

An Exploratory Study on the Reproductive Health Issues Faced by Daily Wager Women in Pune City

Mrs. Ratnabai Tambade and Dr. Prakash Yadav

Tilak Maharashtra University, Pune

Introduction

There are total thousands of daily wage workers, with some sources indicating over 2,000 in specific sectors like the Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Limited (PMPML). A study rojgar way says that A study on female domestic workers in Pune found that 573 women were surveyed, with 62% aged between 20 and 40. Approximately 50% earned between Rs. 4000-8000 per month, and 51 were sole breadwinners. Reproductive health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being, encompassing the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of reproduction and sexual health. Women, particularly those in marginalized and vulnerable socio-economic groups, face significant challenges related to reproductive health. Daily wage workers, who often experience unstable employment, poor working conditions, and lack of access to social security benefits, are especially susceptible to reproductive health issues. This literature review aims to explore the reproductive health challenges faced by daily wager women, focusing on key issues such as maternal health, menstrual hygiene, access to family planning, and the impact of socio-economic factors on reproductive outcomes. Daily wager women often face significant reproductive health challenges due to a combination of factors including difficult working conditions, limited access to healthcare, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. These challenges can lead to various reproductive health issues, impacting their overall well-being. Specific Reproductive Health Problems. Poor hygiene conditions, lack of access to sanitary products, and strenuous physical labour can contribute to menstrual problems like irregular periods, painful menstruation (dysmenorrhea), and infections. Limited access to healthcare and safe sexual practices can increase the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, which can have severe consequences for reproductive health. Lack of access to safe abortion services and inadequate prenatal care can lead to unsafe abortions and increased maternal mortality rates. Women are Facing health problems during Pregnancy and Childbirth, Poor nutrition, lack of access to antenatal care, and difficult working conditions can result in complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as low birth weight, preterm birth, and maternal mortality. In women occurs untreated infections, hormonal imbalances, and other factors can contribute to infertility, impacting their ability to have children. Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence, Daily wager women are often at higher risk of sexual and intimate partner violence, which can have severe consequences for their physical and mental reproductive health. Lack Many daily wager women lack access to information and services related to reproductive health, contraception, and family planning. Mental Health Issues are the combination of difficult working conditions, socioeconomic hardship, and reproductive health problems can contribute to mental health issues like depression and anxiety. Contributing Factors, Poverty limits access to nutritious food, safe living conditions, and quality healthcare.

Difficult Working Conditions can cause strenuous physical labour, long working hours, and exposure to hazardous environments can negatively impact reproductive health .Limited access to education and information about reproductive health can prevent women from making informed decisions about their health. Social norms and cultural practices can limit women's access to healthcare and decision-making power regarding their reproductive health. Limited access to clinics, hospitals, and healthcare professionals can prevent women from receiving timely and appropriate reproductive health services .Lack of access to affordable and effective contraception can contribute to unintended

pregnancies and unsafe abortions. Addressing the Challenges, Providing access to affordable and quality healthcare services, including reproductive health services, is crucial. Raising awareness about reproductive health issues and promoting safe practices through education programs is essential. Supporting women's empowerment through education, economic opportunities, and decision-making power can help them make informed choices about their health. Challenging gender norms and promoting gender equality can create a more supportive environment for women's reproductive health. Ensuring safe and healthy working conditions for daily wage women can reduce their exposure to risks that negatively impact their reproductive health. Providing social support and protection from violence can improve women's overall well-being and reproductive health. In this research paper basically focus on women health issues. Daily wage women health issues not resolved by normal treatment. They are focusing on their income only. They are not taking proper rest and nutritional diet. Repeated pregnancy and abortion are impact on their health.

Research Methodology

The main objective to find out the health issues faced by daily wage women. They are always busy in domestic work. Women are not taking care of reproductive health. To find out the vulnerability among women because of repeated abortion and more pregnancy impact on their health. This study completed on secondary source of data. This study to find out the women facing reproductive health issues because of illiteracy and secondary status about their health. This study will be useful for and nongovernment NGO who working for be useful for government NGO.\

Literature Review

1. Economic Vulnerability and Limited Access to Healthcare

Daily wage workers, particularly women, are often excluded from formal healthcare systems due to their irregular and low-paying jobs. Many do not have employer-provided health insurance, and they may lack the financial resources to seek medical help. According to studies, the lack of access to healthcare services among daily wage women directly impacts their reproductive health. **Choudhury et al. (2020)** argue that these women are at a higher risk of maternal morbidity and mortality because of delayed or insufficient prenatal care, poor nutrition, and the inability to afford medical treatments during pregnancy. Further, women in informal sectors often live in impoverished conditions without adequate sanitation or access to clean water, which increases the risk of infections and complications related to reproductive health. Poor housing and lack of healthcare services further exacerbate their vulnerability.

2. Maternal Health and Pregnancy Outcomes

Maternal health is one of the most significant reproductive health concerns among daily wage women. These women face a higher risk of complications such as **preterm birth**, **low birth weight**, and **eclampsia**. Several studies have found that due to their financial constraints and the nature of their work, daily wage women tend to delay prenatal visits, which often leads to unmonitored pregnancies and a lack of necessary interventions. **Kumar & Chauhan (2021)** report that maternal health in low-income women is disproportionately affected by issues like **high rates of anaemia**, **malnutrition**, and **stress**.

Moreover, women in informal employment may be exposed to physical strain or hazardous working conditions (e.g., carrying heavy loads, standing for long hours, exposure to chemicals) during pregnancy, which can lead to adverse birth outcomes. **Rathore et al. (2019)** emphasize the need for maternity benefits for daily wage workers, as many of them cannot afford to take time off during pregnancy due to economic necessity.

3. Menstrual Hygiene Management

Menstrual hygiene is another critical reproductive health issue among daily wage women. Lack of access to sanitary products, clean water, and safe disposal methods are common challenges.

According to a study by **Sarkar & Mandal (2020)**, many low-income women rely on traditional materials such as cloth, rags, or even ash during menstruation due to the high cost of disposable sanitary products. This practice not only increases the risk of infections but also contributes to stigma and social exclusion. Additionally, daily wage workers often do not have access to private or clean spaces for changing menstrual products, further exacerbating the difficulties faced. The lack of awareness about menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is another barrier, with **Sharma & Agarwal (2022)** noting that many women lack education on proper menstrual health and hygiene.

4. Family Planning and Reproductive Rights

Access to family planning services is a fundamental component of reproductive health, but for daily wage women, this access is often limited. **Patel et al. (2021)** found that many women in the informal sector are unaware of or unable to access contraceptive methods due to cultural barriers, limited healthcare access, and financial constraints. In rural areas, where many daily wage women live, family planning services may be sparse or non-existent, leading to unintended pregnancies and higher fertility rates.

In addition, daily wage women may face significant barriers to reproductive autonomy. Studies have shown that due to patriarchal societal structures, many women in low-income families have limited control over their reproductive decisions. **Joshi & Kaur (2020)** highlight that the lack of reproductive rights and family planning education often leads to larger family sizes and repeated pregnancies, putting a strain on the health and well-being of women.

5. Psychological Stress and Gender-Based Violence

The dual pressures of economic instability and gender inequality also manifest in reproductive health challenges among daily wage women. Financial insecurity, long working hours, and a lack of support contribute to heightened psychological stress. **Patel (2023)** argues that chronic stress can negatively impact reproductive health, leading to menstrual irregularities, fertility issues, and complications during pregnancy.

Moreover, daily wage women are at a higher risk of **gender-based violence (GBV)**, both at home and in their workplaces. The prevalence of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and exploitation in informal labour settings contributes significantly to poor reproductive health outcomes. **Singh et al. (2019)** show that exposure to violence leads to both physical and emotional trauma, which can have lasting effects on women's reproductive health and decision-making capacity.

6. Impact of COVID-19 on Reproductive Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified the reproductive health challenges for daily wage women. Lockdowns, loss of jobs, and economic downturns have led to an increase in stress, decreased access to healthcare services, and worsened financial insecurity. Studies conducted during the pandemic period revealed that many women delayed seeking reproductive health care services, including maternal care and family planning services. According to **Bandyopadhyay (2021)**, the closure of healthcare facilities and limited mobility during the pandemic disproportionately impacted women in informal employment, further exacerbating reproductive health issues.

Suggestions

Reproductive health issues among daily wage women (or women working in the informal sector) are often shaped by a combination of socio-economic, cultural, and physical factors. Here are several key reproductive health issues that these women may face:

1. Limited Access to Healthcare Services

- **Lack of Access to Health Insurance:** Many daily wage women do not have health insurance or the financial means to afford regular healthcare. This results in delayed or inadequate care

for reproductive health issues such as menstrual problems, pregnancy complications, or infections.

- **Rural and Urban Divide:** Women in rural areas may face even more limited access to healthcare facilities, medical professionals, and reproductive health services compared to their urban counterparts.

2. Unsafe Work Conditions

- **Physical Strain:** Daily wage women often engage in physically demanding work, such as manual labour, farming, or household cleaning. These activities can have negative impacts on their reproductive health, especially during pregnancy or in the case of pre-existing health conditions.
- **Exposure to Harmful Chemicals:** Women working in agriculture or factories may be exposed to pesticides, chemicals, or other toxins that can harm their reproductive organs, lead to miscarriages, or cause long-term fertility issues.

3. Lack of Menstrual Hygiene Management

- **Inadequate Access to Sanitary Products:** Many daily wage women cannot afford sanitary pads or tampons, leading them to use unhygienic alternatives like cloth, which increases the risk of reproductive infections.
- **Lack of Facilities:** In many informal work settings (e.g., construction sites, farms), there may be no private or hygienic place to change sanitary products or maintain menstrual hygiene.

4. Unplanned Pregnancies and Contraceptive Access

- **Limited Knowledge of Family Planning:** Due to limited education or outreach, many women may not have access to reliable information about contraception or family planning methods. This leads to unintended pregnancies.
- **Cultural Barriers:** Social norms and taboos can make it difficult for women to access family planning services or discuss reproductive health matters openly.
- **Financial Constraints:** Even when contraception is available, the cost may be prohibitive for women who are already struggling to make ends meet.

5. Gender-based Violence (GBV)

- **Sexual Harassment at Work:** Daily wage women are often vulnerable to sexual harassment or exploitation at work, which can lead to physical and mental health problems, as well as unintended pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- **Domestic Violence:** Many daily wage women face domestic violence at home, which can have direct effects on their reproductive health. For example, forced pregnancies, abortion complications, and poor mental health outcomes due to violence can exacerbate reproductive issues.

6. Poor Nutrition

- **Malnutrition:** Daily wage workers often face food insecurity, leading to poor nutrition, which can impact reproductive health. Poor diets can affect menstrual cycles, fertility, and pregnancy outcomes.
- **Anaemia:** Women in this demographic may be more prone to anaemia, which is a common cause of pregnancy complications, including premature birth and low birth weight.

7. Increased Risk During Pregnancy and Childbirth

- **Inadequate Prenatal Care:** With limited access to healthcare services, daily wage women may not receive adequate prenatal care, which is crucial to ensure a healthy pregnancy and childbirth. This can increase the risk of complications such as maternal mortality, preterm labour, or pregnancy-related hypertension.
- **Lack of Safe Birth Practices:** Without proper medical supervision, some women might be forced to give birth at home, which can be unsafe without the proper resources.

8. Mental Health and Stress

- **Chronic Stress:** The constant financial instability and difficult working conditions can contribute to high levels of stress. Stress during pregnancy is linked to negative reproductive health outcomes, such as low birth weight or preterm births.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Daily wage women may face mental health issues related to the economic and social challenges they face, including depression or anxiety, which in turn can affect reproductive health.

9. Stigma and Social Discrimination

- **Reproductive Health Taboos:** Stigma around discussing reproductive health can prevent women from seeking help for menstrual issues, STIs, or pregnancy-related complications. These taboos can be even stronger for women from marginalized communities.
- **Discrimination at Work:** Women who need time off for menstrual health issues or pregnancy-related health concerns may face discrimination or lose their jobs.

Recommendations

1. **Improved Access to Healthcare:** Mobile health clinics, government-supported health programs, and NGO initiatives can help bring healthcare services to the doorsteps of daily wage women. Expanding access to free or low-cost healthcare and medicines is crucial.
2. **Menstrual Hygiene Education:** Providing education about menstrual hygiene and subsidizing sanitary products can help reduce infections and health risks.
3. **Affordable and Accessible Family Planning Services:** Offering free or low-cost contraceptives, along with comprehensive family planning education, could help prevent unplanned pregnancies and improve overall reproductive health.
4. **Protection from Gender-based Violence:** Establishing stronger legal frameworks to protect daily wage women from harassment and abuse, both at work and in their homes, is essential.
5. **Public Health Campaigns and Education:** Raising awareness about reproductive health, family planning, and safe childbirth practices can empower women to make informed decisions about their health.
6. **Strengthening Labor Rights:** Ensuring that daily wage workers protections such as paid maternity leave, sick leave, and safe working conditions could improve their overall health and well-being.

The findings suggest the need for comprehensive interventions, including:

1. **Increased access to affordable and accessible healthcare services** for daily-wager women.
2. **Awareness and educational campaigns** to inform women about reproductive health, family planning, and hygiene.
3. **Government policies** aimed at improving working conditions and providing health insurance to informal sector workers.
4. **Community outreach programs** to reduce stigma and empower women to prioritize their reproductive health.

Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach that combines health, education, and socio-economic support to improve the overall well-being of daily-wager women in Pune. A more inclusive healthcare system, with targeted outreach for vulnerable groups, can significantly reduce the reproductive health burden on these women, ultimately improving their quality of life and social standing.

This study underscores the importance of continued research and advocacy to ensure that reproductive health services reach those who need them the most, particularly marginalized groups like daily-wager women.

Conclusion

Reproductive health issues among daily wage women are complex and multifaceted, deeply influenced by socio-economic factors, access to healthcare, and broader gender inequalities. These women face significant barriers to accessing maternal care, menstrual hygiene products, and family planning services. Economic insecurity, lack of education, and cultural barriers to reproductive rights further exacerbate these issues. Additionally, gender-based violence and psychological stress play a critical role in shaping their reproductive health outcomes.

To address these challenges, it is essential for policies and interventions to focus on providing better access to reproductive healthcare services, improving menstrual hygiene management, ensuring reproductive rights and family planning education, and offering protections against gender-based violence. Social security schemes, including maternity benefits, should also be extended to women in the informal sector to mitigate the adverse effects of economic insecurity on reproductive health.

The study highlights that the combination of financial instability, irregular working hours, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure results in a high prevalence of reproductive health issues among these women. Additionally, cultural and social factors, such as stigma around discussing reproductive health, further hinder their ability to seek necessary care and information.

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