming. Due to lack of education these women suffer in silence to weave a better future for their children. Most of the women employed in the informal sector rarely thinks about their future existence. The save up money to get their kids married and most of them had no answers to how they plan on living once they get old and were not able to work.

The extensive informal sector within the nation significantly aids its progress, yet it grapples with numerous issues including the absence of formalized service regulations, wage structures, and limited prospects for career progression. Moreover, a striking statistic reveals that approximately 94% of female workers in India are engaged in the informal sector, where they encounter gender bias—a disparity largely absent in formal employment settings.

The informal sector serves as a readily accessible source of income for unskilled and inexperienced women across our nation. Many women persist in their current roles or within the same type of work due to a lack of awareness regarding better alternatives, or often due to a reluctance to transition from their familiar environment to an entirely new field. The majority of these women engage in such work to supplement their family's income, with only a small fraction relying solely on this occupation for their livelihood.

## RESULT ANALYSIS

The study was carried out among 30 women working in the informal sector to gather extensive information on their type of job, level of satisfaction, the obstacles they have to face, the level of job security etc. The results derived were already anticipated from what the literature review had already suggested.

The majority of the respondents (70 per cent) agreed that they have taken up the work because they were unable to find any other work to support their families. This means that most of the women working in the informal sector were working forcefully or without any interest due to their financial conditions.

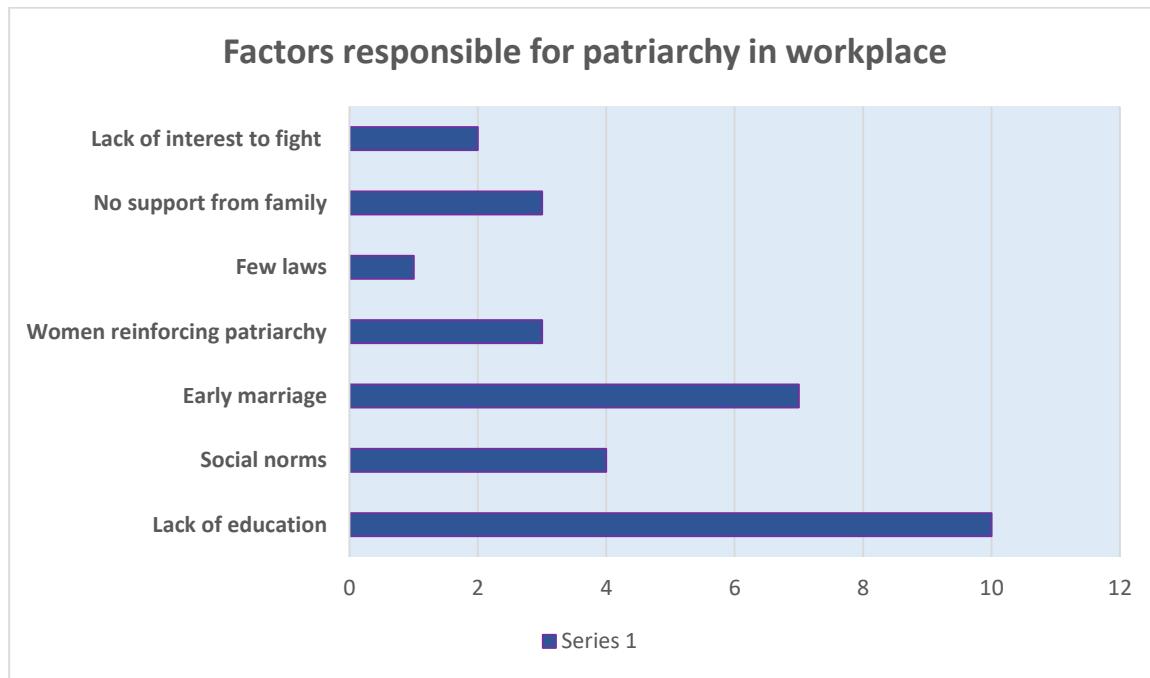
Lack of education was a major factor for these women to end up in the informal sectors. 82 per cent of the women haven't passed higher secondary. A major reason of this outcome was pointed to the fact that their parents decided to send their sons to schools and get them educated. Some of the respondents also pointed out to the fact that they got married at a very early age when they were unaware of the importance of education or a job.

When asked if they will send their daughters to schools a very major proportion (98%) of the respondents replied that they will utilize maximum of their potential to get all their children educated so that they have a better future and put an end to this poverty trap.

The women were paid painstakingly low wages which were just enough to maintain their daily sustenance. 60 per cent of the women felt that men involved in similar work were paid extra due to their gender dominance. Most of the women hadn't even thought about how they were planning on spending their old age once they were unable to work. There was very less to no savings for most of the women which made it impossible for them have a secure future or deal with any contingencies.

In addition to this, most of the women were unaware of the fact that there are organizations and programs functioning to empower the lives of the working women in the informal sector. But unfortunately, the preponderance of women hardly knew about this and had already adjusted to the chauvinistic system that was already in place. It seemed as if they had come in terms with the reality and that nothing would change it no matter what. What was disturbing was the fact that some women themselves thought that it is better to stay submissive to the men in workplaces so that they could work, earn and return to their households even if that meant lesser pay for the same work or facing sexual, physical and verbal harassment at workplace, which close to 4 per cent of the sample had already been through.

The women were given a set of factors from which they were asked to rank the in order which they felt was the primary reason which led to dominance of men in the workplaces- ( 1 being the prime most factor holding responsibility for the same and 5 being the least responsible factor). The results derived were as follows.



**Source: Primary Data**

Majority of the women ranked lack of education as the primary reason why they had to suffer in silence in the workplaces. They were scared that any voice raised against the system would result in the losing of their jobs and the lack of education or any skill set would end up in them not finding any other jobs resulting in poverty.

Early marriage and the related responsibilities were ranked the second. Since most of the respondents got married very early, they were unable to recognize their passion or field of interest and were over burdened with the household chores too soon. Now that the financial conditions of their families were at stake, they had no choice but to work at a place where they weren't comfortable and get paid the bare minimum to sustain themselves and their family.

The existence of social norms and women themselves reinforcing patriarchy were ranked together. The respondents felt that there is no use fighting because the society will always favour men and their dominance no matter what. Even some of the other women aren't supportive of their co workers and they reinforce the fact that men are supposed to be the leaders and women the follower.

No support from the family was ranked next. The respondents felt that the family members were least bothered about the sufferings that they have to go through at the workplaces and are only concerned about

the money that feeds the family. Hence, they were willing to work in the informal sectors in order to keep supporting the family.

Most of the women already got adjusted to the existing system and hence doesn't want to fight against the injustice they face. They were willing to suffer in silence than to raise their voice and get kicked of the job. Since anyone can be easily replaced in the informal sectors, these women scared that it would happen to them too.

## HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Salary>Equality * Does Patriarchy affect workplace equality	30	100.0%	0	0.0%	30	100.0%

Salary>Equality \* Does Patriarchy affect workplace equality Crosstabulation

		Does Patriarchy affect workplace equality		Total
		yes	no	
Salary>Equality	yes	Count	21	21
		Expected Count	18.2	21.0
	no	Count	5	9
		Expected Count	7.8	9.0
Total		Count	26	30
		Expected Count	26.0	30.0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.769 <sup>a</sup>	1	.001		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	7.266	1	.007		
Likelihood Ratio	11.195	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.005	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.410	1	.001		
N of Valid Cases	30				

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.20.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

## ANALYSIS

The Chi square test is a non-parametric test which determines whether there is an association between the categorical variables.

In the given table the asymptotic significance or the P value is 0.001 which is lower than the level of significance (0.05). Thereby the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that even though the women feel there exists patriarchy in their work places they are forced to continue work because they need the salaries to support their financial circumstances. To put it in other way, they are willing to go through inequality and gender biases at work place if they are able to earn money at the end of the day.

Hence this proves that patriarchy indeed acts as an impediment to women empowerment.

## LIMITATIONS

- a) The findings are entirely based on the research conducted in Chennai and hence may not be a representative value for any other region.
- b) The sample size of 30 is very small compared to the population. Hence the results may not be representative of the population.
- c) Due to financial and time constraints certain topics have not been touched restricting the in-depth analysis of the study.

## SUGGESTIONS

Educating the girl child is the first and foremost option to tackle the problem of women retrogression. This not only helps in empowering them to stand up for themselves and fight for their rights, it also aids in building skills and prowess for them to settle in jobs with more security and legal backup. It means that women won't have to suffer in silence anymore and go through gender discrimination at workplaces.

More labor laws for women working in the informal sector needs to be instituted and should be put to practice to safeguard them from being exploited at workplaces. In spite of many labor laws already existing, it is a shame that working women have to still go through several atrocities at work places. It shows that these laws were just created for name-sake and discloses the failure in applying the laws into practice and actually contributing to empowering women.

Empowering women by educating men. If any woman feels threatened at her workplace it means that she doesn't feel secure with the people around her. Hence the change can be initiated by educating the men on what is the code of conduct in the workplaces (especially in the informal sector). Everyone needs to know how to treat a woman in a workplace and understand her boundaries. This can be attained by equally educating both men (on respecting the boundaries of women) and women (to understand the rights they are entitled to in the workplaces).

The next important recommendation is for the family members to be supportive of the mental health of the working women, particularly in the informal sector. Pouring the financial stress and pressure onto the shoulders of the women would numb them from reacting to the atrocities at workplace for the sake of earning an income to support their families. Families need to be considerate about the mental state of the working women particularly in the informal sector and be accommodating.

Spreading awareness is the next key stratagem to keep the working women well-informed above the working conditions and the rights they are entitled to at workplaces. This means any updates made in the existing laws any new rules or policies framed for any particular community should be outspread to the target parties.

## CONCLUSION

Even though the government has initiated schemes to elevate the condition of the working women in the informal sector it has not yet reached to the root levels, where the women are still ignorant about the policies existing for them. Even though India is accomplishing in many a field, they cannot be truthfully called a success unless all the communities benefit from such development. Women have been suffering from the earlier times but if they are still scared or doesn't feel safe outside the four walls of their house, no growth can be indubitably accounted for as developing the nation.

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