



Nature of Work, Working Conditions and Problems of Women Construction Workers: A Case Study

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Abstract

Construction industry is one of the important sectors employing a large number of people on its work force. A wide range of activities are involved in it. This industry is taking a pivotal role for construction of buildings, roads, bridges and so forth. Women workers are almost unskilled labourers. About one third of these workers are women and children. The work force employed in the industry have to face several difficulties at the work place viz., wage discrimination and sexual harassment, un healthy job relationship, lower wages etc. The pathetic conditions is that women workers in the construction industry. This paper attempts to analyse the nature of the work, working conditions, wage discrimination, exploitation, harassment and problems of women workers in construction industry in study area and the paper highlights major findings of the study. It also recommends for certain policy initiatives for the status of the women construction workers.

Key words: working conditions, construction workers, harassment, exploitation discrimination, health hazards

I. INTRODUCTION

The Construction industry place very important role in the socio-economic of the country. It is closely associated with nation's economy. India is the one of the fastest growing economies in of the world. Construction sector is providing employment to seven percent of total world employment. Today Indian construction industries employ about 30 million people and create assets worth over Rs 200,000 million annually. In India, it is the largest employer of unorganized labor next to Agriculture sector. The construction industry provides job opportunity to large number of skilled as well as un-skilled work force. Construction workers are the back bone of the economy as they create the infrastructure necessary for industrial growth. In a globalization economy, it is they who are constructing the new economy. India's three crore construction workers are initially the builders of modern India. They contribute in infrastructural development of India by building the roads and highways, the railway tracks and airports and ports. The IT cities, the call centers and mega malls that are creating new forms wealth today. It is they who are laying the cables for a rapidly expanding country-wide telecommunications network that connect the sub-continent and



make India one country. To shorting the distance and supporting the business actively in order to upgrade the economic development. Yet these workers, who are creating the base of the new economy.

II. WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Women play a prominent role at various levels in our economic status. They are the backbone of our nation. Both men and women are integral part of the society. Give appropriate skills and opportunities of decision making, women can prove that are not less than men. The women employment in the construction industry is very high, even though they work only as the helpers or unskilled workers. Their skills are always at the same level and are not upgraded as they assist only the male work force at the work place. About one-third of these workers are women and children. Construction workers as a whole are included in exploited category of workers. Women workers within this category are subject to a more intensive from of job insecurity. Women occupy an extremely disadvantages position in the society. They are the victims of multiple forms of oppression. This is because they are women and they are occupied in mostly exploited areas in the society. Despite the existence of various constitutional and legal provisions guarding women is employment particularly in the unorganized sector; suffer from various disadvantages relating to their working lives as well as their home. The benefits of labour laws have not covered these women workers in many areas especially health, maternity and social security.

III. WORKING CONDITIONS

Industrialization and urbanization has paved a good way to the construction industry. Small towns and cities become more urbanized and the construction sector too has got a boost. Expending and fast growing construction sector and in general, shortage of greater employment opportunity elsewhere has attracted large number of workers in this sector. Construction labours are labours who are migrated from different regions and states leaving their native villages in search of daily job. They have maximum mobility because of the nature of work. These laborers are engaged in huge industrial constructions, residential and commercial apartments, road constructions, hotel constructions, pool and bridges and infrastructure facility works. These construction workers are from poor families and are illiterates. Their lack of education and skill make their choice very limited. They have to face number of problems because of their inexperience and lack of skill. They become easy victim of exploitation and gender discrimination for work allocation and wage distribution. Sexual harassment is a serious problem for women construction workers. They faced different health hazards, physical problems and adverse out comes.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the nature of work and working conditions of women construction workers.
- To study about the wage structure of women construction workers.
- To analyze the problems faced by women construction workers.
- To suggest the recommendations for uplift the status of women workers.



V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Chikmagalur District of Karnataka, in India. according to the 2011 census, Chikmagalur District has a total population of 11,37,961 of which 56,6,622 are males and 5,71,339 are females. The total area of Chikmagalur district is 7201 sq. km and number of Hoblies 34, the seven Taluks of the district have been further sub divided into 34 Hoblies (revenue cities) and density population per sq. km 1587 and sex ratio is 1008 in 2011. In this study, multistage stratified random samplings technique has used. A sample of 300 women construction workers in Chikmagalur district were selected for this study.

The present study is based on the primary data. Primary data is collected from respondents with the help of an interview scheduled; as majority of the women construction workers are illiterate an the women construction workers interviewed in the local language such as Kannada and the responses were noted in interview schedule.

Simple statistical tools like percentage, frequency and cross tabulation and for this SPSS-17 statistical package was used for analyzing the data and explaining the results.

VI. PRIMARY DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table No-1

Cross tabulation of Caste and Nature of job of the Respondents

Caste \ Nature of job		Nature of job				Total
		Temporary	Seasonal	Permanent	Contract basis	
Scheduled Caste	Count	33	48	50	2	133
	% within Caste	24.8%	36.1%	37.6%	1.5%	100.0%
Scheduled tribes	Count	11	16	15	2	44
	% within Caste	25.0%	36.4%	34.1%	4.5%	100.0%
Nomadic tribes	Count	1	0	2	0	3
	% within Caste	33.3%	.0%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
Backward castes	Count	25	32	46	0	103
	% within Caste	24.3%	31.1%	44.7%	.0%	100.0%
Forward caste	Count	2	2	7	0	11
	% within Caste	18.2%	18.2%	63.6%	.0%	100.0%
Others	Count	2	0	4	0	6
	% within Caste	33.3%	.0%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
Total		74	98	124	4	300
		24.7%	32.7%	41.3%	1.3%	100.0%



Source: Field Survey

The table No.1 indicates the results of cross tabulation between Nature of job and caste. This study reveals that majority of the women construction workers are permanent i.e. 41.3% respondents have permanent jobs. They stay at work site. 98 respondents seasonal workers, and 74 respondents (24.7%) are Temporary workers. The majority of the women workers are temporary, seasonal and permanent jobs in nature is found among SC, STs and Backward communities



Table No-2
Frequency Table of Types of construction work of the Respondents

Types of Construction work	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Shopping Centers	77	25.7	25.7	25.7
Residential Apartments	97	32.3	32.3	58.0
Commercial Apartments / Blocks	46	15.3	15.3	73.3
Hotel Construction	10	3.3	3.3	76.7
Governments Administrative Buildings	37	12.3	12.3	89.0
Educational Institutions	19	6.3	6.3	95.3
Pools and Bridges	2	.7	.7	96.0
Temples	10	3.3	3.3	99.3
Infrastructure facility work	2	.7	.7	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey

Table No.2 shows the result of Frequency test regarding the type of construction workers. Out of 300 respondents 32.3 percent of the workers working at residential apartment, 25.7 percent of the women workers working at shopping centaurs, 15.3 percent of the women workers working at Commercial apartments, 12.3percent of the women workers working at Government Administration Buildings, 6.3 percent of the women workers working in Educational Institutions, 3.3percent of the respondents working at construction of Hotels and 0.7percent of the respondents are from construction work of pools and Bridges and Infrastructure facilities.From this result we can observe that the majority i.e. around 98.6 percent of the construction activity are building construction activities.



Table No.3

Cross tabulation of Caste and Types of construction work of the Respondents

Caste	Types Of work	Shop ping Cent ers	Resid ential Apart ments	Comme rcial Apartm ents / Blocks	Hotel Constru ction	Govern ments Adminis trative Building s	Educa tional Institu tions	Pools and Bridg es	Temp les	Infrast ructur e facility work	Total
Schedul ed Caste	Count % within Caste	35 26.3%	38 28.6%	22 16.5%	1 .8%	22 16.5%	8 6.0%	2 1.5%	4 3.0%	1 .8%	133 100.0%
Schedul ed tribes	Count % within Caste	12 27.3%	10 22.7%	9 20.5%	4 9.1%	7 15.9%	2 4.5%	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	44 100.0%
Nomadi c tribes	Count % within Caste	0 .0%	2 66.7%	1 33.3%	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	3 100.0%
Backwa rd castes	Count % within Caste	27 26.2%	44 42.7%	11 10.7%	4 3.9%	6 5.8%	6 5.8%	0 .0%	4 3.9%	1 1.0%	103 100.0%
Forwar d caste	Count % within Caste	2 18.2%	3 27.3%	2 18.2%	1 9.1%	0 .0%	2 18.2%	0 .0%	1 9.1%	0 .0%	11 100.0%
Others	Count % within Caste	1 16.7%	0 .0%	1 16.7%	0 .0%	2 33.3%	1 16.7%	0 .0%	1 16.7%	0 .0%	6 100.0%
Total	Count % within Caste	77 25.7%	97 32.3%	46 15.3%	10 3.3%	37 12.3%	19 6.3%	2 .7%	10 3.3%	2 .7%	300 100.0%

Source: Field survey



Table No.3 shows result of cross tabulation between caste and types of construction workers. This result reveals that majority of women worker around 73.3 percent are working at Building activities like Residential apartments (32.3%), Shopping centre (25.7%) and Commercial Apartments or Blocks (15.3%).

In total 133 respondents belong to scheduled caste, followed 103 backward communities, 44 respondents are scheduled tribes. Number of respondents belongs to Nomadic tribes; forward caste and other respectively are 3, 11 and 6. From this result we can observe that the majority of women workers are in building construction Industry, and majority of them belongs to SC, ST and OBC. It is of this illiteracy, low level of education limited to primary, secondary education which has made them unskilled workers in construction industry.

Table No-4

Frequency Table of multiple Type of work doing women construction workers in the Construction Industry

Type of work doing	Frequency	Percentage
1,2,3,4,5	1	0.33
1,2	5	1.66
1,2,3	7	2.33
1,2,3,12	2	0.66
1,2,3,4	27	9
1,2,3,4,12	4	1.33
1,2,3,4,5	36	12
1,2,3,4,5,6	3	1
1,2,3,4,5,6,12	2	0.66
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,12	4	1.33
1,2,3,4,7,8,9	2	0.66
1,2,3,4	3	1
1,2,4	27	9
1,2,4,5	142	47.33
1,2,4,5,7	3	1
1,2,5	3	1
1,3	3	1
1,3,4	8	2.66
1,3,4,5	15	5
1,3,4,5,7	3	1
Grand Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey

Note: 1.Water feeding 2.Material supply 3. Mall mixing 4.Mixing Cement 5.Stone shaping 6. Slab pouring 7. Load Carrying 8. Breaking Stones 9.Mixing Motor 10.Digging 11.Concreting 12.Levelling 13.Plastering 14. Mason Work 15. Supervision

Table No.4 shows the results of type of work of women construction workers. The majority of women construction workers do the work like water feeding, material supply, mixing cement and stone shaping with percent of 47.33 and its amount to be 142 out of 300



respondents. Next highest multiple type of work done by the respondents is 1,2,3,4,5 by 36 respondents, followed by each 9 percent (27) of the respondents doing 1,2 ,4 and again 9 percent of the respondents(27) doing 1,2,3,4. Totally 77.33 percent of workers work done by above said works. Than the remaining 22.67 percent of the respondents doing different types of construction works.



Table No-5
Cross tabulation of Caste and Exploitation of the Respondents

Caste	Exploitation			Total
		Yes	No	
Scheduled Caste	Count	76	57	133
	% within Caste	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%
Scheduled tribes	Count	29	15	44
	% within Caste	65.9%	34.1%	100.0%
Nomadic tribes	Count	1	2	3
	% within Caste	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Backward castes	Count	54	49	103
	% within Caste	52.4%	47.6%	100.0%
Forward caste	Count	7	4	11
	% within Caste	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%
Others	Count	3	3	6
	% within Caste	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Count	170	130	300
	% within Caste	56.7%	43.3%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey

As shown in table No.5 cross tabulation of caste and Exploitation of the women workers in construction industry. The study reveals that highest exploitation of women workers are around (57.1%), 76 respondents belong to scheduled caste, followed by 54 respondents (52.4%) belongs to backward community, and 29 respondents belongs to scheduled tribes. Only 7 respondents belong to forward community. This study explore that majority of women workers exploited at workplace belongs to SC, backward community and STs respectively. Their exploited by mestri (work supervisor), employer and male workers, and others. Those were exploited i.e. 79 respondents belongs to SC, 54 of them backward community and 29of them belongs to STs. Illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, low status and fear of owner's are main the causes of exploitation.



Table No-6

Rate of exploitation of women workers in construction Industry

Sl. No	Nature of work	Actual wages(In Rupees)	Paid wages(In Rupees)	Difference	Rate of Exploitation
1	Water Feeding	300	230	70	23.33
2	Material Supply	300	250	50	16.66
3	Mall Mixing	300	260	40	13.33
4	Brik Handling	300	250	50	16.66
5	Other	300	250	50	16.66

Source: Field Survey, Discussion with the workers on the site

The table No.6 shows the result of Rate of exploitation of women works. Women workers doing the works like water feeding, material supply, mall mixing, brick handling and other work. Actual wages of these works Rs 300 for among the women workers and them get continues work in the work site. But wages are paid Rs 230 per day by contractor. Difference of actual (expected wage) and paid wage to workers is 70 per day. Exploitation rate is 23.33 percent and next is also rate of exploitation by the contractors is 16.66 percent and 13.33 percent in various work among the women construction workers.

This result reveals that the majority of women workers are exploited by contractor in the form of wages. Rate of exploitation is variation according with the nature of work among the women workers. This type of wage exploitation exists in the construction workers; it is because women workers are illiterates, insecurity of job, and discrimination of gender.



Table No-7

Harassment of women workers at the work place

Sl.No	Name of the Harassment	Opinion of the Respondents	Percentage
1	Abused/Scolded	270	90
2	Humiliated	255	85
3	Beaten	50	16.66
4	No Harassment	100	33.33

Source: Field Survey

The table No.7 shows the results type of harassment of women workers. Out of 300 respondents, 90 percent of the respondents are stated abused or scolded by mestri or contractor or male workers. This result shows that we can observe majority of women workers are harassment by mestri or contractor or male workers in the work site in the form of abused, humiliated and beaten. It is because gender discrimination is also in the construction industry, illiteracy, low skills, and no knowledge of legal education of women workers.

Table No-8

Problems of women workers in the Construction Industry

S.No	Problems	Opinion of Respondents	Percentage
1	In security of job	158	52.66
2	Dangerous working condition	196	65.33
3	Underpaid jobs	22	7.33
4	Unskilled and illiterate	103	34.33
5	Health problems	150	50.00
6	Lack of basic facilities	140	46.66
7	Wage discrimination	204	68.00
8	Absence of child care facility	08	2.66
9	Sexual harassment	06	2.00
10	Lack of sanitary facility	112	37.33

Source: Field Survey

The table No.8 shows the result of various problems faced by women workers in the construction industry. The majority of the women workers faced multiple problems of at the work site with wage discrimination (68%), dangerous working condition (65.33%), and insecurity of job (52.66%), health problems (50%), and lack of sanitation facilities (37.33%), due to not proper facilities to provide the women workers by contractors or mestri or owners.



Table No-9

Frequency table of Satisfaction of Job of the Respondents

Satisfaction of job	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Satisfied	34	11.3	11.3	11.3
Not satisfied	266	88.7	88.7	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey

The above table No.9 shows the result of frequency test of satisfaction job of women workers, out of 300 respondents 88.7 percent of the women workers are not satisfied with their job. It is because hard work, low wages, long working hours, exploitation by male workers and contractors, harassment, lack of basic amenities at the workplace, hazards of working condition and discrimination of gender by various reasons etc.

Table No-10

Reasons for not Satisfied with construction work of the Respondents

S.No	Reasons	Opinion of Respondents	Percentage
1	Hard work	127	42.33
2	Low income	173	57.66
3	Long working hours	39	13.00
4	Exploitation	10	3.37
5	Harassment	07	2.33
6	Lack of basic facilities	14	4.66
7	Hazards working condition	11	3.66

Source: Field Survey

The table No.10 shows the results of reasons for not satisfied the construction women workers. Out of 300 respondents 57.66 percent of the respondents not satisfied with reason of low wages, 42.33 percent of the respondents are stated hard work, 13 percent of the respondents are stated long-working hours of the work site, 4.66 percent of the respondents are stated lack of basic facilities, 3.66 percent of the respondents are stated that hazards working condition and 2.33 percent of the respondents were stated harassment. This result reveals that majority of the workers not satisfied with construction work due to multiple reasons i.e. low income, hard work and long working hours etc.

VII. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The study found that majority of construction activities is concentration of building construction activities like shopping centre, residential apartments, commercial block, government buildings, and educational institution etc. with percentage 98.6 out of 300



respondents. This study shows majority of the women workers (98.6%) are engaged in the building construction activities in study areas.

2. The study found that majority of women workers around 73.3 percent are working at building construction activities like residential apartments (32.8%), shopping centres (25.7%), and commercial apartments or blocks (15.3%). Further this study indicates that 133 respondents belong to scheduled caste followed 103 backward communities and 44 respondents are scheduled tribes out of 300 samples. From this result observe majority of women workers are in building construction activities majority of them belongs to SC, STs and OBC it is of these illiteracy, low level of education limited to primary and secondary education which has made them unskilled workers in construction industry.
3. The study reveals that 88.7 percent of the women workers are not satisfied with their job out of 300 respondents. It is because hard work, low wages, long working hours, exploitation by male workers and contractors, harassment, lack of basic amenities at the workplace, hazards of working condition and discrimination of gender by various reasons etc.
4. The study reveals that highest exploitation of women workers are found i.e. 170 respondents (56.7%) are exploited by mestri (work supervisor), employer, male workers and others out of 300 respondents. Further this study found that majority of the women works are exploited belongs to SCs, STs and OBCs. Those were i.e. 79 respondents belongs to SC, 54 of them backward community and 29 respondents them belongs to STs. Illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, low status and fear of owners are main the source of exploitation.
5. The study found that majority of women construction workers have to work in multiple types of construction works like water feeding, material supply, mixing cement and stone shaping with percent of 77.33 out of 300 respondents. It is due to because of nature of industry itself.
6. This study found that of the women workers stated multiple reasons for not satisfied with construction work i.e. low income with percentage of 57.66, followed by hard work with percentage 42.33 and long working hours with percentage of 13 out of 300 respondents.
7. The study shows that rate of exploitation of women workers doing the work like water feeding, material supply, mall mixing, brik handling and other work. Actual wages of these work Rs 300 per day for among the women workers, but wages are paid Rs 230 to 260 per day by contractor. Differences of actual wages and paid wages to workers it is rate of exploitation i.e. water feeding rate of exploitation is 23.33 percent, material supply, brik handling and other works with 16.66 percent, and mall mixing 13.33 percent out of 300 respondents. Majority of women workers are exploited by contractor in the form of wages.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In spite of its hard work in construction industry women workers are attracted by relatively higher wages and relatively regularity of employment. The same attraction should be retain by bringing a corporate touch to the construction industry.



2. This analysis is with regarded to women construction workers and hence 98.6 percent of them are chosen from building construction activities and only 1.4 percent them are randomly selected from road/bridge's construction. Just to have a passing comparison because the problems of building women construction workers are more than that of women construction workers in other fields.
3. Traditionally, women workers use to work in private building construction activities as the times have changed one third of them (1/3) work in residential apartments where there is no direct contact between the builder and the workers . They have to work under a person who has brought them for such work. They cannot clime any benefits in such job opportunities. $\frac{1}{4}$ of the workers work in the construction of shopping centres and margin of them i.e. 15.3 percent of them work for commercial apartments. Again all these workers are from depressed classes their bargaining capacity is limited and they have to work under meagre wages. Since there is a law for minimum wages in unorganised sector. This law should be strictly implemented among the construction workers also.
4. There is no job satisfaction among women workers in construction industry. They have been exploited through long working hours with low wages along with physical exploitation and harassment. Human Rights Commission should look in to the ill practices prevailing in this field and warn against such exploitations.
5. Construction workers are not assured of work throughout year particularly women workers are having seasonal and temporary jobs, their physical capacity, health problem force them to absent for many day's even when the job are available. Highly skilled male workers get jobs throughout the year but women workers job are in secured and there is no continuity of job. Under MGNREGS act the workers are assured of at least 150 days in a year. Whereas women workers are in construction industry are not assured of their income because of the seasonality employment, government provides unemployment benefits to many people under different programmes. In the same way women construction workers should also be compensated by the government through the special assistance during of seasonal workers. Just as food security bill assure food, job security bill should be made in the parliament to support the unorganisedlabourers particularly women workers in construction industry.
6. Women workers in construction industry do work at different levels and hence they get different wages vary rarely we found women work supervisors. It is because of gender gap. They should also be allowed to undertake higher levels of work in construction industry such as work supervisor or mestri.
7. Women construction workers should also be provided with nature call facilities at work spot. At the place their residence water facilities and sewage system is satisfactory in the study area.
8. The negative satisfaction in construction industry is due to hard work and harassment. These can be correct through stringent labour laws.
9. Women workers in construction industry are paid low wages than prescribed by the contractor. They are exploited at all levels. Supervision by labour inspector and by NGOs can go a long way along with the organisation formed by the women workers in putting halt such exploitation.



10. Use of abused words, humiliation, and beating can be stopped through appropriate criminal procedures code.

IX. CONCLUSION

The constitution of India provides equal rights and opportunities to both the genders. In addition, there are specific provision for protection and welfare of working women many of the labour laws. The scenario only can be changed with the government intervention, by implementing the policy strictly. There is a argent need for a unified legislation on construction workers that must provide an independent enforcement authority for its enforcement at state as well as district level. Further it is desirable on the part of the government to enforce strict legislations pertaining to the life security of the women construction workers such as providing safely at the work places, subscribing insurance policies of these workers etc. the minimum wages should be provided to these workers. Social welfare fund for construction workers may set in each district and utilized the fund properly for social welfare scheme of these workers. The socio-economic and cultural development must empower women at greater choices and giving in change of their own future and makes them self-reliant and confident.

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