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# Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Construction Workers: A Case Study of Chamarajanagara City, Karnataka

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the various challenges faced by female construction workers. Despite playing a vital role in social reproduction and economic production, women workers remain largely ignored and invisible in formal labor statistics and legal protections. This paper highlights important problems, including gender-based wage discrimination, unfavourable working conditions, lack of social security, and absence of legal safeguards such as overtime pay, standardised working hours, health, and maternity benefits. Women construction workers are especially vulnerable and face irregular incomes, high living expenses, dependence on unofficial credit sources, and frequent exploitation by local authorities. Furthermore, systemic problems such as sexual harassment, workplace intolerance, denial of terminal benefits, and inadequate healthcare underscore the broader neglect of labor rights in this sector. The present study focuses on investigating the socioeconomic status of female construction workers and evaluating the difficulties they encounter in the study area. In order to assess the socio economic status, working condition of the women construction workers in Chamarajanagara city, 55 sample respondents were selected. A convenience sampling method was adopted to collect primary data with the help of an interview schedule. The findings show that the majority of unskilled female workers were paid less compared to their counterparts. The major problems faced by women construction workers are the lack of security, there is no security for their life at working site. This study would be beneficial for the government, construction organizations, and women who are willing to work in the construction industry-related disciplines.*

**Keywords:** Women Construction Workers, Unorganized Sector, Gender Wage Disparity Working Conditions, Legal Protection, Workplace Exploitation

## Introduction

In India, the construction industry is the second largest source of employment after agriculture. Over time, it has grown quickly and significantly contributed to national economic development and job creation. In particular, during periods of rising unemployment, the construction sector serves as a crucial source of income for the economically disadvantaged, offering opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labourers. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2016), the percentage of employment in the construction sector increased from 20.3 percent in 1980–81 to 35.74 percent in 1990–91, continuing to grow steadily over the following years. After agriculture, the construction sector is the fastest-growing sector in terms of job creation in the informal economy. From a gender perspective, the construction sector employs a sizable number of women; as per Government of India estimates (2018), there are 31 million female workers are engaged in construction-related work across the country.

The Construction sector has not only contributed to the development of physical infrastructure but has also played a vital role in lower poverty by creating jobs and bolstering related industries. The growing demand for construction has led to an increase in the consumption of raw materials such as cement, bricks, and sand, creating additional job opportunities in related industries.

A number of socio economic factors that influence women's involvement in construction work, including poverty, illiteracy, and restricted access to skill development opportunities. The construction industry provides daily wages for many women, particularly those from underrepresented groups, albeit through informal and frequently unstable work arrangements. Most female workers in the construction industry have casual jobs with little to no social protection or job security. Despite their contributions, women in this industry face several obstacles. In particular, female migrant workers experience gender-based discrimination, exploitation, sexual harassment, unsafe and subpar working conditions, and a general lack of institutional support. Construction sites frequently fail to provide basic amenities, such as childcare centres, proper healthcare, and clean and separate toilets for women. The nature of construction work physically taxing and often done in open or unsafe environments poses additional difficulties for women.

Research on the particular difficulties and working conditions faced by women construction workers is lacking, despite the fact that there is an increasing number of women working in this sector rising. The majority of research studies focus on general employment trends, overlooking sex-specific data and individual experiences. There is still a lack of research on important issues such as job insecurity, absence of social protection, and women's safety at work. Furthermore, there is inadequate focus on the dual responsibilities of paid employment and household duties that female workers encounter. This underscores the necessity for targeted research on gender, informality, and labor rights within the construction sector.

## Review of Literature

Numerous studies have revealed the unstable socioeconomic circumstances faced by female construction workers in India and other developing countries. According to Neetha (2009), women in construction are mostly employed in low-skilled and low-paying jobs with minimal job security and limited access to welfare benefits. The informal nature of construction work, according to Sankaran and Madhav (2011) exposes women to wage

discrimination, hazardous working conditions and lack of maternity or healthcare benefits because they are not legally protected. Desai and Mahadevia (1998) highlight women construction workers bear the dual burden of domestic responsibilities and physical labor often without adequate social support systems. Lal and Srivastava (2012), state that despite the fact that women contribute significantly to the labor force in construction sector, but they are systematically excluded from skill-training programs and are invisible in policy frameworks.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) gender inequality is pervasive in the construction industry and calls for inclusive policies that guarantee equitable pay, access to childcare, and safeguards against exploitation. The need for increased participation of women in the construction industry has been emphasised to tackle labour shortages, promote equality, and enhance productivity (Norberg & Johansson, 2021). Although significant strides have been made in recognising the challenges women face in the construction field, there are still underlying reasons for their ongoing underrepresentation (Galea et al., 2015). As noted by Pamidimukkala and Kermanshachi (2023), many construction sites do not provide sufficient sanitation facilities for female workers, leading to various health issues for these individuals. To enhance the socioeconomic well-being of female construction workers, the literature points to the urgent need for structural changes and gender-based sensitive labour laws.

## Statement of the Problem and Need for the Study

India's construction sector significantly contributes to national development by supplying the infrastructure required for economic expansion. However, the workforce that propels construction sector especially women construction workers often continues to be under-recognized, underpaid, and inadequately protected. Even though these women usually work in labour-intensive, low-skilled jobs, they still deal with a number of socioeconomic challenges, including poverty, illiteracy, poor health conditions, lack of social security, wage discrimination, and unfavourable working conditions. Despite their vital role in the construction

industry, women workers receive little attention in academic research, policy-making, or labor reforms. Their working conditions are dangerous, and they have limited access to basic necessities, such as sanitary facilities, drinking water, and medical care. Furthermore, gender-based problems, such as harassment, unequal pay, and lack of maternity benefits, are still common. This reveals a significant knowledge and intervention gap.

Women construction workers face various socio-economic problems and a number of other problems associated with their work. Women workers are predominantly unskilled casual workers in the field of manual production. They work on the construction site, digging bricks, cement, sand, water, earth, mixing cement, and breaking stone. There is gender pay inequality. Women workers are paid less than men. The risks in the construction sector are very high, particularly for women workers, who are often carrying heavy loads. Simple accidents involving injuries occur almost every day, while fatal accidents occur infrequently. Some of the problems faced by female workers include security risks, health risks, low wages and poor working conditions. Women construction workers are unaware of the legal rights they've been given by the government. A thorough investigation into the socio-economic and working condition of women construction workers in Chamarajanagara need to be systematically investigated.

It is evident from the review of related research that a number of attempts have been made to study the socio-economic conditions, health status, and other problems of women construction workers in different disciplines at different levels. The main purpose of this study is to shed light on the socio-economic status, working conditions, and other work-related problems of female construction workers, because systematic efforts in this direction are still needed.

### Objectives of the Study

By keeping the above cited view in mind, the researcher has framed the following objectives for the purpose of the present study:

- To Know the Socio-Economic Status of Women Construction Workers

- To Examine the Working Condition of Women Construction Workers

### Data Sources and Methodology

In the present study, the methodology consisted of sampling design, source of data collection, period of the study, and statistical tools used.

To fulfil all the objectives of the present research work, with a view to thoroughly study and understand the socio-economic status of women construction workers in Chamarajanagara district, Karnataka, the present study began with a literature search. The researcher contacted several women construction workers in various construction fields. The study is based on survey research technique. Hence, Chamarajanagara city is selected as the area of study. The workers in construction fields after so much hesitation permitted to take interviews. After understanding the research issue, the workers responded positively and assured them to extend their cooperation for the investigation.

Keeping the very personal nature of the topic and the specific nature of the population under study, the Convenience Sampling Method was used to reach the respondents. The Convenience Sampling Method is simply one where the units selected for inclusion in the sample are easiest to access. Because the aim of convenience sampling is easy access, the researcher has simply chosen to stand at one of the working fields in the selected construction field to meet the sample respondents. After obtaining consent from the willing participants, data were obtained, in addition to assuring the confidentiality of the information. This study was carried out from April 2025 to May 2025 in selected construction fields in Chamarajanagara city. Keeping the scope, limitations and willingness of the respondents who came forward to provide information for the present study in mind, the researcher was able to cover 55 sample respondents. Primary data were collected using the developed, pre-tested interview schedule relating to socioeconomic background, working conditions, and problems faced by women construction workers. The total time required to collect data from each worker ranged from 30 to 40 min. A descriptive research design was used in this study.

## Results and Discussion

### Socio Economic Conditions of the Women Construction Workers

The aim of the present section is to analyses the socio-economic status of women construction workers in Chamarajanagara district.

**Table 1 Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents**

Socio-Economic Background	Number	%
Age		
Below 31	18	32.7
41-50	33	60.0
51 and above	4	7.2
Social Background		
SC	17	30.9
ST	16	29.1
OBC	22	40.0
Type of Family		
Joint	24	43.6
Nuclear	31	56.3
Size of the Family		
2 or less	12	21.8
3-4	17	30.9
5 and above	26	47.3
Educational Level		
Illiterate	27	49.1
Primary School	22	40.0
Secondary and Higher Secondary	6	10.9
Average Monthly Individual Income (in Rs)		
Less than 7000	6	10.9
7001 and above	49	89.1
Savings		
Less than 2000	47	85.5
2001 and above	8	14.5
Total	55	100.0

**Source:** Primary Data

The above table depicts out of total respondents, majority workers (33 respondents) fall within the 41–50 years age group, followed by 18 sample respondents are below 31 years of age. This indicates a working age population. The social background of the sample respondents indicated that around 30.9

percent of the respondents belonged to Scheduled Castes (SC), while 40 percent of the respondents belonged to Other Backward Classes (OBC) and 29.1% belonged to Scheduled Tribes (ST). This study highlights that 100 percent of the sample respondents came from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, which may significantly influence their access to resources, employment opportunities, education, and financial needs.

As far as the family structure is concerned, about 56.3 percent of the respondents live in nuclear families while 43.6 percent of the women construction workers are live in joint families. The data reveals the education status of the women construction workers, about 49.1 percent are illiterate. Furthermore, 22 sample respondents completed their primary education. The remaining 10.9 percent were secondarily or higher educated. Moreover lack of education has also meant very poor levels of awareness about laws, health, savings, and government welfare schemes.

Women construction workers earn wages every day. Out of 55 sample women construction workers 89.1 percent earn income more than Rs.7000 per month and remaining 10.9 percent earn income less than Rs.7000 per month. A majority of the women construction workers (47 respondents) had savings less than Rs. 2000 per month, and 14.5 percent of the women construction workers saved more. However the majority of the women construction workers use their earnings for family expenditure.

**Table 2 Working Condition of the Women Construction Workers**

Working Condition	Number	Percentage
Working Hours		
8 hours	55	100.0
Job Environment		
Poor	15	27.3
Average	32	58.2
Good	8	14.5
Modes of Salary Payment		
Daily Payment	55	100.0
Bonus Structure		
No Payment	55	100.0

Medical Allowance System		
No Payment	55	100.0
Maternity Leave		
None/No Payment	55	100.0
Transport Facilities		
No Facility	55	100.0
Total	55	100.0

**Source:** Primary Data

The above table shows that all the women construction workers (100 percent) reported that they worked eight hours per day, indicating complete uniformity in reported working hours. According to sample women construction workers around 58.2 percent of them rated as average job environment at workplace, followed by 27.3 percent rated as poor, and only 14.5 percent considered it good job environment. All women construction workers in the study (100 percent) are paid on a daily wage basis. None of the (55) sample women construction workers stated that they were not receiving any type of medical allowance.

The study reveals that all women construction workers reported the absence of transport facilities provided by employers in the study area. This indicates that women construction workers to either walk long distances or bear additional travel costs.

**Table 3 Satisfaction towards Earning of Respondents**

Satisfaction of Earning	Frequency	%
Poor	13	23.3
Average	27	49.1
Good	15	27.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

The above table presents the level of satisfaction with earnings among the sample of women construction workers. It was categorised into three levels: Good, Average, and Poor. The majority of respondents (49.1percent) rated as their satisfaction as an average level. About 27.3 percent of sample construction workers expressed a good level of satisfaction with their earnings. The remaining 13

female construction workers rated their earnings as having poor satisfaction. This suggests that around a quarter of the sample women construction workers are unhappy with their earnings.

**Table 4 Satisfaction towards Job of Respondents**

Satisfaction of Job	Frequency	%
Poor	8	14.5
Average	31	56.4
Good	16	29.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

The table above reveals the level of job satisfaction among the sample women's construction workers. About 56.4 percent reported having an Average level of job satisfaction. A sizable percentage of the sample of construction workers (16 respondents) rated good job satisfaction. The remaining eight construction workers rated a low level of job satisfaction.

**Table 5 Problem Faced by Women Workers in the Unorganized**

Problems	Frequency	%
Lack of Facilities at workplace	41	74.5
Poor Working condition at season	14	25.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

The data depict key issues faced by female construction workers in the informal sector. The majority (74.5 percent) of female construction workers reported a lack of facilities at the workplace as the biggest problem they encountered. This suggests that basic necessities such as clean drinking water, sanitation, proper seating, restrooms, or childcare may be missing or insufficient at workplace. Further 14 sample women construction workers (25.2 percent) reported poor working conditions during the season.



**Table 6 Reasons for Joining the Job**

Reasons	Frequency	%
Economic Necessity	39	70.9
Family Pressure	16	29.1
Total	55	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The data reveal that around 70.9 percent of the women construction workers reported they were working due to economic necessity. This suggests that the majority of female construction workers are working primarily due to financial constraints. Family pressure was reported by 16 women construction workers (29.1 percent), showing that a sizable percent of women construction workers joined their jobs not out of choice but due to external expectations or obligations.

### Suggestions and Recommendations

The following suggestions and recommendations are made by this study are as follows:

- It is suggested that government take some initiatives to regulate the working conditions, wage structure, and welfare measures for women workers.
- It is also suggested that construction sector should offer medical facilities to protect the health of female workers.
- It is suggested that construction industry should provide housing and transportation facilities, raise current wages, guarantee minimum pay, and ensure that salaries are paid on time.
- Separate restrooms should be designated for female workers, and maternity benefits should be adequately provided for them.

### Conclusion

Women construction workers in the informal sector face a dual challenge of managing household responsibilities alongside demanding jobs. The study was significant since it concentrated on women who work in construction sector; these women either supplement the family's income or, in certain situations, are the primary breadwinners. The study's overall analysis shows that, in comparison to women working in the formal sector, the socio economic status of those working in the construction sector

is unsatisfactory. Their living conditions are also affected by their low incomes. The major problem faced by women construction workers is a lack of security, and there is no security for their life at the working site. This study is restricted to women construction workers in the Chamarajanagara city only. While collecting the data at the worksite, the women workers are not free and comfortable disclosing all information in front of the contractors and other co-workers.

To address these challenges, it is essential to strengthen institutional support, increase awareness, and ensure social protection to enhance the socio-economic conditions of women in the construction sector. This study provides significant insights that can inform future policy development and advocacy initiatives aimed at empowering this underrepresented group within the workforce.

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