

DT 113: Qualitative Research Methods

Exploring Women Vendors' Degrees of Use of Mobile phones

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Abstract

This paper explores the experiences of women vendors and shopkeepers in urban Bengaluru with mobile phone use, focusing on the negotiations they undertake in their daily lives. Drawing on existing literature on non-use, gender, and mobile data usage, the study identifies four themes in women's various degrees of use of mobile phones. First, we examine reasons for the non-use of smartphones, looking at ideas of self-perception around digital literacy. Through the theme of mediated use and decision-making, we explore how women often negotiate access to mobile phones and data through intermediaries, such as family members or shopkeepers, and how these decisions around use are influenced by gender roles and expectations. The theme of family dynamics understands the role of family in shaping women's seemingly 'public' mobile phone use. We also see how women vendors balance their time on their phones, using mobile phones for both work and leisure purposes. These themes tie together to the larger conclusion that while studying the usage of technology, use and non-use cannot be understood in mere binary, and the various in-between shades of degrees must be examined as well.

Keywords: Women vendor, non-use, leisure, family dynamics, digital literacy

Introduction

The past ten years have seen a great push for digitalization, driven by various e-governance initiatives, mobile-based transactions in digital commerce, and various digital regulatory policies. The entry of Jio into the mobile internet market in 2016 caused a jolt to the industry, building new digital infrastructures making internet services massively cheaper for users, and leading other companies to also offer competitive plans. Many have lauded the initiative and the government-led Digital India mission for expanding the reach of the internet to billions of users and have claimed the success of it to be 'beyond imagination'. (Singh, 2023)

However, literature critically examining policy moves of 'digital inclusion' in developing countries has frequently problematized existing notions of internet affordability and access. The India Inequality Report 2022: Digital Divide by Oxfam indicates several gaps in access on the lines of region, income, caste, education, and gender, and while 67% of urban India has access to the internet (Oxfam India, 2022), the quality and persistence of internet connectivity for meaningful use remain questionable (Mihindukulasuriya, 2023). Women continue to have low access to mobile phones, with a 2018 study estimating that only 38% of women in India own mobile phones, as opposed to 71% of men. The same

study notes that the cause for women's reduced access to mobile phones is two-pronged: first, the economic barrier, wherein women have lesser access to the capital required to own and use a mobile phone, and second, the normative barrier, wherein notions about women's social roles prevent them from accessing technology (Barboni et al., 2018).

Considering that much of government services, entertainment options, education, and commercial exchange are moving to digital platforms, the lack of access to mobile phones is likely to have significant repercussions on women's agencies, mobilities, and independence.

Women vendors and shopkeepers occupy an interesting space, particularly in urban cities such as Bengaluru. Their commercial presence implies a digital presence as well, owing to the necessity of offering UPI transactions. At the same time, their experiences with mobile phones are influenced by their gender identities, which often may dictate how, where, when, and for what they have access to mobile phones. Their access to education and the presence of digital literacy determine their comfort with technology. The possibility of a new kind of private leisure also emerges from mobile phone use, allowing for snatches of leisure during a work day when business is lean.

This study focuses primarily on the experience of women vendors and shopkeepers in urban Bengaluru, to understand their experiences around mobile phone use and examine various degrees of usage and negotiations they undertake.

The paper will begin with a review of related literature and an explanation of methodology and authors' positionalities. The findings are enumerated in four themes: perceptions of non-use, mediated use and decision-making, family dynamics, and work and leisure, each bearing sub-themes. These will be discussed in context with existing literature in the discussion, and followed by a conclusion and cited references.

Literature Review

Non-Use of Technology

The study of technology in human, social life largely focuses on users. However, studying non-use or different kinds of use, as well as the reasons for it, may prove valuable in exploring a more nuanced understanding of how people navigate technology.

Satchell & Dourish (2009) look at non-use in its terms, understanding which circumstances and indications lead to the non-use of technology. Non-use is also an activity in practice: it is constantly shaped and modified, based on various contexts, with use and non-use belonging to the same continuum.

Two of the six forms of non-use identified by them are significant to our study here: disenfranchisement and disinterest. Disenfranchisement looks at how certain technological arrangements may put some groups of people at a disadvantage, in terms of their accessibility to technology. Disenfranchisement may be physical, cognitive, economic, social, infrastructural, and geographic. Disinterest refers to non-use where people may simply not find the technology relevant to their lives (Satchell & Dourish, 2009).

In her research work exploring mobile phone use by rural women in Uttar Pradesh, Kumar (2015) explores the layered differences in use and non-use further. She identifies that women have to negotiate their use of mobile phones in contexts where their gender and social position prevent them from having the same access as men do, such as by hiding their phones from the men in the household or agreeing to intermediated access (Parikh & Ghosh, 2006; Sambasivan et al., 2010). One

such method is intermediation. When people lack access due to non-literacy, lack of digital literacy, or affordability, others who have access enter as intermediate users to allow the end user better access. This negotiation comes with various kinds of use: few women might make use of a phone's 'full' functionality, but mobile phones continue to be used and not used in various ways.

Internet Use in Low-Income Constraints

Much of the existing literature on access to mobile internet by low-income groups has primarily tried to look at barriers preventing widespread use and attempted to recommend policy changes for increased inclusion. Issues of affordability across lines of socio-economic disparity, language barriers, complexity of internet use, and digital literacy were some issues identified by a mixed-methods study of factors inhibiting internet adoption in India. (Chauhan et al., 2018)

In the context of smartphone usage, especially in multilingual regions, it is common for people to face challenges related to language barriers and usability. While not everyone is comfortable using English, many individuals still prefer to use it as it allows them access to a wider range of resources and opportunities. This preference for English may help them to learn and create their identity, improve mobility, and facilitate learning in a digital world that often prioritizes English-language content. (Karusala et al., 2018)

Recent studies, particularly looking at the usage of mobile data from a qualitative research perspective, have attempted to understand patterns and negotiations of usage in various socio-economic contexts.

A 2010 study looks at how individuals from low-income backgrounds often negotiate with limited bandwidth and internet access, resorting to various workarounds to make the most of the data that they can afford, including using Bluetooth data transfers and going to mobile shops to download content such as songs, videos and movies. Despite many of these activities requiring knowledge of complex mobile phone features to use Bluetooth and download videos from the internet, even those with minimal prior digital interaction were able to learn to use these interfaces from their families and peers (Smyth et al., 2010).

Rangaswamy & Cutrel (2015) have also looked at the experience of digital leisure in urban Indian slums, critiquing the notion that technology for development must necessarily always be instrumental. They argue that the consumption of entertaining content is what forms strong social networks around the use of technology. This can then work towards building enduring digital literacies in communities (Rangaswamy & Arora, 2016).

All of these works, however, focus primarily on the masculine social experience of digital technology use. The gendered texture of access to digital devices and negotiation over mobile data use has not been addressed so far, particularly in the context of working women vendors in India.

Gender and Mobile Data Usage

Some relevant studies have been done that show how variables like household educational level might bridge gender inequalities in technology usage in specific contexts like urban slums in New Delhi (Joshi et al., 2020).

Gender might be a factor of exclusion in accessibility to ICT infrastructures even though a woman might be equally knowledgeable, and equipped to use it, due to the constraints of space and mobility faced by them. This can often lead to them being invisible potential customers despite their desire and economic capability to pay for the services (Mudliar, 2018). It also shapes the self-perception of

women regarding their capability to use the internet and other technologies as women are often marginalized by their own beliefs which can be shaped by illiteracy and economic circumstances (Johnson, 2010). How devices, whether laptops or mobile phones, are used by women is also often shaped by gender norms. Women often have to negotiate between cultural expectations to share their phones with family members and their privacy, as their devices are mostly open to scrutiny by family members. In certain cultural contexts, if a woman outright refuses to hand over her phone to men or elders, it may be considered disrespectful or impolite. These norms likely influence women's behaviours regarding the sharing of mobile phones. Women for the purpose of privacy may selectively delete their search queries to maintain covert privacy while not signalling that they are hiding anything from those who share or monitor their devices. This opens up questions about gender and privacy in the digital domain (Sambasivan et al., 2018).

As the digital domain has become a part of our everyday lives, this has led to blurring of boundaries between the domestic spacetime, and employment sphere for both men and women. However, it has been observed that transgression from one sphere of life to another may differ between men and women. It has been argued that while the employment sphere transgresses into the domestic spacetime for men, the reverse tends to be the case for women (Massey, 1995; Brannen, 2005). It means that the internet and other technologies have the potential to reinforce gender roles for women and men (Schwanen & Kwan, 2008).

Gender not only plays a role in reinforcing the traditional roles but is also a determining factor in shaping financial ability and owning ICT infrastructure such as mobile phones. Such financial constraints can be explored in categories of income, savings-related barriers and the cost of owning and maintaining a mobile phone (Potnis, 2016). Gender goes beyond just shaping the usage and accessibility to social, economic and digital structures but penetrates how individual choices around ICT like mobile data services are made. The motivation or driving value to use mobile data services is seen to be influenced to a great extent by gender identities. It has been found that hedonic value, emphasising on entertainment and pleasure, was stronger in the female group and it was the utilitarian or instrumental value that was more prevalent in the male group. These insights have often been used by mobile marketers to successfully position mobile data services into targeted markets (Yang & Lee, 2010).

| | M/F/? | Type of phone | Type of shop | Language of interview |
|-----|-------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| JN1 | F | Smartphone | Pushcart | Kannada |
| JN2 | F | Smartphone | Brick and mortar | English |
| JN3 | F | Button | Roadside stall | Kannada |
| JN4 | F | Smartphone | Roadside stall (UR) | Hindi |
| JN5 | M | Smartphone | Roadside stall (R) | Hindi |
| JN6 | F | Smartphone | Roadside stall (R) | Kannada |
| JN7 | F | Smartphone | Roadside stall (R) | Kannada |
| JN8 | F | Smartphone | Roadside stall (R) | Kannada |

| | | | | |
|------|---|------------|----------------------|---------|
| JN9 | F | Smartphone | Roadside stall (R) | Kannada |
| NL10 | F | Smartphone | Roadside stall (UR) | Hindi |
| NL11 | F | Button | Pushcart (UR) | Kannada |
| NL12 | F | Button | Pushcart (UR) | Kannada |
| NL13 | F | Button | Pushcart (UR) | Kannada |
| NL14 | F | Smartphone | Footpath vendor (UR) | Hindi |
| NL15 | F | Smartphone | Footpath vendor (UR) | Hindi |
| CS16 | F | Smartphone | Brick and mortar | English |
| CS17 | F | Smartphone | Brick and mortar | Kannada |
| CS18 | F | Smartphone | Brick and mortar | Hindi |
| CS19 | F | Smartphone | Brick and mortar | Hindi |
| CS20 | M | Smartphone | Roadside stall (UR) | Hindi |
| CS21 | F | Smartphone | Roadside stall (R) | Hindi |
| CS22 | F | Smartphone | Footpath vendor (UR) | Hindi |
| CS23 | F | Smartphone | Footpath vendor (UR) | Hindi |

Table: List of respondents

Methodology

The interviews were done in three weeks across September and October. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 participants, 20 women and 2 men. All participants were shopkeepers or vendors. 7 interviews were fleeting, lasting less than five minutes per person. 8 interviews were lasted between five and ten minutes per person. 7 interviews were extended conversations, taking over ten minutes. The fleeting interviews were largely due to the nature of the vendors' work, their time constraints, and the cessation of interviews when customers approached them. The interviews were conducted by the researchers. Two of the researchers were Hindi-speaking and conducted the interviews in Hindi. The other researcher spoke to the Kannada-speaking participants. All three researchers participated in the English interviews.

Participants were selected from three different places around Bengaluru. The first set of interviews was conducted in Jayanagar (JN). Jayanagar was selected due to its established commercial nature, with many women vendors occupying registered stalls and locations. The second set of interviews was conducted in Neeladri Nagar (NL), Electronic City, due to its transient, relatively new nature as a commercial space. The third and fourth locations were Church Street and Commercial Street (CS), both covered within a day. These locations were chosen because they are located at the heart of the city and have a mixture of both local and non-local vendors.

Participants were recruited through a convenience sampling method, based on the location of participants. Since we were aiming to study the habits and preferences of street vendors and shopkeepers, we visited commercial areas around the city to find participants willing to speak to us. We walked up to the shops during off-peak hours, typically between 11 AM - 4 PM on weekdays, and approached participants when they did not have customers. We introduced ourselves, briefly explained our research project, and asked them if they were willing to talk to us. If they agreed, we requested their consent for video and audio recording, in the absence of which, we took detailed interview notes.

Positionality

All of the researchers are cis-gender women, currently pursuing our master's in Digital Society at IIIT Bengaluru.

KY comes from a privileged class background and is proficient in English and Hindi. Her position as a non-native of Karnataka helped provide different perspectives as an outsider and also sometimes as an insider when interacting with participants who were migrants from the North. After getting her first phone as an undergrad-student, she understood the various unsaid conventions of phone use at home and elsewhere. Like taking calls at night being discouraged in her house and how family dynamics changed the pattern of her phone usage. She also had experiences with data usage when she was traveling and no Wi-Fi was available. Her identity as a woman also motivated her towards this study.

AK hails from a privileged caste and class background, she is a Hindi speaker, a factor that facilitated her interviews and connections with Rajasthani migrants and Urdu-speaking individuals. AK's experiences include negotiating the use of a limited data pack during the COVID-19 pandemic when most activities transitioned online. She also adapted to using UPI in the absence of cash when she began living independently during her undergraduate studies. Additionally, her role in teaching her grandparents how to use a smartphone, a relatively new technology for their generation, sparked her curiosity. This curiosity led her to choose and research how individuals of different backgrounds manage and negotiate the use of data packs and their relationship with smartphones.

SK belongs to a privileged caste and class background and is Kannada-speaking. She conducted and transcribed the interviews with Kannada-speaking participants. Her position as a Kannada-speaking interviewee allowed certain participants to talk to her comfortably. Her own experiences during her undergraduate education in a new city, having to navigate online and offline academics with a limited data pack and adopt various workarounds to maximize data use led her to a curiosity about how other people may negotiate with their data usage similarly.

The interviews were transcribed based on the notes and audio recordings of the interviews. Analytic memos were made on the document, based on which we did an open coding of the text and looked for emergent categories. Once a suitable number of codes emerged, axial coding was done to finetune our classifications.

Findings

1. Perceptions of Non-Use

This exploration delves into the intriguing nuances of non-use and dislike of smartphones among a subset of women vendors, shedding light on the intricate interplay of personal preferences, familial

dynamics, and digital literacy. As we journey through their stories, we discover the threads that connect the complexities of technology adoption in the context of societal expectations and individual goals.

1.1 Non-Use and Dislike

6 women out of 20 whom we interviewed, of which all those who had keypad phones claimed that they did not like using smartphones.



Fig1:Women showing keypad phone

'I don't like phones. I have just a button phone. My brothers have a smartphone, but I don't like to use it.' - NL12

NL12 is a fruit-selling vendor and NL11 is a flower-selling vendor, they mentioned while interviewing, that the male members in their family usually have smartphones, but they wouldn't use them. Some of this 'dislike' could be, in fact, a lack of knowledge on how to use mobile phones. NL11 was a push-cart street vendor who had a keypad phone and claimed that she did not like smartphones: *'My husband has a phone. Children also have... I don't like to use phones. Whether they show or don't show, I don't like it. I don't know how to use also.'* In some cases, this might be due to a lack of knowledge or utility for smartphones as we can see in the case of NL12.

'I like watching serials in my free time. But I watch it on TV. I don't need a phone.' - NL12

We approached JN3 when we saw her scrolling through a smartphone that was connected to a plug point in her shop. Upon seeing us, she kept the phone aside and said that the phone belonged to a customer who wanted to recharge its batteries at her shop. She didn't have a smartphone and used a keypad phone, that was managed by her daughter-in-law. She had not received any primary education, could not read or write, and used her phone only to tell the time and to call people.

Upon being asked if she sees content on her daughter-in-law's phone, she said *'Yes, sometimes she shows. But not much. I don't see it. It's just a time waste, I don't have any use for it.'* This contradicted our observations of her using a smartphone and her assertion when asked if she liked seeing things on her daughter-in-law's smartphone, that *'Yeah, yeah (I like) ... Can't ask my daughter-in-law for her phone whenever I want'*. This dislike also reveals other reasons for non-use such as family dynamics, which we will discuss in the following sections.

1.2 Self-Perception

Many a time in the case of women vendors we observed that they have the perception that technology is for those who are literate and it is of no use for those who haven't studied.

'When they are free, they like to use the mobile phone and go wherever they want. It brings a lot of joy. But it is only for those who have studied. My daughter takes her phone, goes outside, with a lot of freedom she goes around, explores new places, and so on. She can make phone calls.' - JN8

'Do you use UPI to pay other people, in shops and all?

No, madam, my daughter does it. I did it twice or thrice, and it didn't work, I didn't know how to use it. I have not studied as much as them, I studied very little. That's why they handle everything.' - JN8

We can see in the case of JN8 who is a fruit vendor that her daughter has studied and knows how to use smartphones. She also said that she is free and can go anywhere she wants. This shows her perception that literacy is necessary to use technology efficiently which in turn brings freedom and gives people autonomy over things, like it has done for her daughter.

1.3 Digital Literacy and Discomfort with Technology

'No, madam, my daughter does it. I did it twice or thrice, and it didn't work, I didn't know how to use it. I have not studied as much as them, I studied very little. That's why they handle everything.' - JN8

'I don't go to the ATM, madam. These people (UPI market account) let us withdraw money from the account four times each month. If we take it five times, we have to pay a penalty of Rs. 80. If we withdraw more than five times, we have to pay Rs. 100. What can I do? Do I look at the Rs. 100? No, I can't do that, so I just go for it. If I need it urgently, I go and take it. If I walk a bit, I reach the bank, in third block ... It's just a short distance from here - if you walk five minutes from here, just like you go to the restroom, you can go and get money.' - JN8

JN 8 Upon being asked about whether she uses UPI to pay to others as she mentioned that she uses it to receive money, she said that she doesn't know how to use it. She tried using it but failed but her daughter uses it. She also mentioned that whenever she needs money she goes to the bank which is nearby, just in 5-minute walk and withdraws, though they take charges for it she feels more comfortable in withdrawing. This shows that in many cases women have access to technology but they are not able to utilize it properly because of lack of digital literacy.

2. Mediated Use and Decision-Making

2.1 Mediated by Adult Children

Women vendors with older children and grandchildren took their help to use their smartphones. Especially in case they were not digitally literate, the older children made most of the decisions about mobile phone use and mobile internet purchasing. When asked about which data pack she prefers, JN8 said: *'Data? The normal... My children put it for me, I see that, that's all...I do find it difficult, but they (children) take care of everything. I just do 'on-off'. If I want some song, I listen to it, I talk (to people), that's all.'* In the case of JN9, who enjoyed watching shows and movies as she worked, she shared that her daughter *'downloads and gives me pictures (movies) to watch.'*

2.2 Data Recharge Decisions: Others

6 women informed us that their plan recharge decisions were made by others in the family: either older male members of the family, or children and children-in-law.

Women who had keypad phones did not recharge their phones by themselves. NL13 said, *'I have a button phone only. To recharge and add currency, my husband takes care of everything, I don't do*

much.' The UPI scanner attached to their phones also sent money to their husbands' accounts. *'All scanning money goes to my husband's phone... Husband's account'*, mentioned NL11.

2.3 Data Recharge Decisions: Self

13 of our participants recharged their data plans by themselves, most of them going to recharge stops instead of doing it in-app. The decision of how much money to put in was based on the money they could save each month. All of our participants with smartphones bought either 1-month or 3-month plans.

JN9, who makes and sells plastic wire baskets explained her saving and spending patterns.

'Whatever money I get, I have to spend it on these materials, for my household expenses. After that, if I still have 2000-3000 Rupees in my account, then I purchase a three-month plan. If that month my budget is low, then I buy only a one-month or twenty-eight-day plan.'

The volatility and uncertainty of her income imply that she needs to switch between plans: *'One or two months I do it like that only, I keep switching between plans. I can't predict, right? If [inaudible] comes, I have to spend Rs. 1000, and if these other things come... current bill...now they have made current bill free, but before if I had to spend on current, I would have to spend Rs. 500. If some child falls sick, that amount I'll spend for them. Then, whatever money I get next month, I'll use that accordingly for data.'*

For JN1, the worry of her phone going missing or breaking kept her from taking a longer plan: *'We all take only the 1-month pack for data and currency ... We recharge once it gets over only, don't know when our phone will get spoiled. Don't want to take more.'*

3. Family Dynamics

We noticed that women's varying identities as members of families: wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and mothers-in-law, were brought into their decisions on technology use. Family dynamics, both gendered and otherwise, influenced how they used and didn't use their mobile phones.

3.1 Family Dynamics In Phone Use

For women who are not digitally literate, relying on children and children-in-law is essential. JN3, who is illiterate and owns a regular button phone, relies on her daughter-in-law to recharge her phone and show her pictures and videos. We observed JN3 watching videos on a customer's charging smartphone when we approached her, which she kept away. Upon asking her about her experiences with smartphones, she said *'I don't know anything... It is just time waste, I have no use for it.'* But upon asking her whether she enjoyed looking at things on her daughter-in-law's phone, she said *'Yeah yeah but...can't ask my daughter-in-law for her phone whenever I want.'*

Sometimes, even if there is a smartphone at home, the nature of family relationships may prevent women from accessing them freely. JN4 noted, *'They scold me if I use it because we should not use mobile much in front of bhaiya (brother) and papa (father). But at night I can use it.'*

3.2 Vendors as Mothers

Women vendors with school-going children negotiate with their children's use of mobile phones and the internet, trying to balance out what they might need as part of school work, while also maintaining what they feel are appropriate restrictions.

All of the women vendors with young children believed that children should not use their phones too much, although they did allow their children to access them from time to time. JN4 said: *'Sometimes kids play (with phones). But I don't give it to them for a long time, just for 10-20 mins...It's not good for them because they are school-going children.'*

Some women subscribe to low-data daily plans on purpose and use up the data at work, in order to ensure that their children don't get too much data after they return from work. Upon being asked if her current data plan is sufficient for her CS16, a woman managing a textile shop at Commercial Street, noted: *'But if children use it, the data will not be enough. But children should not use more, no? That's why one day of data is enough for us... I don't put full data, because I cannot use it up.'*

4. Work and Leisure: Blurred Boundaries

The lines between work and leisure are increasingly blurred in our modern world, particularly for women vendors, who often navigate complex social and cultural expectations while juggling the demands of their work. In this section, we explore how this is enabled by degrees of usage of smartphones and what it means for these women vendors who navigate between the blurred boundaries of public and private, work and leisure while also negotiating between their many role expectations.

4.1 Phone usage of others(customers/people standing nearby)around women vendors' workplace .

"Phones today cause only tension. Very irritating. Sometimes customers come to my shop and just stand and talk on their phones. I don't know whether to work, eat food, or talk." -JN3

This particular quote is from a woman that we interviewed in Jayanagar. She was a Kannada-speaking woman and did not own a smartphone. She had a keypad phone which she mostly used for calling. She wasn't using her phone for leisure activities but after talking to her we realized that the use of a smartphone by others around her whether it is her customers or just other people standing blurred her sense of work and leisure.

4.2 Phone usage by these women vendors at their workplace.

It was evident to us after our fieldwork that women vendors use their phones in varied ways for leisure at their workplace, depending on their degrees of usage. Here, we go through some of these ways which were highlighted by these women themselves during our conversations with them.

4.2.1 Enacting religion at the workplace

"Q. 'So if customers don't come, do you look at the phone?'

18: 'The phone is there. If they don't come, we'll listen to the message for a while.'

19: 'We'll look at cooking videos in it.'

- CS 18, 19

There were two women whom we interviewed in Commercial Street while they were at their workplace which was a clothes shop. They said that their employer ensures that they don't use phones while attending to customers but when there is nobody around they can use their phone for a while. One of the women (CS18)said that she just uses her phone to listen to God's messages, songs, and other related media. She also confessed that she also checks WhatsApp messages, she said she is in a group where people pray for someone when they are in their times of need like when someone in the locality meets with an accident, etc. She was a Christian and it was interesting to see how she was enacting her faith in the workplace by using her phone.

4.2.2 Downloading movies at the workplace

'I download movies using WiFi, and later I watch it after work.' - CS1

This quote is from this woman who we had a conversation with in Church Street. She was in her early 20s and was employed in this street-side shop with mostly items like rubber bands, and hairbands. etc. The shop had a Wi-Fi connection. While having a conversation with her about her phone usage, she disclosed to us how she also downloads movies while working and also so that she can watch them later at home as wifi is available in the shop.

4.2.3 Entertainment at workplace

"Q: 'Do you use your phone for entertainment purposes here?

10: 'Yes, to listen to music.'

Q: 'From where do you listen to songs? YouTube?'

10: 'No, my brother downloads it and I just listen to that.'- NL10

"In Sharechat you can see everything. Videos, TikTok, everything. I use it for timepass when others are not around" -JN1

These quotes show how women vendors use their phones for entertainment at their workplace in varied ways. The first quote is from a woman that we had a conversation with in Niladri. She did not own a smartphone of her own and she just used her brother's phone to report things related to work. She said that she listens to songs that are downloaded by her brother but she cannot do anything else on the phone. The other quote is by a woman in Jayanagar who has her smartphone, she shared with us how she uses this app called Sharechat(which we were not aware of), and she said it helps her consume varied media types all in one place. She revealed how she uses it to entertain herself when she is not attending to customers.

4.2.4 Leisure activity and work enabling each other



Fig2 JN9 weaving basket while watching a movie

"As I do this work (basket-weaving), I start thinking about all these problems... my mind becomes black. When that happens, if I want some enjoyment, I keep my phone in front of me and smile sometimes, laugh sometimes, cry sometimes (gestures crying) - when I watch some shows, I tear up. Now all of this is available inside the phone, in the dramas you watch"- JN9

This was an interesting case where this woman in Jayanagar revealed to us how her work and leisure are intertwined. She said that she likes basket weaving while watching movies. This helps her to be engaged in her work longer, as she feels less lonely and feels that she has someone by her side, she

can also just let her mind drift and wander. She also admitted that she feels anxious if she cannot be engaged in watching something while working and in such cases has to go talk to people she knows down the street to relieve herself. This was a clear case where the blurred boundaries between work and leisure made the time at her workplace more productive and enjoyable at the same time.

4.3 Hesitance to admit leisure

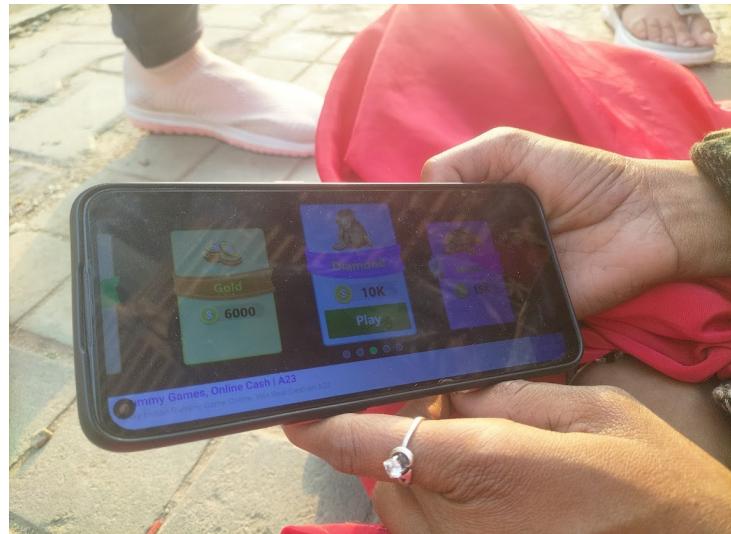


Fig3: Games played by NL14 as she works

"S: So what do you watch on your phone?

14:I don't like using phone much."-NL14

This picture was taken in Niladri when we came across this woman vendor who was playing some game on her phone when we approached her. As we did she had this reaction that made it seem like she wanted to close off the game she was playing, but she hesitantly showed us the screen as we were well in time. After shutting her phone she agreed to talk to us and answered our questions. Although from her mannerisms it was obvious that she loved using the phone and was playing games, later in the interview, she mentioned that she does not like using her phone much and only uses it for necessities.

Discussion

Prior research on the themes explored in our topic, namely data negotiations by individuals from relatively 'low' income backgrounds, gendered differences in use, and variations in the use and non-use of technology looks at groups from various socio-economic contexts. In narrowing our study down to women shopkeepers and vendors, we found that our participants use their mobile phones in varied ways, through both mediated and non-mediated means, and through the interplay of private and public and work and leisure.

Disenfranchisement as a form of non-use refers to the exclusion of certain groups because of the nature of technology (Satchell & Dourish, 2009). In our work, we find that various social arrangements may also lead to disenfranchisement through reduced mobile phone access, such as

gendered family dynamics and varied levels of access to education. Male family members tend to, directly and indirectly, police the use of mobile phones by women. The self-perception of women in regards to their capability to use the internet and other technologies is also significant in their disenfranchisement, as women may often be marginalized by their own beliefs which can be shaped by illiteracy and economic circumstances (Johnson, 2010). While the theme of dislike of mobile technology came up often in our work, we found that this claim of dislike derived from disenfranchisement, lack of knowledge of use, and lack of everyday relevance. Satchell & Dourish (2009) refer to this as 'disinterest', although this must be understood with nuance in the context of larger gendered and social structures.

When women are unable to use their phones 'fully' for work, we found that they rely on others to guide them through those functionalities. These may be their male relatives, such as husbands and brothers, or adult children, such as educated daughters. The mediated use of their phones implies a dependence on the intermediary, especially concerning timings and duration of usage and the kind of content consumed. Some women tend to use their mobile phones for the barest of functionalities, while others are more familiar and comfortable with different usages - and in between lie a host of various degrees of usage of mobile phones.

Women vendors sit at the juncture of public and private, there are often blurred boundaries between work and leisure. Through our research, we were able to gather insights about how mobile phone usage comes into play within such close-nit expectations. We also came across instances where the blurred boundaries between work and leisure arose out of the use of phones by others around their vicinity. Women were seen enacting religion at the workplace, playing games, and listening to songs, etc. We also observed how sometimes the phone became a medium that enabled both work and leisure together for these women vendors.

Limitations

In hindsight, we realized that convenience sampling was not the best for our research study. Due to the nature of our respondents' work day, we were unable to establish rapport and conduct in-depth interviews. Our learning curves also implied that the earlier interviews had poorer data since we were still learning to ask the right questions.

Conclusion

Through the various sections of the paper we have explored the numerous factors and dynamics associated with the degrees of phone usage of women vendors in urban Bangalore. Our study highlighted the distinction between phone ownership and its actual usage by stating our findings about how while most women vendors own phones, their ability to utilize them effectively for various purposes remains uneven. Then we also explored non-use and looked at barriers beyond access that limit women's degree of usage of mobile phones like technological limitations, social constraints, and self-perception. Also, we looked at varied ways in which these women vendors navigate between the blurred boundaries of public and private, work and leisure through the use of mobile phones, and how the use of phones by them /others around their vicinity enables these blurred expectations. All of these tie together for us to understand the various in-between shades of degrees of usage by these women vendors and why they must be examined to understand the use and non-use of phones by them.

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