

Exploring Gender Dynamics in Idol Making: Visualising Approach to Identity Formation among Female Idolmakers of Kumartuli through Intersection of Sexual Division of Labour and Emotional Labor

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Abstract: The aroma of wet clay from Hooghly River, the crackling of dried straws beneath your feet, the crisscrossed patterns of bamboos laid out within the narrow confined ramshackle, along with processes of eight-by-eight studios blend seamlessly to create the traditional homes of artisans where goddess Durga takes birth. The neighborhood of Kumartuli, famed for its processes of idol making, has been traditionally a caste-homogenous, male-dominated industry where females of this cluster were mainly assigned roles of 'supportive character' in the processual of idol making at varied workshops within the neighborhood.

This paper tries to explore the gender dynamics among the idol making community of Kumartuli. Drawing on concepts of 'emotional labor' alongside 'cultural capital', this paper aims to explore the dimension of 'sexual division of labor' among the aforementioned community and how the female idol makers navigate their way towards unique individuality, through the intersection of emotional labor and sexual division of labor amidst intermingling of numerous dynamic realities. This paper through certain cases recorded through qualitative proposition of unstructured interactions, tries to understand how female idol makers steer their roles within traditional male-dominated craft by projecting varied cases of lived in experiences on aspectual of spatial organization related to workspace contiguous with household and social capital derived from caste homogeneity, thus ultimately exploring the proposition of identity formation among female idol makers in the neighborhood. The research finally highlights how, in order to create their identities and claim their cultural legitimacy in a profession dominated by men, female idol makers in Kumartuli must negotiate the confluence of sexual division of labor, and emotional labor amidst the unique spatial dynamics determined by the processes of caste homogeneity.

Keywords: Caste Homogeneity, Emotional Labor, Identity Formation, Lived in Experiences, Sexual Division of Labor, Social Capital, Spatial Organization, Unstructured Interactions.

Introduction

Kumartuli, a bustling neighbourhood in Kolkata is mainly renowned for its intricate art of idol making. The artisans from this neighbourhood are mainly celebrated for their skills in craftsmanship. However, the art of idol making has traditionally been dominated by male artisans, whereas female artisans were relegated to supportive roles. This organisational set-up was largely a result of caste-homogenous process among the idol making community based on endogamous processes and affinal relative terminology¹ (Sarkar & Roy, 2019).

Basically, most of the idol makers belong to Kumbhar caste, traditionally associated with pottery and idol making, where on one hand this close-knit homogenous structure functions as a form of social capital², facilitating trust co-operation and mutual support, on the other hand it reinforces the female idol makers with traditional gender norms and roles and expectations limiting women's avenues for development and innovation with the craft (Basu, 2020).

Women in the family are generally married within the idol making (Pal) community. This leverage scenarios for continuing and constructing gender roles which constrict women to the supporting character which are mainly fulfilled 'behind the scenes' (Dutta, 2018). Despite these constraints, majority of female idol makers recognise themselves with the caste-inflicted gender roles to gain recognition, respect and community support within the neighbourhood. This creates a unique dynamic which helps us in understanding the process of 'identity formation' among female idol makers (Chatterjee, 2021).

Varied social-anthropological studies³ have documented varied realities of idol making community at large in relation to social and cultural propositions referring to the artisanal activities and spatial dynamics. But these studies have been an overview on the processes of ethnographic accounts from the community, which somehow creates a distorted reality in terms of 'individual proposition' when it comes to the case of female idol makers. The ethnographic studies never focused on the individual challenges, aspirations and identity politics of the female idol makers, rather tried to give a holistic picture which would be objective in nature in understanding the experiential apparatus of the whole community (Sen, 2022).

Thus, taking inspiration from this scenario, this paper tries to examine the aspect of 'sexual division of labour' in accordance to theoretical concepts of 'social capital' and 'emotional labour' paired with specific cases from among the female artisans of the community. The analysis delves into how female idol makers navigate their roles within this traditionally male dominated craft, emphasizing on the intersection of sexual division of labour and emotional labour. In relation to this, the paper also tries

to address how spatial organisation of workspace and social capital derived from caste homogeneity⁴ contributes to identity formation among idol makers.

Methodology

The empirical data for the study are qualitative in nature based on both primary and secondary information. The main purpose for employing qualitative methodology was to gain in depth apprehension on the complexity of sexual division of labour involved in the work dynamics of the female idol makers in the area, through their varied experiences in the private and professional realm. The primary information mainly consists of data collected through participatory observations in the initial phases and eventually through unstructured interactions where main aim was to explore the process of socio-cultural forces leading to the identity formation among female idol makers. To fulfil the demands of this study, 12 idol making families were taken as samples, where more than 60 percent of the respondents were female idol makers, mainly the utilisation of snowball sampling was taken into consideration which helped in gaining access to certain critical spaces where female idol makers navigated their roles as housewives on one hand and artisans on the other. The study is carried out in Kumortuli (also Kumartuli) specifically in ward 8 and 9 of Sovabazar Metropolitan Area, which is the age-old abode of idol makers as well as potters in Kolkata, West Bengal. This area has gained its popularity worldwide over a long period for making fine clay idols. These idols are made by a distinct occupational caste community known as Potua or Poto or Kumor. The fieldwork was completed in two stages in the month of September, 2023, which initially involved rough mapping of the spatial dynamics of the neighbourhood and observing the day-to-day activities of idol making families (for choosing the specific family convenient sampling was used due to limitation in time frame), followed by unstructured interactions with the female members of the families in regards to their lived in experiences. Rough field notes were made to record the information procured during the interaction process. The analysis and coding were done using both primary data that was collected from the field and the secondary data that was procured from previous ethnographic studies on the area supported by specific theoretical propositions on Sexual Division of Labour, Emotional Labour and Cultural Capital leading to realisation of varied realities in terms of identity of a female idol maker from the lived in experiences and day to day work dynamics within the neighbourhood.

Role of Caste as Social Capital

In kumartuli idol making is a skill that is passed on from one generation to other. A plethora of castes namely Sutradhars, Kumbhakars, Karmakars, Pals, Chitrakars⁵ are

involved in this profession and treat this 'particular profession' equivalent to their generational wealth (Mitra, 2017).

The neighbourhood mainly dominated by the Pal community, have been practicing idol making for many generations now and amidst this performance of idol making practice they reinforce the gender roles and norms related to this 'performance'. Historically, the craft has been male dominated, with men undertaking more celebrated and visible aspects of sculpting and painting the idols. Women on the other hand, have been confined to supportive roles of preparing materials, painting minor details and structuring clay (Ghosh, 2016).

Since this idol making community represent a close-knit caste homogenous neighbourhood, it developed with a character of primordial cottage industry⁶ where the roles of each individual of the family was clearly defined on gender lines, the house-based workshops were mainly maintained by the male members of the family and the female members were confined to the household chores such as taking care of children, organising kitchen requirement, etc (Chakraborty, 2019). Even with change in time, these distinctions on the lines of public-private dimensions of gender roles created unique rationality around which the identities of women in the area are carved out (Lahiri, 2018). However, it is worth mentioning, that an intersection of public-private realm can be noticed when women comes to help in the workshop during peak seasons, creating a jerk in the process of identity formation, since there is a shift in the spatial dynamics as in their professional sphere of work i.e. their household becomes their private sphere and the space i.e. the workshop which is not accessible to them around the year, becomes their professional workspace (Roy, 2021).

This proposition of historicity reflects the broader patriarchal structures that Mies (1986) critiques, where women's labour though crucial remains undervalued and invisible. According to Mohor Pal (Pal, M. personal communication, Sept, 2023), a female idol maker in the neighbourhood, Caste homogeneity plays a significant role in catering to their identities as 'artisans'. It also serves as a form of 'social-capital' that reinforces the traditional division of labour. The idol makers predominantly belong to specific caste and their caste identities where on one hand gives them recognition on the other hand dictates the roles and expectations for men and women (Pal, 2020). According to her, women participation in the craft is often seen as an extension of their domestic duties. She also says, the artisanal work they do is not considered 'professional' in nature since these chores are fused with the 'household work dynamics'. They are only allowed in the workshops in extreme scenarios, such as burden of order, death of father or husbands. This describes the continuous reinforcement of sexual division of labour that Mies (1986) describes. Thus, caste homogeneity creates a dialectic process where on one hand it leads to trust, co-operation within the community in everyday

lived in experiences and mutual support, on the other hand it leads to marginalisation of women and deprives them from opportunities of economic independence and professional recognition (Sengupta, 2021).

This discourse on caste homogeneity in relation to gender roles leads us to explore the epistemological dimensions of how applications of emotional labour and sexual division of labour intersect that leads to the identity formation of female idol makers.

Emotional Labor

Emotional labour, as defined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983), involves managing feelings and expressions to fulfil the emotional requirements of a job, thus creating a 'mechanised being'. This type of labour is particularly pertinent in professions that require interaction with clients or the public. In the context of Kumartuli, emotional labour is crucial for female idol makers, who often interact with customers, organize workshops, and engage in community relations (Chakraborty & Sen, 2019). Female idol makers engage in significant emotional labour, which plays a crucial role in their identity construction. The concept of emotional labour, as developed by Hochschild, intersects with Mies' sexual division of labour in the context of Kumartuli. Women in this community engage in significant emotional labour, managing family relationships, supporting their husbands' or father's work, and maintaining social harmony. This emotional labour is integral to their identity formation, as it reinforces their roles as caregivers and supporters within both the family and the community (Nandi, 2020).

Women in Kumartuli manage a range of emotions, from the stress of tight deadlines to the pride associated to tradition and culture in their craft (Basu, 2017). They not only handle the emotional expectations of customers and the male idol makers in the workshop who may have specific spiritual or aesthetic requirements for the idols based on gendered notion of stereotypes and sexual division of labour but also navigates and introspects varied realities and roles attached to their identity as 'housewives and daughters'. This emotional labour is both a source of empowerment and exploitation. On one hand, it enables women to carve out a niche for themselves in a male-dominated field by building strong customer relationships and enhancing the marketability of their idols. On the other hand, it adds an extra layer of burden to their already demanding roles, often without corresponding recognition or compensation (Chakraborty, 2020).

The emotional division of labour extends to the spiritual and ritualistic aspects of idol making⁷. Women often participate in rituals and ceremonies associated with the creation and consecration of idols, roles that require them to manage and express appropriate emotions (Das, 2021). This emotional labour, though vital to the cultural and spiritual life of the community, remains largely unacknowledged and uncompensated (Mukherjee, 2018).

We may project the conception of emotional labour extensively on two aspects of female idol makers lives.

A. Family and Community Roles

Female idol makers often have to balance their professional roles in the workshops with their responsibilities as mothers, daughters, and wives. This balancing act requires substantial emotional labour, as they navigate the expectations of their families and the demands of their craft (Roy & Chatterjee, 2022). The emotional labour involved in managing familial relationships and ensuring the well-being of their households reinforces their identities within their communities and contributes to the perception of their roles as indispensable both at home and at work (Ghosh & Mitra, 2023). According to China Pal (Pal, C. personal communication, Sept, 2023), generally they manage both responsibilities without any issue, since they have been socialised in doing so relating to caste homogeneity. But according to her, the problem occurs during the periods of Durga Pujo when the rush of completing and supplying the idol is too high, and they have stay at the workshop for the major part of the day, and during this time the other family members who are not the part of the workforce have to make their food on their own. She says this by referring to her daughter. She also says that this creates family feuds and tensions leading to day-to-day conflicts, initially she was fed-up with these regular quarrels, but now she has understood how to work as a ‘machine’⁸ without paying any heed to these conflicts. She also says that this whole scenario of public-private dimensional transgression would prepare her daughter to be the same, what China Pal refers herself to a ‘machine’. The term ‘machine’ becomes an integral part of China’s life and lived in experiences where she have to regularly juggle between the role of a mother, wife and an idol maker where a tremendous emotional toll is being dislodged over her character enforcing the blurred boundaries between the public and private spheres of life which she needs to balance out for the sake of sustenance in the community.

B. Client Relations

Interacting with clients, who commission idols for various religious and cultural events, also involves a high degree of emotional labour. Female idol makers must often manage clients’ expectations and preferences, which can be emotionally taxing (Sen, 2020). Successfully handling these interactions can enhance their professional reputation and affirm their identities as skilled artisans capable of meeting the diverse and often demanding requirements of their clientele (Chatterjee, 2019). According to Arati Pal (Pal, A. personal communication, Sept, 2023), she was initially stereotyped for being a woman. There was a pre conceived notion that woman could not handle

large orders and thus it was better to approach a workshop headed by a male member of the community. Arati recalls, how initially her father then her husband would send her to do 'clay structuration work' when a client would come and would deal with the clients themselves. After her husband's death, she took over the workshop due to lack of male members in the family, but she foregrounds the fact that because of not letting her converse with the clients initially, she had a lot of issues related to handling clients of rough sceptical temperament and bargaining with the clients. She says, that she also had to face socially awkward situations, physical humiliations, etc, however she mentions that her close-knit community helped her in all instances to get rid of these problems but somehow, she also felt that this attitude of assistance creates the scenario for female artisans to be dependent on the caste homogeneity all along. According to her, this homogeneous community taught her to keep aside her emotional basis in the professional domain, since client satisfaction remains the ultimate factorial to earn a livelihood. Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour is exemplified in Arati's role. She not only works on the physical aspects of idol-making but also engages deeply with clients, managing their expectations and maintaining long-term relationships irrespective of the negative experiential apparatus. This mechanised emotional investment ensures client satisfaction and loyalty, which are crucial for the family business and cultural fabric of Kumartuli. This continuous tenacity of 'performance' and 'steering emotive paroxysm' infused in the process of idol making and interacting with different actors in the spaces of Kumartuli creates a unique reality where the female idol makers continuously showcase an act of equivalence in controlling their emotional individuality without letting any effect on their work dynamics in day-to-day scenarios.

Sexual Division of Labor and Spatial Dynamics

Sexual division of labour, distinct from emotional labour, involves the use of one's sexuality in the context of work. Maria Mies, a prominent feminist scholar provides a critical analysis on sexual division of labour by examining the historical context of the sexual division of labour. She traces its origins to the transition from subsistence economies to capitalist economies, where women's work in the home became separated from men's work in the public sphere. This division, Mies argues, is rooted in the patriarchal control of women's reproductive capacities. By confining women to the private sphere and associating them with nature and reproduction, patriarchal societies have ensured that women's labour remains unacknowledged and undercompensated (Mies, 1986). She also highlights how capitalism exploits this division of labour. She explains that the capitalist system relies on the unpaid labour of women to sustain the paid labour of men. This unpaid labour includes not only domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare but also emotional and sexual labour, which are essential for the

reproduction of the workforce. By keeping this labour unpaid, capitalism reduces the cost of labour power, thereby maximizing profits (Mies, 1986).

She also explores the global implications of the sexual division of labour. She discusses how colonialism and imperialism have extended the exploitation of women's labour to the Global South. In these regions, women are often pushed into low-wage labour, including agricultural work, textile production, and domestic service, while still being responsible for unpaid domestic work. This dual burden exacerbates their exploitation and maintains the global capitalist system (Mies, 1986).

Maria Mies' concept of the sexual division of labour provides a critical framework for analysing the processes of identity formation among female idol makers of Kumartuli. The cases of female idol makers from this traditional community in Kolkata, known for its intricate idol-making craft, offers a unique lens to examine how the sexual division of labour shapes women's identities and roles within both their professional and domestic spheres. Sexual division of labour plays an important role in the lives of female idol makers in Kumartuli, influencing their identity politics through spatial dynamics and social interactions that can be understood through certain thematic propositions.

A. Navigating Male-Dominated Spaces

The spatial organization⁹ of Kumartuli's workshops delineates gender roles. The physical spaces of Kumartuli are predominantly male-dominated. Workshops are typically structured to prioritize the visibility and applications of activities dominated by male artisans, such as sculpting and structural work, are performed in central, prominent areas of the workshop where there is better ventilation and space. Female artisans often work in peripheral spaces, engaging in tasks that, although crucial, are less visible and less valued, such as preparing the clay, tying the straws, mixing the colour for painting the idols (Banerjee, 2019).

Female idol makers must navigate these spaces, often using their ascribed status to assert their presence and negotiate their roles. This can involve subtle forms of sexual labour, such as managing interactions with male colleagues and clients in ways that balance professionalism with the social expectations of femininity. The ability to navigate these dynamics successfully can enhance their status and reinforce their professional identities within the community (Chakraborty, 2020).

Sexual labour in Kumartuli also encompasses the vulnerabilities faced by female idol makers. The spatial dynamics of the area, characterized by crowded workshops and close quarters, can create environments where women are at risk of harassment or exploitation. However, these same dynamics can also foster protective networks among female artisans. By supporting each other and collectively addressing issues of

harassment, female idol makers can strengthen their identities and assert their agency within the male-dominated space of Kumartuli (Sen, 2018).

According to Malati Pal (Pal, M. personal communication, Sept , 2023), when her father was alive she would help him in the workshop, her father would ask her to do her assigned tasks in the interior parts of the workshop, the reason he cited was to protect her from any sort of physical and emotional humiliation, since there are a lot of outsiders who are working in the central space of the workshop , and her father would not be available to protect her from any harassment in the rush of the workflow. According to her, there were no proper provision for toilets in the interior parts of the workshop, even though the central part of the workshop was a bit spacious where mainly the creative and organised aspects of idol making such as colouring the idol making, painting the eyes, final touch-ups along with final layering of clay on the idols is accomplished, the interior parts are dark cramped up spaces where mainly the preparatory works were done, with minimum ventilation and light. She mentioned that she had to stay there for almost 7-8 hours a day, she was to be released once her assigned task of mixing the colour for idols and first layering of clay on the idols was completed by her. After that she would go and help her mother in the household chores. She also mentions the fact, when after her father's death she took over the studio, she had to face the sceptics of the labourers and karigars working in the workshop. She says that initially, she had to face a lot of problems and uncomfortable situations referring to the work dynamics of the central part of the workshop. Many workers concomitantly refused to abide by her suggestions, for example providing different quotations to clients, sticking to their creative propositions and not discussing with her about the process of creating an idol, etc. Whenever she intervened, she was asked to sit aside and manage the finances. She mentions, there is a general notion catering to sexual division of labour that female idol makers are not capable of providing the 'hard and creative labour' that the profession of idol making demands, thus they are assigned jobs that are done in the 'peripheral areas' with less 'creative rewards'. However, according to her, this distinction of sexual labour is a constructed process. She also says that with time she got adapted to the process, she uses the identity of her father in relation to the ownership of the workshop to make the workers abide by her decisions. She says, she visualises this process as a sort of 'promotion' and aspires to establish an achieved status among the idol making community of Kumartuli. Even though she becomes the sole proprietor of the workshop, she has to continuously juggle between her roles in the private and public domain. This creates a disjuncture in the identity of Malati amidst the establishment and intermingling of two roles namely the 'role of a daughter at home' and the 'role of an owner at workshop'. These intermingled roles involve significant emotional labour, as she manages both her work and home responsibilities simultaneously, creating a

confusion in the process of prioritization and management, reflecting the dual burden often faced by women in patriarchal societies.

B. Artistic Practice and Identity Formation

The practice of idol making is not merely a craft but an artistic expression that contributes significantly to the identity formation of female artisans in Kumartuli. The emotional and sexual labour involved in their work intertwines with their artistic practice, further shaping their identities (Das, 2020).

The creation of idols requires a deep emotional investment. Female idol makers often infuse their work with personal expressions of devotion and creativity, which becomes a part of their emotional labour. This emotional connection to their art enhances their identities as artists and reinforces their roles within the cultural and religious landscapes of their community (Roy, 2017). According to Jostna Pal, she inherited this art of idol making from her forefathers, the art of creating ‘Sabeki style’¹⁰ Durga idols is a generational heritage of her family. This form of idol making and aesthetics requires comprehensive immersion in the process. She mentions, how they need to religiously keep track of drying of the clay layers on the infrastructure of the idols followed by the process of colouring the idols, they continuously watch for the adherence of the colour on the idols. According to her, the process of idol making is a rigorous process involving extensive creative labour. She says that she has devoted her life to the process of extending her creative labour¹¹ to this form of ‘art’. She mentions, how idol makers are also human beings with emotional senses which may vary from time to time, but they cannot afford to compromise on the process of idol making due to variations in their emotive sensory dynamics, since this is not only their source of livelihood but it is the form of art through which their social aspirations related to identity formation is fulfilled (Pal, J. personal communication, Sept, 2023).

Another young female idol maker Minu, highlights how she experiences an emotional connection with the process of making idols in the workshop. She highlights the fact that, the grandeur or size of idols are not important, rather the whole process initiating from moulding of clay to each stroke of colour deposited on the idol leads to a ‘harmonious creation’ which is homogenous in nature, but also holds a subjective importance catering to process of ‘individuality’ if seen through the eyes the idol maker. She says how, this process of idol making acts as an escape from day-to-day problems and quarrels experienced from household and community processuals. She says all hard labour and daily problems faced by the idol makers gets validated once the idol is completed (Minu. personal communication, Sept, 2023).

The two cases highlights the proposition of how a congruence is maintained between varied community and household dynamics, by the female idol makers in their

profession, the reality however might be much harsh where stereotypical traditions, household responsibilities, distinguished gender roles, sceptical clients, low labour wage, etc. creates a disintegration of their artistic expression, the female idol makers within the community have to navigate these scenarios on daily basis to create an 'achieved-expressive-rational identity' for themselves that complements their 'ascribed-emotional being' amidst the crisis where the art is disembodied from the artist and explosion of commercial proposition is experienced within the spaces known for their artistic expressivity.

Another theme that gets exposure through the relative notion of artistic expression, senses and spatial dynamics among the female idol makers is the relation of production between the clients and the female idol making cluster. A dual proposition is being constructed in the scenario which can be a part of the discourse, where according to Arati Pal, idol making is not just a simple art form but it is the expressive forces of their homogenous and subjective identity. Obviously, this art form caters to their livelihood but this art should not be equated with commercial profit. According to her she was socialised to create the idols of 'Mother Goddess'¹² and she is going to preserve this heritage at any cost. She also mentions one scenario where she refused a big order to preserve the cultural and artistic proposition of this art form. Kumartuli for her is not just neighbourhood, rather a caste homogenous community and more importantly a place holding unique spatial characteristic defined and redefined by multisensory experiences that motivates them to express their emotive being through the profession of idol making (Pal, A. personal communication, Sept, 2023).

On the other hand, Chaina Pal, expresses her discontentment with the neighbourhood. According to her, the dynamics of the spaces within the Kumartuli neighbourhood have changed. The notion of artistic expressivity is being compromised for commercial ideals and political affiliations. The clients are demanding for 'theme idols', which becomes a heavy toll on their creative proposition since they are confined to create idols that strictly cater to the themes provided by the clients, any creative addition would lead to a 'loss of order' on their part. The community based on simple traditions is transiting to a competitive cluster based on complex 'client-actor (idol maker-client) relational network'. The spaces of this community are now characterised by sounds of negotiations between clients and idol makers, the quarrels within the neighbourhood on petty issues, addressing note of the bloggers, political conflicts and rush to complete orders for the larger clubs and societies somehow suppresses to notion of 'art' and 'the embodied nature of art'. According to her, she is now well adapted to sustain in this mechanised-commercial environment. She had already left behind her values catering to her artistic expression and is creating idols just for the sake of 'profit maximisation' and for constructing a 'commercial status' (Pal, C. personal communication, Sept, 2023).

Somehow this statement leads us to the fact, how the idol making industry solely based on 'artistic expressionism' is being commodified to such extent, that the artists not only gets disembodied from their created art but also are being resembled as workers in the assembly-lines whose individual identity is on the verge of disintegration, leading to creation of hedonist without heart and specialist without spirits (Chatterjee, 2019).

The interplay of innovation and tradition in the artistic practice also caters to a form of identity politics, where female artisans assert their individuality and creativity within the constraints of their cultural heritage (Sarkar, 2020). Rani Pal, the daughter of Arati Pal introduced a new technique of terracotta detailing using clay, she later used this technique to create jewellery similar to terracotta design¹³ coupling with oxidized base, which apparently became a very famous product among the youth of the neighbourhood, she thought of selling these products through retail stores to gain some additional income. However, she had to face constraints from the unions of the area, since making jewellery for commoner's use was against the heritage and traditional basis of the neighbourhood. Any jewellery created within the cluster was to be created for the idols or for special purposes like wedding ceremonies and not for regular use. However, the provided rationale for discontinuing the terracotta works did not satisfy Rani, since according to her this was a foul play by the whole cluster to confine female idol makers within the constructed gender roles and restrict their artistic expression by using the basis of 'tradition'. This according to her would help in maintaining the 'caste homogenous' nature of the cluster with clear distinction of gendered identities and roles (Pal, R. personal communication, Sept, 2023).

According to Shanti Pal, through their work, women idol maker like her asserts their presence and expertise in a male-dominated space. Each brushstroke and sculptural detail is not merely a task completed but an assertion of their identity and artistic prowess. This form of expression serves as a medium for these women to challenge the traditional gender roles imposed upon them (Pal, S. personal communication, Sept, 2023).

Moreover, the act of idol making she says becomes a form of resistance against the patriarchal structure that seeks to marginalize their contributions. By mastering the intricacies of idol making, female artisans carve out a niche for themselves, gaining recognition and respect within their communities. This recognition, although gradual, signifies a shift in the traditional dynamics of labour and artistic expression (Roy, 2017).

In the whole process of exploring the concept of sexual division labour among female idol makers and their process of identity formation through their artistic expression, a riveting fact comes up, how social spaces in the neighbourhood plays an important role in determining the identity politics of the female idol makers. These spaces of social and cultural productions cater to multisensory lived in experiences among the female idol

makers leading to construction and reconstruction of their social realities, where they are forced assert their identities and agency within a complex social and cultural milieu to maintain a balance between their imploded roles amidst public-private dimensional disjuncture (Banerjee, 2019).

Intersection of Sexual Division of Labor and Emotional Labor

The concept of emotional and sexual division of labour intersects with spatial dynamics in complex ways. Arlie Hochschild's (Hochschild, 1983) idea of emotional labour, where individuals manage their emotions to fulfil the emotional needs of others, is evident among female idol makers. Women often engage in tasks that require meticulous attention to detail and patience, traits that are culturally feminized. Their work is imbued with emotional labour as they invest personal care and cultural sentiment into the idols, which are ultimately meant to invoke devotion and spirituality.

This emotional investment becomes a cornerstone of their identity. Despite operating within constrained and often undervalued spaces, the emotional and cultural significance of their work elevates their status within the community. By maintaining and perpetuating the sacred traditions of idol making, female artisans assert their cultural authority and craft a distinct identity that is deeply intertwined with their spatial and social environment. The interplay between the sexual division of labour and emotional labour significantly influences the identity formation of female idol makers in Kumartuli. These women navigate a complex landscape where they must continually negotiate their roles and assert their identities within a traditionally patriarchal framework.

Certain themes can be carved out in the process of identity formation through this intersection among the female idol makers:

Skill and Recognition: As women take on more visible and skilled tasks in idol making, they challenge the traditional sexual division of labour. Their increasing involvement in sculpting and detailed painting not only showcases their technical prowess but also demands recognition as skilled artisans. This shift is crucial for their professional identity and helps in gaining respect within the community and beyond (Dong-Sook, 1999).

Emotional Capital: Managing emotions and maintaining relationships with customers gives women a unique form of capital that men might not possess to the same extent. This emotional capital becomes a critical aspect of their professional identity, setting them apart in a competitive market. By excelling in emotional labour, women can build loyal customer bases and create a distinctive brand identity (Mackintosh, 1981).

Community and Solidarity: The shared experiences of navigating a male-dominated industry foster a sense of community and solidarity among female idol makers. This

collective identity is reinforced through informal networks and support systems, where women share resources, knowledge, and emotional support (Benería, 1979). Such solidarity is essential for sustaining their presence in the industry and advocating for better working conditions and recognition.

Cultural and Social Capital: The caste homogeneity in Kumartuli also plays a role in the identity formation of female idol makers. Belonging to a specific caste associated with idol making provides a cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that can be leveraged for gaining acceptance and legitimacy in the craft. This cultural capital, combined with their skilled and emotional labour, enriches their identity as artisans who are not only part of a tradition but also innovators and entrepreneurs.

Professionalization and Economic Exploitation: The professionalization of idol making in Kumartuli, driven by market demands and globalization, has had mixed impacts on women. On one hand, it has created new opportunities for women to engage in paid work within the craft. Some women have become adept artisans, taking on more significant roles in the creation process. However, these opportunities are often constrained by the existing sexual division of labour, which continues to prioritize men's work and undervalue women's contributions. Moreover, the economic exploitation of women's labour is evident in the wage disparities and lack of recognition they face. Women often receive lower pay for their work and are less likely to be acknowledged as skilled artisans. This economic exploitation is a direct consequence of the sexual division of labour that Mies (1986) critiques, where women's labour is systematically devalued.

Spatial Organization and Workspace Dynamics: Spatial dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of female idol makers in Kumartuli. The physical space of the workshops is typically dominated by men, with women often working in the peripheries or in less visible areas (Massey, 1994). This spatial segregation mirrors the sexual division of labour, where men occupy the central, more prestigious roles, and women are relegated to the margins. However, the spatial organization of Kumartuli also offers opportunities for female artisans to redefine their roles. By occupying and transforming these peripheral spaces, women create their own areas of influence and control. These spaces become sites of creativity and collaboration, where women can share techniques, ideas, and support each other's artistic endeavours.

However beyond these superficial propositions, it is important to note how gendered social norms¹⁴ based on the traditional notion of the caste homogenous cluster along with sexual division of labour within the families caters to identities of female idol makers which in turn creates certain discourse of recognition through which the interplay of production relations and pauperisation based on the mentioned intermingled relation of sexual division of labour and emotional labour can be identified.

The male owners of the workshops argue that these women are 'sitting in the house' and are not used to work in the workshops and that participating in the process of idol making is just a way for them to pass their leisure time, it acts as an extension of their main field of work within the household, where their participation in the process of producing idols at the workshops reflects the leisure time.

Whenever they found time before or after their housework, they would come to the workshop to help in the process of preparing clay, tying straws and structuring the idols. Thus, they had practically no leisure time. It was obvious that the extreme exploitation of these women about which they all complained was made possible only by the specific organisation of the production process, namely the caste homogenous form of the idol making industry and, what is more important is the maintenance and propagation of the housewife-ideology, the 'woman sitting in the house'.

Not only the male members in the family, also the whole female artisanal fraternity saw themselves mainly as housewives and not as workers. Although many of them were the actual breadwinners of their families (due to death of their husband or father) they did not change their ideas and said that women of their community only could do housework and had always been confined to the house, the work done in the workshop is just an extension to their household chores, even if they own the workshop and they are the main idol maker within the confined arena, the household continues to be their main space of work. It is doubtful whether this statement is a reflection of historical reality or whether it is a rationalisation.

It is absolutely necessary for the extraction of surplus value through the labour from the female idol makers by the owners of the workshop, that the ideology of seclusion of the 'woman sitting in the house' is maintained. Though the domestication of women may be justified by older forms of seclusion¹⁵, it has definitely changed its character. The female in the community are not just housewives but are domesticated housewives and workers at the same time who produce for the world market.

This specific work organisation and the accompanying housewife ideology prevents them also to get organised. The sexual division of labour, even where it is only fictitious, provided the basic, structure for the various forms of horizontal divisions among the female idol makers and thus for their exploitation by the male artisans as well as the male idol making fraternity at large.

What is striking about this industry is the fact that the primary creators have become virtually invisible. Women working in what is called a house-based-industry¹⁶ were nowhere to be found in the census statistics of the area. For the census enumerators only the male head of the household counts. Thus, officially, these women statistically do not exist as idol makers, rather as housewives. This may not be the case with female artisans who lost their father or husband, but in majority of situation where women

perform unrecognised labour at the workshop in presence of a male member of the family, she is recognised as housewife and not ‘idol maker’.

A. Division of labour between sexes

We can say that the domestication and seclusion of women (Mies, 1986), formed part of a process of caste homogenisation and that the idol makers used and reinforced this feudal domestication of women. From the social definition of women as housewives follows the definition of the men as the breadwinners, the separation between the private sphere of the house and the public sphere, the sphere of production and reproduction and the subordination of the latter under the former.

The political-economic function of the separation of the sphere of production from the sphere of reproduction and the definition of women as housewives seems to be to create a readily available and readily disposable labour power whose day-to-day reproduction as well as its unemployment will not be the responsibility of the male idol makers.

It is important to understand that the semi-proletarianisation of the men and the semi-domestication¹⁷ (or housewifisation) of women as mentioned in the works of Maria Mies (1986), is not a transitional mode which will evolve into full-fledged proletarianisation and housewifisation, because only this system makes the rapid accumulation of capital for both rich and marginal male idol makers possible. Therefore, the social definition of women as housewives serves mainly the purpose of obscuring the true production relations and to consolidate their side of the house.

B. Sexual division of labour within family

When production for the world market was introduced in this area, older forms of the sexual division of labour (Mies, 1986) were not abolished, but rather used, reinforced and reinterpreted. We can see that the female labour force is divided along the lines of (despised) artisanal workers and (respected) housewives. Similarly, the overall hierarchical division of labour along sex-specific lines, dating back from older stages in the social history of these communities, was preserved in a transformed way. To understand the nature of this division and its transformation, it is necessary to look at the relationship between women and men within the family also because under the impact of capitalist production relations, the family was defined as the main arena of women’s work. But this work is not autonomous work. If social division of labour means that some men control the means of production and thus the labour of other men and women, then sexual division of labour means that men in general control the means of reproduction, that is, their women and their productive and reproductive work in the household and in the workshops.

Domestication or housewifisation (Mies, 1986) is the main mechanism by which this control is achieved. We have now to ask how this division of labour is organised. The basis of division is, of course, that women do housework and men work in the workshop. According to Jhumur Pal (Pal, J. personal communication, Sept, 2023), another middle-aged female artisan, the men do not do any work in the house at all. All the services in the household like cooking food, fetching water, washing clothes, etc were performed by women in the household. But many of these reproductive tasks involved a series of production processes. Thus, cooking meant not only the preparation of food, but also the arrangement of gas stove, the processing of certain foods, arranging the raw materials, etc.

While analysing a woman's working day, it can be noticed that reproductive household chores and productive tasks at the idol making workshops were closely interwoven and that the women performed a large variety of different activities during the time frame of 24 hours.

Jhumur continues with her account of a normal day in her life, she says that the arena of her activity is the house. Her husband returned to this arena only for the satisfaction of their basic needs for eating and sleeping. Except for her father-in-law, her husband was usually not seen around the house during the day. But when he returns, he had immediately to be attended to by her, irrespective of the fact that she as well was working at the workshop along with him and she too just returned home after a hectic day. She has to prepare the bath water for him. She even had to wash her husband's backs when they came home, which she finds to be outrageous. She has to give food to the male members of the family first before the female members of the family could eat, and she had to sit next to them and serve them the food on their plate. She also mentions though the men spent most of the time in the workshop, they returned home as the lords and masters who expected that the women would wait upon them even after realising that, these are the same women who spent almost similar working hours as that of men in the workshop in creating an idol.

All services of the domesticated woman to her husband are legitimised by the definition that he' is the head of the household, and the main breadwinner. The intermingled sexual division of labour within the household cum workshop and the sex segregation appeared to be sharper among the idol making community of Kumartuli. Where caste homogeneity and patriarchal character ensured rigid demarcation of gendered boundaries and roles.

The female idol making community is being socialised to consider the roles of men as superior in both the private and public realm as compared to the tasks performed by female artisans. Even if they become the sole proprietor of the workshop due to death of the main male idol maker, they still take it for granted to serve and obey the men in the

family and community. Jhumur Pal laughed, when she was asked why she did not teach her son the craft of idol making: “he is not interested to carry forward the heritage”¹⁸ she replied.

C. Pauperisation and Idol production

It was not the division of labour between men and women as such or the fact that the women worked longer hours than the men which roused the women’s criticism. But it was the experience of the family that younger male members are not willing to take up the profession of idol making, thus the female members of the family according to Runu Pal (Pal, R. personal communication, Sept, 2023) had to take up the profession of idol making. Particularly, the poorer sections of female idol makers in the area who do not own a dedicated workshop to their name, complained about the men’s laziness. Runu Pal is one such female idol maker in the area, who was forced to take up the practice of idol making to sustain her family. She says, that her husband is a gambler who is not interested in continuing with his father’s idol making processuals which is the only source of earning a livelihood.

She highlights one instance saying that her husband acts in such a way since he is lazy. Once she asked him to repair the bathroom in the house, which he completely ignored and later it had to be done by her. It is important here to note that it is not about sexual division of labour but the pauperised irresponsible attitude among the male members of the families belonging poorer sections of community leads to scenarios where women takes up a lot more responsibility of the family as compared to the male counterparts which dislodges an extreme emotional toll on their identities, at most instances this emotional labour coupled with the rigour of sexual division of labour remains invisible and taken for granted creating a flux in their identities.

According to Runu, her in-laws were not under the clutches of poverty initially, they had their idol making workshop at Krishnanagar, but then her father-in-law migrated to Kolkata for better opportunity. However, their family faced a lot of issues to find clients at the new place amidst the processes of caste homogeneity. Since they migrated from Krishnanagar, a slight xenophobic attitude was dislodged against them. She also mentions how her father-in-law and her husband lived with the “prestige of past”¹⁹ and completely wilfully ignored the present scenario.

She, however, had to find ways and means to keep the household going. Since there was no income from the men, she started making small idols on the narrow lanes of the area due to absence of a proper workshop. In spite of the rigidity with which she sticks to the ideology of the respected housewife, in reality they seem to be more flexible than the men to change the old pattern of the division of labour if necessity arises. This flexibility is, of course, more a result of pauperisation²⁰ than of a change in cultural

values, according to her. This means that in practice she had to violate the professed norms of their caste and take up idol making as a profession to sustain her family.

Pauperisation (Mies, 1986), however, does not only lead to parasitism in the case of men who try to live off their women's subsistence work related to idol making, but also to class polarisation and changes in the men's class positions within the family. One mechanism by which pauperised male members tried to solve the problem of their survival was entering the sphere of petty trade. Runu pal mentions how her husband forcefully took away her jewellery to sell them off in attempt to gain some money which was to be invested in further gambling processes.

Here the fact is that her husband's material interests was inseparably linked to her social definition as housewives shows that it is not merely 'backward' ideology which keeps women domesticated, but rather material forces, where he invests the earned income from the sold idols which is a product of the 'creative labour' of his wife into the sphere of gambling and petty trades, thus creating a dissociation of the labourer from the fruits of her labour.

D. Production relations between men and women

According to an anonymous source, the work done by female idol makers in their father's or husband's workshop is not only considered to be an extension of their household chore rather it is also taken for granted and remains ignored to most instances. The female idol makers are struggling to construct their individual identity amidst the processes of ascribed proposition where the limelight for creating the idol is completely grasped by the male idol makers where the labour of female idol makers goes unnoticed.

She says, the male idol makers feel that they just sit in the house and eat, doing nothing. They think that the sole proprietorship of creativity attached to idol making process belongs to the male idol makers, since they own the workshop and consider the female counterparts as just minor helping hands, as if they were working at the workshop at the mercy of their fathers and their husbands. She talks about the efforts they have to put in, to make the male owners of workshop realise that they are co-workers and not subordinate interns even after gaining a hands-on experience in the process for about five to ten years.

This statement shows that the female idol maker's work, and the labour time spent on creating an idol, is completely "invisible" (Federici, 2012) not only to the outside world, but also to the husbands or fathers under whose noses their work takes place.

Even they define it as non-work²¹. The work done by the women appears as something miraculous or natural. The source mentions how, male idol makers thinks women are normally free at home and household chores are 'no labour', so they participate in the idol making process of the workshop, she mentions one scenario where she had to

complete the total structuration process of an idol along with colouring the idol all by herself after completing her daily household tasks and her labour went unnoticed as all limelight was taken away by the process of 'chokkhu-dan' i.e. donating the eyes to the idol by her father.

On being asked through a follow up question that how does she defines dynamics of labour by both male and female idol makers, she answered by saying that the male idol makers denotes their labour at the workshop as primary source of earning a livelihood, so they are entitled to rest at their homes which becomes their private sphere but the labour which is performed by the female idol makers at the workshop is just the extension of the leisure activity at their homes.

Thus, this process of division of labour creates a paradoxical confusion among the female idol makers when they try to achieve their status as an artisan since, the caste homogenous gender roles define the 'household' as their main space of work, and working at idol making workshops becomes an extension of their leisure activity, then it is apparent to create perplexity regarding which arena becomes their main sphere of 'recognised labour'. This process creates a disjuncture in the identity formation and the spatial belongingness of female idol makers as housewives or daughters at home and artisans at the workshop, where the distinction between private and public realm gets blurred. Thus these complex processes of relational apparatus engaged in defining the roles of female idol makers as domesticated housewives on one hand and empowered artisans on the other, has been a product of constant negotiations between the sexual division of labour and emotional labour that caters to this dual charactered identity of women in this caste homogenous neighbourhood specifically defined by the multi-sensory navigations of 'spatiality of places' within the community by the female idol makers. It becomes a very complicated process, in breaking down their relations or relative dynamics to other members of the community, since the division of labour we are speaking of comes out to be a perplexed overlapping of roles instead of strict compartmentalisation. The traditions of the neighbourhood and processes of caste homogeneity creates relation of production within and outside the family structures create a dual process of identity formation, where on one hand there is a tendency to domesticate women and define their work as extension of their leisure time, whereas on other hand there is the urge to navigate and establish themselves as 'artisans' within the male dominated spaces through their artistic expressions. Somehow the processual of traditionality mediates between the two forces of identity formation leading to the structuration of a peculiar congruity where often the roles of female idol makers come out to be a factorial of 'intersection' of numerous realities, lived in experiences and emotive expressions ultimately leading to 'non recognition' of the labour (Federici, 2012) performed by them both as homes and workshops due to blurred boundaries between their private and professional realms.

Conclusion

The lived in experiences of the female idol makers in Kumartuli provide insight into how varied social interactions based on spatial dynamics and caste homogeneity as social capital leads to a process of intersection of sexual division of labour and emotional labour among the female artisans within the neighbourhood. Women in Kumartuli exhibits immense creative resilience, in forging schemes for claiming their requisite over spaces in the cluster despite the fact that they are engaged in a field that is almost entirely male-dominated. Their experiences provide for key insights into the rigorous process of intersectionality, dislodged within the entangled framework of gender-caste interplay and zero recognition to their labour in the traditional crafts, that help open up the socio-cultural-political realities of the female artisanal fraternity in broader context of Indian sub-continent.

Sexual division of labour intersects with emotional labour in shaping a major part of these women's experiences. Through the cases discussed, it becomes a noticeable fact how female idol makers navigate complex socio-cultural dynamics amidst the entanglement of their private and professional realm to realise their individuality and in turn question the traditional roles set for their creative comprehension. This paper, not only tried to identify the forces that shape and reshape their personal identity but also focuses on the framework within which space is organized and the way they navigate these spaces amidst varied enforcements of gendered norms.

Spatial organization in Kumartuli plays an important role in the way female idol makers construct their identities, a situation that follows very much the sexual division of labour as espoused by Maria Mies. It is within the framework of Maria Mies that we understand how the sexual division of labour in Kumartuli among female idol makers exposes a plethora of deep-rooted gender inequalities, which is further complicated by caste homogeneity realised through physical separation and gendered allocation of tasks reflecting as well as a devising reinforcement of normatives in the neighbourhood.

Within these constraints, however, the female idol makers actively engage themselves towards construction of identities characterised by the tension between the enforced 'ascribed identity' and the urge of realising an 'achieved status'. Through compilation of skill, emotional labour and artistic expressivity, the woman wields her agency to make a claim to their importance and cultural legitimacy. This complicated interaction between spaces, labour, and identity in turn outlines the intricate and changing nature of identity formation in Kumartuli among the female artisans amidst the intersection of emotional and sexual division of labour characterised by the processes of caste homogeneity. It is hence the interplay among these axes, that actually accounts for the unique realisation of the immediate realities catering to formation of identity among such female idol

makers in Kumartuli permeated by the urge to construct the professional 'achieved status' based on their artistic expressions and creativity.

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Notes

1. Affinal relative terminology refers to the specific terms used to describe relatives by marriage, such as in-laws, rather than by blood, reflecting social relationships formed through marital connections. These terms distinguish between consanguineal (blood) and affinal (marriage-based) kinship ties in a family.
2. Social capital is crucial for fostering social cohesion, enabling people to work together effectively, and enhancing the overall well-being of communities.
3. The study of human society and cultures through a comparative lens.
4. Caste homogeneity refers to the social phenomenon where a community or group is predominantly composed of members from the same caste, leading to uniformity in social practices, norms and cultural traditions.
5. Sutradhars, traditionally woodworkers and carpenters, in Kumartuli are responsible for constructing the frameworks (armatures) of the idols. Their origin is within the Vishwakarma community of the Hindu caste. Kumbhakar also known as Kumar, are the traditional potters and primary sculptors in Kumartuli. Their origin is within the Kumbhar community that is believed to exist before the Varna system. Karmarkar, originally blacksmiths and metalworkers, contribute by crafting metal components, tools, and sometimes reinforcing frameworks that ensure the durability and stability of the idols, they are the sub-caste of the larger Kayastha caste, they are believed to have migrated from the Deccan region to Bengal in the 17th century. The Pal community is a subset of the Kumar, specifically known for their expertise in idol-making. Though their origin is debatable, the origin of the Bengali Pal (potter) community is within the Kayastha caste. Chitrakars, painters and artists, Chitrakars add the finishing touches to the idols by painting and decorating them. Their origin is within the Newar community of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal.

6. A cottage industry is a small-scale, home-based, business where goods are produced manually or with minimal machinery, typically by family members.
7. The ritualistic aspects of idol-making in Kumartuli are traditions and practices that are normative, such as the rituals of Collection of Sacred Clay, clay from a prostitute's home to symbolize inclusivity and purity. Chokkhu Daan (Eye-Painting Ritual), the eyes of the idol are painted last in a ceremonial act, typically at an auspicious time, symbolizing the invocation of life into the deity. Invocation of Pran Pratistha, a ritual to infuse the idol with the spirit of the deity, performed during the final stages of crafting.
8. The metaphor of women in Kumartuli as "machines" reflects the demanding and often unacknowledged labour they perform in the idol-making industry. Due to the repetitive, physically demanding, and unrecognized labour they perform in the idol-making process, they are losing their identity and treating themselves as mechanised machines.
9. Spatial organization refers to the arrangement and structuring of physical space in relation to objects, people, and activities within it, influencing social interactions, economic activities, and cultural practices within a particular area.
10. The Sabeki style of idol-making is a traditional approach in Bengal that emphasizes classical, time-honoured techniques and aesthetics. Idols crafted in this style feature more conservative designs, adhering to age-old iconography.
11. Creative labour is defined as work that requires imagination, inventiveness, and creative abilities, such as making, designing, or producing cultural products. It emphasizes the worker's intellectual and artistic contributions, which frequently combine manual expertise with creative expression.
12. The Mother Goddess, Durga, is central to the community's identity as she is the primary deity crafted by artisans for the annual Durga Puja festival, the entire idol-making industry revolves around her creation. Her significance lies in her embodiment of feminine power and protection, making the creation of her idols both a deeply spiritual and culturally essential activity for the artisans.
13. Terracotta design jewellery is a traditional form of adornment made from natural clay that is shaped, fired, and often hand-painted or glazed.
14. Gendered social norms are societal rules and expectations that dictate appropriate behaviours, roles, and responsibilities for individuals based on their gender, often reinforcing inequalities by limiting opportunities and freedoms for one gender, typically women. These norms shape everyday life, influencing everything from career choices to domestic roles.
15. Seclusion is the practice of isolating or confining individuals, typically women, within private spaces to restrict their visibility and participation in public life, often based on cultural or social norms.
16. The house-based industry of Kumartuli revolves primarily around the traditional craft of idol-making. These workshops are family run, with generations of artisans contributing

to the process, which involves everything from sculpting and painting to adding intricate decorations.

17. Semi-domestication is a situation in which women do both household tasks and informal economic activities, such as craftwork, within or around the home, with little engagement in the public or professional arena. In this framework, women are nonetheless limited by conventional roles, juggling home chores with contributions to family income or community production.
18. The younger generation of artisans are reluctant to continue their family tradition of idol-making due to low income, lack of recognition, and better opportunities in other professions, leading to a decline in the continuation of this traditional craft.
19. The migrated potters from Krishnanagar maintain their past prestige in Kumartuli by preserving their traditional craftsmanship, renowned in Bengal for its intricate detailing and lifelike figures. Despite the challenges of urban migration, they try to continue to uphold high standards of artistry, trying to ensure their work remains respected and sought after during major festivals like Durga Puja, thereby to sustain their esteemed legacy.
20. Pauperisation is the process by which individuals, communities, or groups become impoverished or fall into poverty, often due to economic decline, unemployment, social inequality, or systematic exploitation, resulting in a significant deterioration of their living conditions and quality of life.
21. Activities such as unpaid household chores, caregiving, and community support that are indispensable to everyday life and society but are not classified as formal employment or economic labour are referred to as non-work. It frequently involves work that is mostly done by women, which is not accounted for in official labour statistics.

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