



‘A SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF MIGRATED WOMEN LABOURERS IN CONSTRUCTION WORK IN HARYANA’

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ABSTRACT:

Construction industry plays the most crucial role in the country's social and economic development. Construction is a central part of the industrial development and infrastructure development in any economy. Through its divisive and forward relation with various additional industries such as cement, iron, power, paints etc., the construction industry catalyzes the generation of services in any economy. A vast majority of India's labour force is engaged in the informal sector such as agriculture and construction. In the absence of employment in their own states, many labourers migrate across the other states of India to seek job/work. Haryana's construction industry depends almost entirely on migrant workers, majority of which are women. The main object of this paper is to study the socio-economic problems being faced by the migrant women labourers in construction industry in Gurugram and Faridabad districts of Haryana. The paper concludes that these migrant women labourers have to live a very tough life. In spite of being actively involved in economic activities for survival, bearing and rearing of children remain their prime responsibility, and thus they end up with playing roles in both production and reproduction. They have to work in very unhygienic conditions, full of dust, without any basic amenities at the work place, low wages, long working hours, risky or hazardous work and many more. Most of women labourers in construction work in Gurugram and Faridabad belong to the backward regions of the country like Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, U.P. and Rajasthan.

Key words: Women Labourers, Migration, Construction, Employment, Working Conditions.

1. INTRODUCTION:

India is the second largest populated country in the world where the construction labour force is estimated approx. 30 million people; about half are women. The employment of women in the construction work falls under the service sector which is of unorganized category. In this field, both male and female workers are engaged. Women account for half of the total construction labour workforce. Women workers are most exclusively unskilled, casual and of manual labourers. They are mainly engaged in carrying bricks, cement, sand and water and also for digging earth, mixing cement and breaking stones. The women construction workers face different socio-economic problems and also many work-related health problems. The women are given common chores including transporting of materials around the site. They are rarely found in male-dominated skill trades like carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical wiring etc. There is wage disparity between the male and female workers. Women labourers are paid fewer wages. The risk involved in construction work is very high particularly for women workers who have to climb great heights with the load on their heads. Accidents involving simple injury occur almost every day, while fatal accidents occur occasionally. The major cause of accidents is falling from great heights, falling of heavy objects or collapsing of ladders. Long working hours, lack of proper nourishment, lack of safe drinking water are some of the occupational hazards due to which women are not being able to work for longer periods. Safety risks, health hazards, low wages, poor working conditions are some of the problems faced by the women labourers. They are not aware of their legal rights ensured by the Government. The study intends to analyze the socio-economic condition of women construction workers in Gurugram and Faridabad districts of Haryana and a special emphasis was given on investigating health hazards and other work related problems. Most of women labourers in construction work in Gurugram and Faridabad belong to the backward regions of the country like Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, U.P. and Rajasthan.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

Major studies related to the present study have been reviewed thoroughly to find out the research gap.

Sundari 's study (2020) found that, due to structural reforms in the economy, there is little quantitative or qualitative increase in jobs for women over time. The research found that women's work is weak in India. The concentration and vulnerability of women and economic inequality in the labour market in the farm industry as wage labourers, reduced incomes, large-scale informal jobs, low literacy, and most of them self-employed women employed as unpaid labourers are signs. The growth of a nation relies on the participation of women in work. Furthermore, it's necessary to reap the benefits of population dividends and working women in economic empowerment. **Kumar, Babu Praveen, (2019)** research investigates certain statistics and observations about women staff at building sites to meet their basic needs. The thesis focused mainly on the psycho-social issues of women building staff. Many professional, as well as non-skilled labourers are provided with employment

opportunities by the construction industry. There are many problems with labourers at work at the building sites. The researchers are concerned with certain topics relating to fitness, depression, and accidents at their workplace. The study is aimed at investigating the issues of women in Nellore's workforce. The main focus of the research is identifying important variables in the building sites for women labourers.

Women are unqualified labourers and have various more challenges compared to men. The job world's key reasons are problematic for women and the work climate is sexual harassment, gender distress, and wage inequality. Even after working for many years, women stay at the same level. **K. Rajanna, (2015)** finds in her research, construction business employs a huge number of people, making it an important sector. All kinds of different activities are included in it. The construction of buildings, roads, bridges, and other infrastructure relies heavily on this business. A majority of women who work on low-wage are low skilled labourers. Around one-third of the workforce consists of women and children. Workplace discrimination and sexual harassment, poor working conditions, and low wages are just a few of the challenges that sector labourers face on the job. Women in construction business are subjected to appalling working conditions. **Dalmia, (2012)** in her book, "Women Construction workers in Delhi," conducted a study on powerful women with frail bodies and muffled voices among Delhi's women workers of construction. The goal of this research is to gain an understanding of the migratory community of women workers in a fast-changing metropolis and to bring forth their voices and tales. The women workers living in the Delhi are fraught with difficulties. Women are burdened and vulnerable due to lack of financial control, despite a fact that it is an earning control, and a lack of awareness and information about their rights and the city. **P. Jayalakshmi, (2016)** her research paper aimed to explore the socioeconomic problems of women workers of Visakhapatnam. The main motive of study is to explore the working environment at the construction site and document issues like gender bias, wages, living conditions, their economic status like saving, loans etc. The data was gathered from one hundred and sixty women construction labourers of Visakhapatnam through a questionnaire. The study's finding is that the women labourers are suffering ample of issues like low earnings, gender discrimination, pathetic working conditions, and absence of social security. She suggested that government and real estate leaders must try to understand the circumstances of women labourers. **Tikoo, (2013)** aim of his research was to determine the acceptability of workplace environmental parameters for women labourers and to determine the influence of workplace environmental parameters on women labourers in terms of occupational health concerns. This research has been performed in four districts of Haryana State (Gurugram, Faridabad, Ambala and Panipat). A total sample of 600 labourers has been chosen (150 from each district). Almost all women labourers in building were subject to fumes, direct sunshine, animal attack, mushroom soil, foggy and rainy weather and electric arc at site. There has been a substantial correlation between occupational health frequency issues and the adequacy of environmental workplace criteria in various districts.

Choudhury, (2013) aims to study the women's mobility in Bangladesh is culturally limited, and women must negotiate with patriarchy in order to enter the male dominated labour market outside the house. A considerable percentage of males are averse to women working for pay, partly because to the societal norm of purdah and

partly because they see it as a negative reflection on their skills as breadwinners, and hence on their masculine character. Women join full-time paid job while overcoming these barriers. However, both genders are rarely treated equally, and this is particularly true in construction industry. As a result, taking rewarded work is a difficult choice for women to make, and once they do, they face a variety of challenges.

Amaratunga et al., (2006) study explore that women have a very low participation percentage in the construction business in the United Kingdom. Currently, over 11 million women work in the United Kingdom, accounting for about half of workforce. Despite advances in number of women working in construction over the last decade, they still account for barely 9% of the workforce. As result, the construction industry will remain to be controlled by men. Women face several obstacles, ranging from challenges entering the construction profession to achieving the highest position in the organization's hierarchy. In this context, this study gives a review of literature on women's current situation in construction, with a focus on impediments that prohibit women from inflowing and remaining in the sector.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The specific objectives of the present study are:

1. To examine the socio-economic conditions of the migrated women labourers in building construction in Gurugram and Faridabad districts of Haryana, India.
2. To examine the working condition and the wage-rate of the migrated women labourers in the study area.
3. To highlights the major problems faced by women labourers in the study area.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research design is a framework of research methods and techniques that are applied to study a particular problem to reach at a logical conclusion. This structure is driven by the researcher's levels of inquiry and the methods used to get samples, collect data, analyze the data, and interpret the outcomes. In this study, descriptive design is used to examine the socio-economic conditions of the migrated women labourers in construction industry and analyze the working conditions of these women. This design has been adopted to analyze the wage rates, major problems faced by women, social security issues in construction Industry. Primary and secondary data are used for the present study. Websites, papers, books, news- papers, journals, etc. have been used to gather secondary data. The primary data has been collected directly from the women labourers working on the building construction sites in Gurugram and Faridabad districts of Haryana using a pre-tested interview schedule. Gurugram and Faridabad districts were chosen as the area of this present study because building construction work is growing very fast in these two districts and a lot of migrant labourers from different states of India coming to these cities in serach of employment. Total 80 women labourers were selected from the different construction sites of both the districts. They were met at their working place for interview to get primary data for the present study. Interview schedule, group discussion and observation methods were applied as the tools for

data collection. Collected data have been analyzed with the use of simple statistics like- classification, tabulation, averages, percentage etc.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

The study intends to analyze the socio-economic condition of women construction workers in Gurugram and Faridabad districts of Haryana and a special emphasis was given on investigating health hazards and other work related problems. Most of women labourers in construction work in Gurugram and Faridabad belong to the backward regions of the country like Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, U.P. and Rajasthan.

5.1. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUD OF THE RESPONDENTS

The study found that majority of women was belong to the weaker sections of the society i.e. from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. There was none of the women labourer belongs to the so called higher castes of the Hindu religion. Out of the total sample of 80 women only 10 percent belongs to the minority category i.e. Muslims. From the total sample of 80 migrated women labourers, none of them belongs to the age group of below 23. It could be clear that the new generation is not interested in working in the construction field. As far as the marital status is concerned, it is revealed that among the 80 samples, 80 percent workers were married and all were living with their husband. About 30 percent of the women labourers having primary education whereas 10 percent are secondary educated and 60 percent of workers are illiterate. Poor educational status coupled with the absence of bargaining power has resulted in the problem of low levels of wages and discrimination at work place. Lack of education has also meant very poor levels of awareness of rights among the women labourers.

Most of migrated women construction labourers are working with their husband at the building construction sites in Gurugram and Faridabad. They are mostly wage earners and their wage is fixed in nature. The daily wage is given either weekly or monthly or when the work is completed. The wage rate for construction workers is the highest in Gurugram in the Haryana state. The researchers found that male labourers were getting Rs 500-600 per day while women labourers were getting Rs 400-450 per day in the study area. In the building construction work the wage rate for labourers is fixed and there is no consideration of experience or educational qualifications. A women labourer has to work for a wage rate of Rs. 400 per day whether she has a 20 years experience or no experience at all. Researchers also noticed that women workers in the construction work were being called as '*BELDAARS*' in the study area while male members were being called as *labourers*. Average wages earned by a women labourer was Rs 7000 monthly while it was Rs 12000 for a male labourer. These women were being found satisfactory with low wages because they were working with their husband. If they demand for the higher wages equal to their male counterparts, the contractor might refused to provide work to them. So getting no work at all, they remained satisfy with low wage rate for them. The monthly income of the women labourers in construction work in the area ranges Rs. 3000 to 10000. The study reveals that they spend

the entire amount they earn during the initial stage of their settlement in the new city. They are able to save a little amount after getting 4 to 5 months regular work.

5.2. WORKING CONDITIONS-

Most women labourers in construction work are illiterate and married off at a young age, often joining their husbands in cities where they are recruited by contractors. They work as concrete mixers, diggers, stone breakers and brick haulers, but are never considered skilled enough to work as masons or carpenters. In addition to the hard labour, they have to fulfil many family responsibilities, including cleaning and feeding the children and husband. They even toil when they are pregnant and resume work soon after giving birth. At construction sites, women can often be seen working hard as their newborns sleep in makeshift cloth cradles. Out of the 80 sample women labourers 88 percent women report that they lack amenities such as clean toilets and basic safety equipment, making them prone to hazards and exposure to construction pollution. Their hands and feet are exposed to the cement mixture, causing skin diseases and scoliosis from inhalation of cement dust. As observed by the researchers at the construction site in the study area, there were no safety measures such as helmets, hand gloves, first aid boxes, clean drinking water, etc. When researchers asked one of the woman labourer about the work, she replied- *'This work is very hard. I have to climb high storey buildings with a lot of load on my head. Not only this I have a lot of work at home like sweeping, cooking, washing cloths, washing utensils child care and money more. My whole body hurts but if I do not work, we will never have enough money to save for our children'*. Another woman reported- *'regular exposure to dust from 8.00 AM to 6.00 PM has caused her cough and breathing problems'*.

5.3. CAUSES OF MIGRATION TO GURUGRAM AND FARIDABAD

In rural areas, family salary is so low that at least one family member has to leave the village to find livelihoods or employment that could give the family an extra source of income. Once in an urban area, the migrants get more reasons to reside in the city, such as better job opportunities, educational opportunities for their children, chances to bring more family members to the city for employment, availability of electricity and electronic goods in an urban area. Gurugram and Faridabad are the connecting cities with Delhi and both the cities are the fastest growing cities in Haryana and have lots of job opportunities. Compared to other growing cities, Gurugram and Faridabad became the main preferences for migrated labourers due to these factors. Most of women labourers in construction work in Gurugram and Faridabad belong to the backward regions of the country like Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, U.P. and Rajasthan. These women come to these cities with their parents or husbands during the time period when there is no agriculture work at their native places. They come to these cities to work for a temporary period of four to six months in a year. Every year during agriculture session they go back to their native places because they find job at their village level that time. This shows that

they migrated mostly in search of job. Their economic compulsions force them to migrate to big cities in search of employment.

5.4. MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY MIGRATED WOMEN LABOURERS IN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION WORK-

The major problems and challenges for women labourers in building construction work encounter are various. These labourers are marked by sporadic employment, ambiguous terms and conditions, a lack of service norms governing their unique tasks, rights, and obligations, and inability to obtain social security benefits. Despite a fact that they make up the bulk of the labourers in construction sector, they face discrimination, inequitable pay, and harassment. Women labourers have been forced to work for long hours in dangerous and health hazardous conditions. Their reproductive capacities were also impaired by different forms of injuries or incidents at work. They have no protection or maternity leave, and there were numerous errors. The wages of women labourers were lower than the wages of men. This condition was, of course, manipulated by the owners or employers. In some cases, construction site owners or contractors threatened that if labourers refused to accept low salaries, they would no longer be employed.

These are number of major problems that are revealed by the women labourers working at the building construction sites in the study area:

- Irregular employment
- Irregular working hours and little pay
- Long hours of work without any safety measures
- Occupational risks and health concerns
- Lack of a suitable physical environment at work
- Major accidents and expenses are made by the labourers.
- Lack of social security like pension, insurance, maternity leave, medical leave etc
- Lack of negotiating power or no labour union
- Lack of educational facilities to the children of migrated labourers, hence their children remain out of the school and force to become child labourers.
- Most of women labourers complained for the physical harassment by the building contractor or the male co-worker.

6. CONCLUSION

The study was based on the empirical information generated through a primary survey in Gurugram and Faridabad districts of Haryana. It should be recognized that the migrated women workers in construction work need to have a good working condition, receive a minimum wage and access to a minimum amount of social

security. The main problems faced by them are the lack of security and safety, there is no security for their life at the construction sites. Some other problems faced by them are the health and financial problems. There is a working of a welfare board for the construction workers while many are not aware of this scheme. The women labourers need the safeguard for their life and also getting a maximum benefit from their work this is because to support their family and children. There is a great need to create regulatory body or a grievance redressal cell to handle various issues, problems and complaints of women labourers in the construction work.

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