

Research Paper



AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

In India, the construction industry is the second largest and a fast growing sector. Transnational companies have been competing in the construction industry since the mid-1990s, engaging in both large public-sector infrastructure projects and private sector industrial projects India's construction labour force is estimated at 30 million people; about half are women. There has been a reduction of demand for unskilled labor since mid-1990s; one estimate suggests 1.5 million jobs are lost per year. Women in Construction in India. Women account for half (51%) of the total construction labour force. Women workers are almost exclusively unskilled, casual, manual laborers: carrying bricks, cement, sand, and water digging earth, mixing cement, breaking stones. Women are rarely found in male-dominated skilled trades: carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical wiring.

KEYWORDS: construction industry, infrastructure, employment, workers, expenditure

INTRODUCTION

Construction sector is the world's major industrial employee with seven percent of total world employment. Construction activity is an essential part of a country's infrastructure and industrial growth. This industry is one of the largest employers of the informal sector workforce in the country, predominantly in the built-up situation. This sector recorded the maximum growth rate in the last two decades, doubling its share in total employment and played a main part in the healthy development of the economy. Where more than 90% of workers are seasonal and temporary, while constructions is measured to be one of the principal industry in the country, the worker continue unskilled, exploited and discriminated against.

Construction industry is the backbone of a country as it creates the infrastructure necessary for economic and industrial growth. In India, it employs large number of skilled, semiskilled as well as unskilled workforce due to its huge demand. The workforce employed in the construction industry has to face several hardships at the work since it is one of the hazardous occupations. Women workers are equally employed in this sector especially in unskilled category for sundry and manual works. They are working at various construction and project sites that are highly dangerous in nature and thus face several issues and challenges. Their major hardships are related to

health, the work-life balance, safety at work, wagediscrimination, harassment, and above all, working conditions as the biggest challenge.

The nature of work in this industry is usually seasonal, depending upon the important of work, which differs extensively with the nature of project, work is highly labour intensive in this industry and most of the workers are unskilled. Incongruously, even though the construction sector has been generating employment for a huge section of Indian population in urban areas, the workers in this sector all the most left out of segments of the society and nothing much has been done about this sector. Most of the women construction workers migrated from rural area to urban areas.

WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

Constructions workers are the mainstay of the economy as they generate the infrastructure essential for industrial development. In India, about 350-400 million people live in absolute poverty with a per capita annual income equivalent to US \$ 275; of these, a majority is women. This sector draws in the largest number of women more than 50 per cent of the 32 million construction workers are women (GOI, 2008, P.189).

India's three crore construction workers are accurately the builders of contemporary India. About one-third of these workers are women and children. In India women workers establish a main share in the work force of the



construction industry. Women employed in the construction industry in major cities like Thoothukudi are mostly unskilled labourers coming from the neighboring districts of Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar, They face serious problems related to their work environment, viz., They remain not only unorganised but also unskilled as compared to male construction workers, who by asset of their gender supremacies have advanced fast in their profession form an unskilled worker to a skilled one, wage discrimination, gender and sexual harassment, lower wages, health hazards, safety issues. Despite these problems, construction industry attracts female workers. Their skills are never upgraded to major skilled jobs in the construction industry like, mason, bar benders, carpenter, plumber, fabricator or painter etc as they are allowed to perform only certain types of work and usually they assist the male work force. There are several policies adopted by Government of Tamilnadu and Central Government for the development of infrastructure.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: The objectives of the present study were-

1. To examine the household characteristics of women in the construction workers.
2. To know the household income and expenditure pattern of the women construction workers.
3. To suggest some measures to improve the socio-economic status of these workers.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in the study includes the choice of the study area, the sampling technique adopted, the collection of data, the period of study and the tools of analysis. The present study is based on primary as well as secondary data. The personal interview method will be adopted to collect primary data. For this, a well-designed and a pre-tested interview schedule will be prepared to collect the information relating to the study. With a view to identifying the growth components of the construction industries, the researcher had an in-depth review of previous studies undertaken, relating to the topic of the present study. The area of research work is confined to women construction workers in Thoothukudi city. As the women construction workers are large, the sample workers have been selected by using simple random sampling method. The survey will be carried out from October 2016 to September 2016 for primary data collection. Totally 50 women workers were interviewed at the work place itself.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SAMPLE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

The main objective of the present study is to understand the socio-economic conditions of Thoothukudi district of Tamilnadu. The main aspects analyzed include the age, caste, sex, education, main occupation of the sample respondents. A detailed analysis of the household in which the sample respondent is a member is also made in this chapter.

Table: 1 Age distribution of the sample respondents

Age	Number of sample respondents	
	Number	Per centage
Less than 20	13	26
21-40	10	20
41-60	16	32
Greater than 70	11	22
Total	50	100.00

Source: Primary data

Most of the sample respondents are of the age between 41 to 60 years of age 32 per cent .A significant percentages of the respondents also come under the age group between 21 to 40years of age.

Table: 2 Sex distributions of the sample respondents

Sex	Number of sample respondents	
	Number	Per centage
Females	50	100.00
Total	50	100.00

Source: Primary data

The number and percentage of female respondents exceed among all the communities of the 50 sample respondents 100 per cent of them under females.

Table: 3 Educational statuses of the sample respondents

Educational status	Number of sample respondents	
	Number	Per centage
Illiterate	33	66
Primary and secondary	17	34
Total	50	100.00

Source: Primary data

Majority of the sample respondents were illiterate and those attained primary educations was also significant. This is also true for all communities. Of the 50 sample respondents, 66 per cent of them were illiterates, 34 per cent got primary and secondary education.

Table: 4 Caste wise distributions of sample respondents

Caste	Number of sample respondents	
	Number	Per centage
SC	26	52
BC	12	24
MBC	10	20
Others	2	4
Total	50	100.00

Source: Primary data

It would be observed that 52 per cent of the 50 sample respondents belong to Schedule caste community. The backward and backward communities occupied about 24 per cent of the sample respondents a negligible per centage of the sample respondents belong to other communities.

Table: 5 Main sources of income of the sample respondents

Main sources of income	Number of sample respondents	
	Number	Per centage
Wage labour	6	12
Construction worker	34	68
Quarrying	6	12
Others	4	8
Total	50	100.00

Source: Primary data

Of the 50 sample respondents 68 per cent of them depended construction worker and wage labour, quarrying and others as their main sources of income and 30 per cent of them depended on other occupations.

Table: 6. Number of days of work of the construction women workers

Days of Employment/ Month	Number of respondents	Percentage of the total
< 15 days	10	20
15-20	6	12
21-25	10	20
> 25	24	48
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

Only 10 of our respondents have reported that they get employment for more than 25 days in any month. Those that do supervisory work may be able to be lucky enough to work for more than 25 days per month. 6 of our respondents get work for less than 15 days on an average in any month.

Table: 7. Monthly income of the respondents of the construction women workers

Monthly income (Rs.)	Number of respondents	Percentage of the total
< 1000	11	22
1001-1500	14	28
1501-2000	12	24
2001-2500	6	12
>2500	7	14
Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

As seen this table only seven of our respondents get a monthly income of above Rs.2500/-.In the case of 28 per centage of our respondents the average monthly income range from Rs.1001/-to 1500/- 12 out our respondents have reported that their monthly earning from construction work is even less than Rs.1000/-.Lower the number of days of work available lower in general will be the income earning capacity of any worker.

Table: 8. Expenditure pattern of the construction women workers

Every expenditure is decided by the amount of income earned. Expenditure is a function of income. To acquire things necessary of daily life one has to spend. The expenditure exhibits one's economic position.

Items	Expenditure(Rs.)	% of the Total
Food	5000	34.6
Clothing	3000	20.5
Rent	1300	8.90
Electricity	1000	6.84
Fuel	600	4.10
Transport	1000	6.84
Education	1200	8.21
Medicine	1000	6.84
Leisure activities	500	3.42
Total	14600	100

Source: Primary data

Angel's Law of family expenditure states that greater part of the income of the lower income group is spent on food and other necessities. With every increase in their income greater part of the increased income will also be spent on necessities only by the lower income group. On an average monthly income of the respondents comes upto Rs.14600/-only. This much lower than the average income needed to maintain a family with reasonable standard of living. In the case of lower income group, greater part of the income is spending on food. Efforts must be made to increase the income of construction workers, so that some more income is left with them to meet the other expenses also. Second important place goes to clothing as far as the expenditure commitment of our respondents, i.e., 20.5 per cent of the income is set aside for clothing. Only rest of the income is spending for other categories of expenses.

FINDINGS

Major finding of this study is presented in this chapter along with some suggestions to improve the socio-economic status of construction workers of Thoothukudi district.

- ✓ Most of the sample respondents are of the age between 41 to 60 years of age 32 per cent. A significant percentages of the respondents also come under the age group between 21 to 40 years of age.
- ✓ The number and percentage of female respondents exceed among all the communities of the 50 sample respondents 100 per cent of them under females.
- ✓ Majority of the sample respondents were illiterate and those attained primary educations was also significant. This is also true for all communities. Of the 50 sample respondents, 66 per cent of them were illiterates, 34 per cent got primary and secondary education.
- ✓ It would be observed that 52 per cent of the 50 sample respondents belong to Schedule caste community. The backward and backward communities occupied about 24 per cent of the sample respondents a negligible per centage of the sample respondents belong to other communities.
- ✓ Of the 50 sample respondents 68 per cent of them depended construction worker and wage labour, quarrying and others as their main sources of income and 30 per cent of them depended on other occupations.
- ✓ Only 10 of our respondents have reported that they get employment for more than 25 days in any month. Those that do supervisory work may be able to be lucky enough to work for more than 25 days per month. 6 of our respondents get work for less than 15 days on an average in any month.

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SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

As the push factor is said to dominate in this work it is essential that government must come forward to create other gainful employment opportunities. Importance of small family must be let known to these respondents. Free educational opportunities must be improved, so that all the construction workers will send their children to school. Banking facilities must be extended and the services of banking sector must be available in such a way that all the respondents come forward to keep their savings in banks rather than in chit funds.

The construction workers Board must come forward to provide incentives and assistance to these workers. Accident and death benefit must be made available to these workers. Social security measures should also be extended to this class of workers. Construction workers should come forward to become the members of trade unions. They must be organised together. Thus they may enjoy the benefits of organised sector. It is the responsibility of the government of Tamilnadu to lift construction workers from a hand to mouth life to a better standard of living with safety and security.

Women's education must be given priority. This must take place from human consideration as large majority of the construction workers are females. Women construction workers face several hardships such as economic disparities,

social inequalities, biological inhibitions, physical limitations, psychological constraints, legal inadequacies, technological inadequate, administrative shortcomings and personal maladjustments.

The major policy decisions and Laws and regulations enacted by the central and state governments must be implemented expeditiously. More and more legislative measures must be enacted to improve the position of construction workers especially diseases. Construction industry must protect the rights of workers and give them a fair deal.

Government Departments and the public sector undertakings which take up construction work should set an example and shoulders the responsibility of implementation the existing legislations related with their area.

In order to improve the earning capacity of construction workers, Non-formal training programme should be taken up. They must be informed of their rights and the ways and means to redress their grievances. Women constructions workers keep their children in the construction site. So crèche, nursery schools, balwadies etc must be made available within the reach of these workers. Proper dwelling

units must be made available to these workers with all basic amenities such as drinking water, sanitary facilities etc.

Construction is a high risk industry. Women and children are vulnerable to accidents. So the contractors must come forward to provide protective equipments such as hand-gloves, gum boots, read gears etc. Women's special needs must be looked into. Construction workers suffer from a Varsity of occupational diseases. This shortens the active life span. Even then, due to poverty and mal-nutrition without minding the occupational hazards these people take up this profession. Suitable laws must be passed to protect their interest and it must be monitored to see that these laws are implemented.

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