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OPINION ANALYSIS ON TRANSPORT ISSUES AMONG WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN KODAIKANAL

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ABSTRACT

The present study found that it is construction workers who are constructing the new economy. 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 of wealth today. It is they who are laying the cables for a rapidly expanding country-wide telecommunications network that connect the vast sub-continent and make India one country, to shorting the distance and supporting the business activity in order to upgrade the economic development. Yet these workers, who are creating the base of the new economy, lives in a time warp, trapped in low skilled, low paid, insecure working conditions. About one-third of these workers are women and children. Hence, it is suggested and concluded that the practice of common working hour, follow of reliable wage system, care by employer on health related problems of women workers and implementation of social security measures by the government and medical facility must be ensured.

KEYWORDS

Transport issues, women construction workers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In India women workers constitute a major portion in the work force of the construction industry. Sad to say they remain not only unorganized but also unskilled as compared to male construction workers, who by virtue of their gender preference have progressed ahead in their career from an unskilled worker to a skilled one, specifically as a mason, carpenter, welder and electrician. While on the other hand women construction workers start as unskilled helpers and remain unskilled throughout their life and as a result are victims of gender discrimination. Traditions, culture and customs along with the attitude of society towards women have placed women workers at a great disadvantage. In addition to this, they are also unorganized and dependent on their husbands without any empowerment socially and economically. Unfortunately, in this system, women workers do not have an opportunity to receive any type of skills training which has left them stagnant without any chance of promotion or upgrade of any sort in their job¹.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Construction workers are the backbone of the economy as they create the infrastructure necessary for industrial growth. 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 centre's and mega malls that are creating new forms of wealth today. Construction Women are almost unskilled labourers and they face serious problems related to work, viz., wage discrimination, gender and sexual harassment, unhealthy job relationship, lower wages. Despite these, construction industry over whelming attracts female workers. Their skills are never upgraded as they are allowed to perform only certain types of work and usually they assist the male work force. Hence the study is undertaken to analyze the conditions of women construction workers in Kodaikanal.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1. REVIEW OF UNORGANISED SECTOR WOMEN WORKER

Srinivasan, (2000) studied the conceptual issues of the unorganized sector along with profile of women's employment and its trend. He concluded that employment for the unorganized women workers moved to the sectors where these women had no say at all and away from the legal protection. Non-farm employment hailed as the panacea for surplus-labour in agricultural sector which could not pick up in rural India and the women were most affected².

According to Nata Puvvury (2000), the impact of new agricultural technology on farm women was deleterious and displaced them from their jobs. The commercialization of agriculture and fisheries displaced female labour. It has been widely noted in India that female tasks become male tasks with a higher wage when new equipments are introduced³.

Singh (2001) in his research based on field study has focused on the problems of women domestic workers and has dealt with the working environment, conditions of work, factors forcing them to undertake this work, family life, effects of work on the health of these workers. The study also looked into some of the approaches for improving their quality of life and work, job security options and resource development. Singh found out that 41.33 per cent of these workers were in the age group of 31 to 40 years and 48 per cent were less than 30 years. 40.67 per cent of these workers were from backward castes while 21.22 per cent were from lower castes. 25.33 per cent workers possessed *kachacha* houses and 20 per cent had *pakka* houses. 65.33 per cent houses had no electricity while 14.67 per cent had no toilet. 64 per cent of the domestic workers were under debt. Singh pointed out that unlike the workers of the organized sector, the women domestic workers did not enjoy better conditions of work and working conditions, neither did they get satisfactory wages⁴.

Eapen Mirduel (2001) in her study: "Women in Informal Sector in Kerala: Need for Re-examination" has exposed the hollowness of statistics which shows that there is increase in women's employment in Kerala's 'informal sector'. She opines that employment is irregular, casual, contractual and of exploitative nature. She highlights the nature of employment of women in the informal sector and points out that majority of the women workers in this sector are casual labourers in agriculture, construction, brick making and other subsidiary activities.

She is of the view that although no firm data is available but it is a well known fact that all such activities in which women are engaged, are contracted out. This has a negative impact on women workers. Leaving aside subsidiary activities, the appointments in main occupations are too made on temporary basis. The degree of regularity is nil in employment of women in informal sector. Even in the prime age group (24-30 years) the number of women working in the informal sector has increased. This section of workers needs to be given some type of assets and guidance so that they may be given new platform and skills, other imperatives including raising levels of output and improving the working environment⁵.

According to **Harris (2001)** the adverse impacts on employment in the unorganized sector particularly in the construction sector has to a very extent influenced by the SAP that displace the mainstream of production through processes such as downsizing, outsourcing, contract labor system and feminization of labor-processes rendered possible by what John Harris rightly calls flexibilisation. The declining role of state, less capital and planned expenditure, removal of trade restrictions to align domestic prices with international prices reduced the scope of labour intensity in production and exports. Due to this handicap, the unorganized sector needs protection in products, input, credit and marketing⁶.

Surati, A (2001) conducted a study on work related problems of women workers in textile industry. The objectives of the study were to study the welfare facilities, health problems of the women working in textile industry, the work culture of organization and participation of women in the process of decision making in trade union activities and the perception of working women towards harassment at work place along with the situation of women and inter personal relation with other employee. 70 working women in textile industry in Ahmedabad city were selected as a sample of the study. The sample was selected by simple random sampling technique. The sample was selected by simple random sampling technique. Interview schedule and observation method was used for

data collection of the study. The major findings of the study were that literacy rate among working women was very low. Women have come out from the four walls and they have accepted the work in industry, mill and factory and have become earning member of family. A reason for working was monetary need and inadequate family income and unemployed of husband. Majority of the women didn't face any problem in fulfilling job responsibility while other women were facing health problems such as respiratory, vision, hearing, blood pressure, cough and joint pain problem⁷.

Maleeha Raghaviah (2002) has that the micro enterprises are one of the similar units operating in 58 corporations/municipalities and 991 gram panchayats in Kerala. These enterprises aimed at eliminating poverty, provide a new meaning to the life of thousands of women involved in it and are set up through the NHG's⁸.

Mony. K. Mathew (2002) identified that the Kudumbasree is one of the promoter of micro enterprises through women empowerment and creation of new self-employment opportunities. He also suggested that informal banking system for the poor could be promoted through the formation of SHG's⁹.

3.2. REVIEW OF CONSTRUCTION SECTOR WOMEN WORKER

Chitra Ghosh (1985), in her study, brings out the wage differences men and women in construction work. It is found that through women carry as much load as men, the contractors pay women at a lower rate only. Worse still the labour contractors get the thumb impression of these illiterate women in the register, often paying them less than the stipulated rate¹⁰.

Verma, A. (1995) conducted a study on socio-economic study of women construction workers in Baroda. The main objectives of the study were to study the living conditions and health hazards faced by female construction workers due to employment, and to compare their living condition with earlier condition at their native place. Sixty women construction workers from Baroda city were the sample of the study. Interview schedule and observation schedule were used as a tool for the data collection. Major findings of the study were that majority of the women were illiterate and had migrated to Baroda in search of work. All the respondents were either engaged in unskilled on semi-skilled work. Economic condition of the respondents' family in terms of income, assets and liabilities had become better after the respondents took up this employment. However, nearly all women suffered from one of the other illness. Their health condition had deteriorated after coming to cities, because of hard life and polluted atmosphere¹¹.

Tripathy, S. (1996) conducted a study on "Women Labour in Construction Sector: A case study on Orissa". The main objective of the study was to analyze the history, organization nature and working of construction sector in our country. And the other objective was to examine the socio-economic conditions of women construction labourers, with special reference to Orissa. 40 women labour from Utter Pradesh state Bridge Corporation were selected. Questionnaire, interviews, observations and field notes were used as a tool for data collection of the study. The findings revealed that it was lack of toilets on the sites that put women to a great deal of inconvenience and every site worker had to look for water and walk some distance to reach for it. In general, no medical facility was provided by the employers and the labourers were compelled to spend money for medical care. Accidents involving simple injuries occur every day while fatal accidents are not uncommon. Women workers who carry the cement mix and wet bricks on their heads suffer serious problem like headache and fever. Pregnant women who carry heavy loads run a high risk of abortion¹².

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- This paper aims to analyze the association between the Marital status and Transport Facility.
- To analyze the transport issues about workers.

5. METHODOLOGY

The study is depends on primary data and based on survey method. Survey is conducted among the sample respondents using Interview schedule. Women Construction workers residing in Kodaikanal, Dindigul Disrtict, Tamil Nadu were the sample respondents and were interviewed.

6. SAMPLING DESIGN

Since the respondents belong to unorganised sector and there is no record on their appointment, salary, classification, education. They could not be classified or stratified on suitable basis. Hence researcher used non random sampling technique for the selection of sample respondents. 100 respondents were selected as samples.

7. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

The objective is analysed with the help of chi square test and average rank analysis.

A. CHI SQUARE

The Chi square analysis describes that the association between the Marital status and Transport Facility.

TABLE 1

S-Significant; NS- Not Significant; df- Degree of Freedom; Significant at 5 %level

Problems faced by women	Dimensions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Dis agree	Strongly disagree	χ ² - test value	df	Sig. Value P < 0.05	S (or) NS
Available of transport facility to work place	Married	10	11	4	17	41	10.179	16	0.857	NS
	Unmarried	0	0	0	1	0				
	separated	0	0	0	3	3				
	Divorced	0	1	0	1	2				
	widow	1	0	0	1	4				
Availability of vehicle facility during overtime	Married	8	0	13	20	42	7.410	12	0.829	NS
	Unmarried	0	0	0	1	0				
	separated	0	0	0	2	4				
	Divorced	0	1	0	1	2				
	widow	1	0	0	1	4				
Organization bear the transport cost	Married	9	12	0	18	44	8.969	12	0.706	NS
	Unmarried	0	0	0	1	0				
	separated	0	0	0	2	4				
	Divorced	0	1	0	0	3				
	widow	1	0	0	1	4				

H₀: Marital status has no significant influence on transport facility

H₁: Marital status has significant influence on transport facility

It is inferred from the above table that chi square analysis was computed between marital status and transport facility to assess the influence between them. It is observed from the above table the marital status and Available of transport facility to work place (0.857), marital status and Availability of vehicle facility during overtime (0.829), marital status and Organization bear the transport cost (0.706) as their P values greater than the level of significance 0.05. Hence, Null hypothesis is accepted for these dimensions.

B. AVERAGE RANK ANALYSIS

average rank analysis describes that the ranking patterns of the construction women workers' *Transport facility* of Availability of transport facility to workplace, Availability of vehicle facility during overtime and Organization bear the transport cost.

TABLE 2

Level of agree	Availability of transport facility to workplace			Availability of vehicle facility during overtime			Organization bear the transport cost		
	X	W	XW	X	W	XW	X	W	XW
Strongly Agree	11	5	55	9	5	45	10	5	50
Agree	12	4	48	14	4	56	13	4	52
Neither agree nor Disagree	4	3	12	0	3	0	0	3	0
Disagree	23	2	46	25	2	50	22	2	44
Strongly Disagree	50	1	50	52	1	52	55	1	55
total	100		211	100		203	100		201
$\frac{\sum xw}{n}$			2.11			2.03			2.01
Rank			I			II			III

It is inferred from the above table that the weighted average was computed to assess the rank of Transport facility issues. It is noted from the above table the *Available of transport facility to work place* placed I rank level of agreeability with average points 2.11, II place agreeability level of *Availability of vehicle facility during overtime* is 2.03, III rank is *Organization bear the transport cost* is 2.01.

8. SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

In a globalizing economy, it is construction workers who are constructing the new economy. 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 of wealth today. It is they who are laying the cables for a rapidly expanding country-wide telecommunications network that connect the vast sub-continent and make India one country, to shorting the distance and supporting the business activity in order to upgrade the economic development. Yet these workers, who are creating the base of the new economy, lives in a time warp, trapped in low skilled, low paid, insecure working conditions. About one-third of these workers are women and children. Hence, it is suggested and concluded that the practice of common working hour, follow of reliable wage system, care by employer on health related problems of women workers and implementation of social security measures by the government and medical facility must be ensured.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. During investigation some of the respondents who are hesitated the reveal facts, regarding their problems faced by them in their work environment.
2. In construction field, there are very limited women workers available, because men workers migrate from various places of Tamil Nadu, so it is very difficulty to gathered information.
3. The present study considers only the women workers who are in the fields of construction. The study doesn't cover the male workers in the same industry.

10. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. Occupational stress and psychological hazards of women workers in construction sector.
2. Women workers' healthcare, maternity protection of construction sector.
3. An analysis of women's empowerment in unorganized sector workers.
4. Analysis of migrate women workers problems and living conditions in construction sector.
5. Women contract workers and their working conditions in unorganized sector.
6. Women workers social security in unorganized sector.
7. Health and Nutritional status of women workers in Construction sector.
8. Health issues of aged women workers in unorganized sector.
9. Analysis of working and living condition of women workers in construction sector.
10. Social Insurance provision and Government Schemes for women in construction sector.

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