



Women workers in unorganized sector- A case study of women construction workers in Kamalapur town in the district of Vijayanagara, Karnataka

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Abstract

In India, women constitute almost half of the total workforce. However, over 96% of women work in the informal, unorganized sector. Overall, the formal sector constitutes 93 % of the workforce of the population of India. Moreover, these workers contribute 62% to the gross domestic product (GDP), and 50% to the national income. Poverty and unemployment are the factors that have created a way for women to enter into the informal sector. Due to the lack of alternatives the women from lower socio-economic backgrounds having a low level of education and illiteracy, are forced to work in the unorganized sector. It is noticed that women's participation in the unorganized sector is increasing day by day, in domestic work, agriculture work, street vending and construction work etc. These women are exploited by their employers, as the placement agencies are yet to find out strategies for the protection of these women. Lack of proper legislation and legal support has put these women workers into still more vulnerable conditions. Even though the women workers work for more hours, they are paid very less. It affects their personal and social life.

Keywords: Unorganized, construction worker and women workers.

Introduction

The term 'unorganised' is often used in the Indian context to refer to the vast numbers of women and men engaged in different forms of employment. These forms include home-based work, selling vegetables, employment in household enterprises, small units, on land as agricultural workers, labour on construction sites, domestic work, and many other forms of casual or temporary employment. Owing to poor economic background, women are exploited to a greater degree as they are paid less compared to men for similar nature of work and hours spent on work. The conditions of work in the unorganized sector are unsatisfactory and the problems confronted by them are acute. And that their illiteracy, poverty and indebtedness forced them to work for lower wages and under unjust conditions.

Women and Unorganized sector

Millions of women all over the world has brought them as paid labour but compared with men their workforce is far behind when it comes to the unorganized sector. Whereas gender inequalities have made women at the lowest level of the global value chain which involves in less paid jobs, subcontracted work, insecurity of self-

employment, denial of social protection. Half of the world's women require access to decent living, quality of work, parental leave, maternity leave which is denied in the unorganized sector. On the basis of economic growth also if women play an equal role with men it can increase the GDP of US\$ 28 trillion by 26 % by 2025.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the socio-economic problems of women construction workers in Karnalapura town in Vijayanagara district.
2. To study the reasons for selecting construction work as their occupation
3. To offer suggestions and recommendations for the wellbeing of these construction workers

Study Area

Kamalapura is one of the fastest-growing cities in the Hospet taluka. The town is adjacent to the international tourism place Hampi and it is very near to Hospet. Here the construction of buildings, apartments, malls, resorts, etc is at a faster rate. People are engaged in construction work besides agriculture. As many as 2850 unorganized women are engaged in street vending, garments, agriculture, and involved in building construction in Kamalapura town. Among them, 582 are working in construction work. For the study of socio-economic problems of construction women workers, a sample of 237 is chosen.

Methodology

The present study is undertaken with the primary objective of studying the problems and prospects of women construction workers in the unorganized sector. A women construction worker in Kamalapur town is taken as the unit of the study. The study primarily has used a quantitative method to investigate the research problem with a structured questionnaire. There are 582 women construction workers in the town, among them 237 sample respondents have been chosen for the study under various categories of socio-economic conditions by simple random sampling method. Sample respondents face various problems like health, being less paid, not aware of labour laws. Most of them do not express their opinion freely and feel that they are insecure about their job. Most of them are not permitted to talk with outsiders on their own. The study is conducted in Kamalapura town in the district of Vijayanagara.

Table – 1 Educational status of women construction workers

Educational qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterates	47	19.84
SSLC	18	7.60
PUC	13	5.84
Up to SSLC	156	67.08
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 1 reveals the educational status of respondents based on various categories, 19.84 percent of the sample respondents are illiterate, 7.60 percent of them have completed their secondary schooling, 5.84 percent of respondents have completed their PUC, 67.08 percent of respondents have studied up to SSLC. The study concludes that the majority of women construction workers have studied up to SSLC. This may be one of the reasons to become unorganized workers.

Table – 2 Age-wise classifications of women construction workers

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
15-25	18	7.59
25-35	68	28.69
35-45	67	28.28
45-55	48	20.25
Above 55	36	15.19
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 2 shows the age-wise distribution of respondents, Majority of the women construction workers are in the age group of 25 to 55. Construction work requires strength, but 15.19 of them are involved in the construction work due to their poor economic background.

Table – 3 Religion-wise distributions of women construction workers

Religion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Hindu	197	83.12
Muslim	13	5.48
Others	27	11.40
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 3 highlights the religion of the sample respondents. Out of 237 respondents, 83.12% are Hindus, 5.48% are Muslims and the rest are other categories. The table also reveals that the majority of the sample respondents are Hindus.

Table – 4 Caste-wise women construction workers

Caste	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Forward	17	7.18
OBC	90	37.92
SC	73	30.80
ST	57	24.05
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 4 states that 37.92 percent of respondents are from the OBC category, 30.80 percent are from the SC category followed by ST and forward category. The study also finds that majority of women construction workers are from OBS and SC categories. The study makes it clear that said respondents are not having any alternative work and force them to opt for construction work.

Table – 5 Occupation-wise women construction workers

Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Main Occupation	204	86.08
Sub Occupation	33	13.92
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 5 exhibits that out of 237 women construction workers, 86.08% considered construction work as their main occupation and 13.92% percent worked as domestic work or agricultural work. If they are not getting work in these areas then they go for construction work. The study also reveals that the majority of the sample respondents opted for construction work as their main occupation.

Table – 6: Family-wise women construction workers

Family	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Nuclear family	213	89.88
Joint family	24	10.12
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 6 shows that 89.88% of respondents are lived with their children and 10.12% of the respondents live with their parents and children. It is a known fact that people prefer to live in a nuclear family than a joint family. The sample respondents are not distinct from it.

Table – 7: Family size-wise women construction workers

Family size	No. of Respondents	Percentage
2-4 members	181	76.38
5-7 members	31	13.08
>7 members	25	10.54
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 7 states that 76.38% of women construction workers live with 2-4 members, 13.08% are live with 5-7 members and the rest are living with more than 7 family members. The study also reveals that the majority of said respondents live and prefer with 2-4 members.

Table – 8 Reason for becoming of women construction workers

Reason	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Poor	23	9.70
No other sources of Income	45	18.99
No easy of getting the job	66	27.86
Unskilled work	63	26.58
Friends and Neighbours working	17	7.17
No other good job	23	9.70
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 8 states that due to poor family background sample respondents were forced to become construction workers. 27.86% of them are due to no easy of getting the job, 26.58 of them feel that construction work does not require extra skill and 9.70% percent of them feel that construction work is a good job than any other work.

Table – 9 Income of women construction workers

Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
< Rs. 3,000	181	76.38
Rs. 3000- Rs. 5,000	25	10.54
> Rs. 5,000	31	13.08
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 9 reveals that 76.38% of the respondents have a monthly income of less than Rs. 3,000, 10.54% of them have a monthly income of Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 5,000 and 13.08% pf the have more than Rs. 5,000 monthly incomes. The study makes it very clear that almost all respondents have monthly income up to Rs. 5,000.

Table – 10 Details of Source and Purpose of borrowed by women construction workers

Purpose Borrowings	Education	Agriculture	Marriage	Medical Exp.	Construction	Festivals	House hold appliances	Total
	Bank	08	18	--	--	07	--	--
Co-operative	--	11	--	--	--	--	--	11
SHGs	09	06	09	--	05	--	05	34
Relatives & Friends	09	06	11	13	11	19	03	72
Money lenders	11	11	23	17	11	11	03	87
Total	37	52	43	30	34	30	11	237

Source: Field survey

Table 10 shows that out of 237 respondents, 33 of them have borrowed from bank for education, agriculture and construction the house. 11 of them have borrowed from cooperative society for agriculture, 72 of them have met their requirements from relatives and friends and 37.34% (87) of the respondents are depending on private money lenders. The study makes it clear that 67.08% percent are fulfilled their financial requirements from informal sector.

Table – 11 Details of health problem of women construction workers

Kind of Health problem	Opinion of the respondents		No. of Respondents	Percentage
	Yes	No		
Diabetes	19	--	19	8.02
Anaemia	09	--	09	3.79
Gynaecological Problem	79	--	79	33.33
High/Low Blood Pressure	11	--	11	4.64
Asthma	29	--	29	12.24

Back /Joint pains	31	--	31	13.08
Allergy/Skin diseases	23	--	23	9.71
No disease	--	36	36	15.19
Total	201	36	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 11 shows the health issues of respondents, the majority of respondents have gynaecological problems, 12.24% have Asthma problem, 13.08 respondents have back/joint pains 15.19 of them are not suffering from any disease. From the study it is clear that more than 74% of the sample respondents are suffering from one or the other diseases.

Table – 12 Details of Migration of women construction workers

Migration	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Permanent	121	51.05
Migrated from neighbouring state	32	13.50
Migrated from other districts	34	14.25
Migrated from other cities	21	8.86
Migrated from other villages	29	12.24
Total	237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 12 shows that out of 237 respondents, 51.05% of the respondents are residing in their own house, 13.50%, 14.25%, 8.86% and 12.24% are migrated from neighbouring states, from other districts from other cities and other villages respectively.

Table – 13 Women construction workers opinion about labour laws

Income	Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Labour Law	Yes	86	36.29
	No	151	63.71
Total		237	100

Source: Field survey

Table 13 indicates that 63.71% of the sample respondents are not aware of the labour law and more interestingly rest of them just know a little about it. It concludes that the majority of them are not aware of the provisions and benefits in labour law.

Major findings and suggestions

1. Out of 237 respondents, 67.08% of them studied up to SSLC and 19.84 have not studied at all. Therefore concerned authorities have to educate them about the importance of education and encourage them to send their children to the schools.
2. 15.19% of the respondents are in the age group above 55. It is advised to the employers of the concerned unit to take group insurance and create awareness about social programmes launched by the state and central governments and advise them to save some earning for their better future.

3. The majority of the respondents are from OBC, SC and ST categories. Even though central state governments have launched many schemes to nurture these communities still these communities have not yet improved. It is advised to concerned authorities to educate them at the grass-root level.
4. In India majority of the workers are forcing them to work in unorganized sectors due to meet their immediate requirements. It is the responsibility of the authorities to advise them to utilize government schemes to improve their livelihood and standard of living.
5. Out of 237 respondents, 67.08% are still under the clutches of money lenders. Regional Rural banks should take initiative to reach government schemes to the poor and offer short term financial loans at an affordable rate to the poorest of the poor. Encourage them to formal structure.
6. Due to heavy physical work and inadequate nutritional food, more than 74% of them suffer from health-related deceases. It is suggested to the labour officer to strict vigilance on those who violate labour law and hygienic environment at workplace.
7. Most of the women construction workers do not know about low relating to their profession. It is suggested to concerned officers to educate them in an appropriate manner.

Application/Improvements: In Karnataka, very few studies were conducted that is the reason the problems of women labourers were not addressed. The legislation and programmes for this group are also very less so through this study the researcher has tried to bring some realities related to women unorganised workers this will helps to bring some new alternatives for the betterment of them.

Conclusion

The Indian Constitution guarantees equality of opportunity related to work, equal rights for Livelihood, equal pay for equal work etc., but these are not effectively implemented. The informal sector is fast expanding, while the organized sector is shrinking. The condition of women in the unorganized sector is deplorable. Unorganized women workers' problems may not possible to eradicate only by the government, so organizations who have undertaken labourers for the work should understand the real problem of the workers and not only the life of the worker but also their dependents. At the same time, the government should take initiatives to educate minimum awareness about labour laws and government schemes to the unorganized women workers and the government come forward to launch a universal wage policy, especially for unorganized workers.

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