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“A STUDY ON WELLBEING AMONG WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS.”

Maitri Mehta¹, Dr. Puneet Ojha²

² Supervisor's

Programme: MSW

Department: Social Work, Parul University

ABSTRACT :

Women construction workers form a sizeable and vulnerable part of the labor force, facing challenges such as unsafe working conditions, low wages, job insecurity, lack of social protection, among others. Even though they keep the construction industry ticking, exploitation, gender discrimination, and hazardous occupations are still the order of the day. Their well-being is contingent upon workplace safety, access to healthcare, financial stability, and labor policies in effect. Among them, anemia has been the major health issue that harms their physical strength, productivity, and life quality.

This study examines the lives of women construction workers in the Raopura area of Vadodara city concerning their working conditions, financial concerns, health issues, and access to welfare measures. Using a case-study approach in which 15 women construction workers took part, the research sought to understand the women construction workers' lived experiences and appraise the efficacy of existing labor and health policies. The findings indicate that women construction workers do not receive appropriate wages and work long hours in unsafe environments. Another finding is that the relatively high prevalence of anemia among these women is primarily attributable to poor nutrition, being overweight because it requires very strenuous work, and ignorance concerning health care services.

To tackle these problems, the study points to the need for proper enforcement of labor laws, safety standards in the workplace, and access to health and nutrition programs. Implementing these could greatly help to ameliorate anemia cases, nutritional awareness programs, free health check-up programs, and iron supplementation programs to improve the well-being of working women. This research can enrich the debate of labor rights and gender equality for the empowerment and welfare of women workers in the construction sector.

Women construction workers are an integral workforce, albeit their contributions so often go unaccounted for. Construction is one of the largest employment-generating industries, characterized by informal labor practices, low payment of wages, and harsh working environments. Women face various challenges in this industry, including job insecurity, exploitation, lack of social security, and unsafe working conditions. Numerous challenges pose health risks to them, including long working hours, exposure to dangerous environments, and minimal access to resources on par with their male counterparts. Being an important part of the workforce, they are nonetheless among the most underprivileged communities often subjected to gender discrimination, giving in to economic instability.

For women working in this sector, physical labor involving carrying heavy loads, mixing cement, and working under extreme weather conditions put their health at greater risk. Anemia is among the most common problems affecting these women, often due to malnutrition, lack of access to health care services, and hard work. Deficiency in iron and nutrients weakens their stamina, making them more vulnerable to fatigue and sickness, thereby interfering with work and general health. Despite continuous efforts by the government to provide welfare schemes and health benefits, there still exists a huge implementation gap and lack of awareness of these schemes, which have denied many women access to support.

The healthy status of women in construction was probed into some detail in Raopura area of Vadodara city. 15 women construction workers were given as case studies. Their socio-economic conditions, health problems, and access to welfare schemes are examined; to know how far existing labor laws and policies are effective, besides pointing to interventions required. The discussion includes possible options to remedy health issues, anemia in particular, through nutritional awareness, free health check-ups, and iron supplementation programs.

An important issue among these is lack of information about the various social security schemes. Many women construction workers do not even know of the existence of those schemes offered by the government-such as health insurance, maternity benefits, and pension schemes. A few, who are aware, face serious problems in accessing these benefits because of administrative hurdles and lack of corruption control. In the absence of any safety net, they are at the mercy of a crisis whenever illness, pregnancy, or old age creeps in-around them or within the family. As such, imperative steps toward consolidating better implementation of these welfare programs are to empower their life and also make it sustainable for them.

The contribution of education and skill development towards improving the well-being of women construction workers cannot also be overlooked. Most women work in unskilled labor, and thus, limited opportunities are available for them to earn decent wages or acquire job security. Offering skill development programs,

vocational training, and alternative livelihood options can provide these women with the ability to seek better-paying jobs and minimize their dependency on physically harrowing work. Besides, the promotion of literacy and financial education would help them make an informed choice concerning their wages, savings, and basic rights in the workplace.

This research is aimed at enlightening the general struggle of women construction workers, so that the discussion on labor rights, gender equality, and social protection can be carried forward. This is intended to provide an avenue for interest and concern amongst policy makers, social workers, and labor organizations on how best to improve the livelihoods and working conditions for women in the construction industry. In their well-being lies not only the respect for the fundamental human rights of women workers under international labor law but also one step towards creating an equitable and inclusive workforce.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Amatya S. (2019) conducted research on, "Role of skilled female construction worker (Mason) in post- earthquake reconstruction and their Socio-Economic changes: a case of Gorkha Earthquake, Nepal." In most catastrophes, women are viewed as a vulnerable category; nevertheless, disasters not only render women more susceptible, but also provide them with opportunities for socioeconomic empowerment through post-disaster rehabilitation. A significant earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 rocked Nepal on April 25, 2015, causing significant damage to housing. The need for labor in reconstruction has increased significantly as a result of this earthquake. For the reconstruction procedure, skilled construction personnel were required. In order to rebuild their homes, a large number of women began to emerge and enroll in mason training. This study's primary goal is to determine how women contribute to post-disaster reconstruction and socioeconomic empowerment following the work. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in this investigation. In addition to conducting two focus groups and two key informant interviews, 122 female masons were polled. The outcome demonstrates that women still have to handle household duties even though they have begun working outside the home. After working outside the home, the duties around the house have not changed. They go to work after doing the household chores ahead of schedule. The women's lives have changed socially and economically as a result of this masonry job. Compared to before, more women are now venturing out into the market. In the household, women are now more respected and have more influence over decisions than they had previously. Additionally, the women are going out and being involved in religious, political, and social groups. Additionally, the women can afford more. It demonstrates how disasters not only increase women's vulnerability but also their social empowerment.

Benette. F et al (1999) conducted research on, "Women in construction: a comparative investigation into the expectations and experiences of female and male construction undergraduates and employees." examines whether, in contrast to men, women's career expectations in the construction sector change once they start working in the field. A literature research and focus group interviews served as the foundation for creating the survey questions. The findings showed that compared to female students, professional women in the construction business had higher aspirations and were more dedicated to staying in the field. Male students had much larger expectations in terms of the number of individuals they intend to manage, whereas female students had significantly higher expectations in terms of money. Professional men oversaw a disproportionately large number of people compared to professional women. Additionally, compared to men, the results indicate that there are fewer women working in the construction business beyond the age of 36. It is advised that this area of research should be developed further

Nandal S. (2006) conducted research on, "Women workers in unorganized sector: A study on construction industry in Haryana." The great majority of workers in India are employed in the unorganized sector. Many laborers travel to other Indian states in search of job because there are no economic chances in their home areas. Nearly all migrant laborers, mostly women, are essential to the construction industry. This paper's primary goal is to raise awareness of the socioeconomic issues that certain women workers in the construction sector confront. The lives of these female employees are quite difficult. They end up playing roles in both production and reproduction because, despite their active participation in economic activities for survival, bearing and raising children remains their first priority.

Lakhani. R (2004) conducted research on, "Occupational Health of Women Construction Workers in the Unorganised Sector." By analyzing the prevalence of occupational health issues, this study aims to evaluate the occupational health status of female workers in the construction sector. One thousand fifty-two workers were chosen through stratified random sampling, given a medical examination, and participated in pertinent examinations, interviews, and investigations. Nearly all of the men and more than three-quarters of the women said they worked 10 to 12 hours a day. Most of the female participants complained of backaches, headaches, and limb pain. Out of all the respondents, 56% of women and 16% of men stated that their injuries prevented them from working. They were not eligible for worker benefits such as social security. Most men and women stated that they would rather work in another field. The prevalence of respiratory, ocular, and skin conditions as well as noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) was discovered in workers exposed to non-ionizing radiation, dust, noise, heat, and cold, as well as dry cement, glass, adhesives, tar, and paint. In addition to the effects of general job stressors including task overload and talent underutilization, almost 76% of women reported gender-specific work stress factors, such as sex discrimination and juggling work and family commitments. It has been discovered that discriminatory obstacles to women workers' access to financial and professional growth are associated with repeated physical and psychological problems as well as more frequent medical visits.

RESEACH GAPS

- **Well-Being Beyond Health and Safety** – Existing research has dealt mainly with occupational hazards, utilizing more perilous hazards, but there has been a gap with respect to insights surrounding mental, emotional, and social well-being.
- **Anemia and Nutrition** – Women construction workers have hardly been studied with regard to nutritional deficiencies and anemia.
- **Regional Specific Gap** – Studies on Vadodara (Raopura area) are absent; there are, hence, needs for regionally based insights.

- **Economic Empowerment** – They are limited in research on women's financial literacy, saving, and growth opportunities.
- **Government Welfare Schemes** – There is little research that has evaluated worker awareness, access, and effectiveness of the welfare schemes for laborers.
- **Gender-Specific Challenges** – There should be a more in-depth study on cultural barriers, unequal wages, and workplace safety issues.
- **Research case studies** - Studies that mostly adopt a survey methodology remain scarce, while first-hand qualitative accounts of women workers are mostly lacking.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

- To investigate the regions for prevalence of anemia.
- To identify the specific factors contributing to various health issues.
- To assess the emotional wellbeing of women construction workers.
- To explore the underline causes & their impact on work performance of women construction workers.
- To evaluate the adequacy of safety measures and practices for women construction workers.

Variable:

- Independent Variable: Age, Education, Caste & Religion of women construction workers.
- Dependent Variable: Education Qualification, Experience and Workplace.

Research Design:

- This research study is descriptive in nature. It is a type of research design that aims to systematically obtain information to describe a phenomenon, situation, or population. The study describes workplace well-being among of women construction workers.

Universe:

The universe for the present research study includes Women Construction Workers of construction industry Baroda City, Gujarat, India.

Sample:

The sample of this study comprises of 15 women construction workers belonging to construction industry of Baroda City, Gujarat, India.

Sampling Method:

This study utilizes non probability sampling technique namely convenience sampling to collect primary data from the Women Construction Workers. In a study on workplace well-being among women construction workers, convenience sampling involves selecting participants from the construction sector specifically because they are relevant to the focus on well-being in that industry.

Tools of Data Collection:

- Primary Tool – Case Study and Narratives
- Secondary Tool- Research Studies, Journals, Internet & Documents.

Data Analysis & Interpretation:

The data will be analyzed and interpret through Thematic Analysis.

Operational Definition:

- **Women Construction Workers-** Women construction workers are female individuals who work in the construction industry, primarily as labourers, masons, and carpenters. They frequently confront specific problems and vulnerabilities because of their gender.
- **Workplace Well-Being-** Workplace well-being for female construction workers refers to their entire physical, emotional, and job safety within the workplace. Physical safety, emotional support, and a healthy work environment are all important considerations.
- **Job Safety-** Job safety for female construction workers refers to keeping them safe from job injuries and accidents. It comprises safety equipment, training, and adhering to safety rules.

- **Anemia- Anaemia** in women construction workers is a lack of red blood cells or haemoglobin, which is frequently caused by insufficient iron consumption, severe menstrual bleeding, or underlying health issues. It might cause fatigue, weakness, and impaired work performance.
- **Emotional Well-being-** Women construction workers' emotional well-being is defined as their ability to regulate their emotions, maintain meaningful relationships, and prevent work-related burnout, exhaustion, and stress. It entails feeling satisfied and fulfilled in their employment.

Limitation:

- A small number of respondents hesitated to answer some questions out of fear of their contractor.
- Women Construction Workers were having limited time to give response.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This study investigates the situation of women construction workers by providing insight into the conditions of their work, economic security, health problems, and access to government benefits and welfare schemes. Working by a case study method involving 15 women construction workers, the study tried to receive a firsthand account of their living conditions and some issues of significance to their overall well-being. The findings indicate job insecurity, hazardous work environments, lack of financial security, health problems like anemia, discrimination against women, and limited accrual of social welfare entitlements.

Working Conditions and Job Security

In the study, it was found that the biggest share of the work performed by fairly unskilled women workers usually tended to involve arduous activities that included manhandling heavy objects, cement mixing, and helping with construction work. Although they do contribute a sizeable labor force, they are paid much less than men and have no job security. A good share of these workers are engaged in temporary or contract work, facing labor market vulnerability in situations of sudden job loss without any means for income. Their employment is dictated by the availability of construction jobs, and when demand is low, they find it extremely difficult to obtain jobs.

Furthermore, occupational safety constitutes a major concern. None of the respondents had reported any safety courses or workers' knowledge against any risk. Many women reported working with no gloves, helmets, or protective shoes; they are exposed to workplace hazards for example injuries, dust inhalation, and extreme weather conditions. The poor sanitation facilities on construction sites certainly add to the burden because women are often faced with the problem of keeping themselves clean, especially during menstruation. Poor comforting conditions put women under stress and make them prone to frequent illnesses, and long-term health complications.

Health Challenges and Prevalence of Anemia

The most alarming of all is the high number of women construction workers with anemia. Almost all the respondents reported having going through nonspecific complaints such as fatigue, dizziness, weakness, and general body pain, which all affected their performance at work and other day-to-day activities. Their main nutritional deficiency causing anemia is mostly the intake of starchy food with very little protein or iron. With low wages and poverty, they cannot afford nutritious meals and depend upon cheap and conveniently available food items, mostly devoid of nutrition.

Moreover, heavy workloads and prolonged working hours overwhelm their health. The reasons are that construction women stand for long hours while lifting and doing physically demanding work, which wastes much of their energy. Some women do not care to get proper medical help because they do not understand other health implications surrounding anemia, and many only seek medical help once their condition has aggravated. The study also finds that many of these workers do not carry out any periodic checkups for health either due to financial constraints or the denial of competent medical care in their vicinity.

Owing to the availability of free government health schemes for medical treatment and nutritional support, most of the women were still unaware of those programs, and even the few aware found it very cumbersome to access them due to bureaucratic reasons, lack of documentation, and involvement of middlemen. Consequently, anemia and other diseases have become a major public health concern and heavily affect the productivity and quality of life of women construction workers.

Economic Instability and Wage Disparities

Another significant issue highlighted in the study is economic instability and wage disparities among women construction workers. The findings reveal that women receive lower wages than men for performing similar tasks, reflecting deep-rooted gender discrimination in the construction sector. While men are often promoted to skilled positions such as masons, supervisors, or contractors, women remain trapped in low-paying, unskilled labor roles. This wage disparity is not only unjust but also contributes to financial insecurity, making it difficult for women workers to support their families and afford basic necessities.

Additionally, the lack of stable employment means that women construction workers often struggle to make ends meet. Many of them are the primary earners for their families, yet irregular income and job uncertainty make it difficult to plan for the future. The absence of financial literacy programs and access to formal banking services further limits their ability to save money or invest in their long-term financial security. As a result, they remain economically vulnerable, often depending on money lenders who charge high-interest rates, trapping them in cycles of debt.

Lack of Awareness and Access to Government Welfare Schemes

Despite the existence of several government welfare schemes aimed at improving the lives of construction workers, the study found that most women were unaware of these programs. Welfare schemes such as the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, health insurance plans, maternity benefits, and pension schemes are intended to provide financial and social security to construction workers. However, low levels of education and lack of proper outreach programs mean that many women do not receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Even those who had some knowledge about these schemes faced challenges in accessing them. The primary barriers include lack of proper identification documents, bureaucratic delays, and corruption. Many women reported that they were unable to register for welfare programs due to complicated application procedures or were asked to pay bribes to get their applications processed. This highlights a significant gap between policy formulation and implementation, preventing marginalized women workers from receiving much-needed support.

Gender Discrimination and Skill Development Barriers

The study also found that gender discrimination is deeply embedded in the construction industry. Women workers are not only paid less than men but are also excluded from opportunities for skill development and career advancement. Unlike men, who receive training in masonry, carpentry, and supervisory roles, women remain confined to unskilled labor tasks. This limits their chances of securing better-paying and more stable jobs, forcing them to remain in low-wage positions with minimal job security.

Furthermore, the social and cultural expectations placed on women make it difficult for them to balance work and household responsibilities. Many women construction workers start their day by completing household chores before heading to work and return home to continue domestic duties. This double burden of labor leaves them physically and emotionally exhausted, affecting their overall well-being. Without adequate support systems, such as childcare facilities or flexible work arrangements, women in the construction sector continue to face significant challenges in maintaining a work-life balance.

Discussion and Recommendation

The results of the study emphasize the imperative for policy interventions and enhancing the implementation of current welfare programs to enhance women construction workers' well-being. All the challenges of suboptimal working conditions, meager wages, poor health, and gender discrimination necessitate a holistic approach.

Improve Workplace Safety Regulations – All employers must offer PPE, safety training, and adequate sanitation facilities on site.

Health and Nutrition Programmes – Free medical check-ups, iron supplements programmes, and nutrition programmes to spread awareness about anemia and other health ailments.

Awareness Drives on Welfare Schemes – The government and non-governmental organizations must organize outreach programs to inform women of the welfare benefits available and make the application process easier.

Skill Development Programs – Female workers need to be imparted training in technical skills, carpentry, and masonry so that they are able to gain better jobs and minimize pay gaps.

Financial Inclusion Programs – Promoting women to have bank accounts, access microfinance facilities, and avail themselves of financial literacy programs can enhance their economic security.

Conclusion

This research focuses on the immediate issues of women construction workers in Vadodara's Raopura region, with a special focus on their precarious working conditions, economic instability, health issues, and inaccessibility to welfare schemes. The results reinforce the institutional marginalization of women in the construction sector, in which they are stuck in poorly paid, unskilled positions with no room for advancement or financial security. Even as they are integral to their livelihoods, they remain plagued by job insecurity, wage discrimination, and exposure to workplace dangers with minimal social protection.

One of the pressing issues that emerge from the study is the alarming prevalence of anemia, which affects productivity directly as well as general health. Deteriorating health through poor nutrition, unawareness, and hard labor puts women workers in a state of vulnerability to fatigue and illness. Moreover, their restricted access to government health schemes and financial aid programs further adds to their vulnerabilities. Although there are several labor welfare programs, the lack of awareness and accessibility bars women from availing these benefits, thus further entrenching their disadvantaged status in the labor market.

The research also highlights the gendered constraints in skill development, which bar women from moving to higher-paying jobs. The absence of training schemes and exclusion from skilled labor forces them into a cycle of economic dependence and uncertainty. To deal with these issues, systematic policy interventions, labor law enforcement, and more effort to mainstream women in skill acquisition programs are necessary. Making accessible healthcare, consolidating legal protections, and extending financial inclusion can improve their level of living significantly.

In summary, this research highlights the imperative necessity for labor rights, workplace safety, and social security reforms to benefit the lives of female construction workers. In the absence of structural transformations and specific interventions, their struggles will continue, putting a cap on their economic empowerment and social mobility. Research in the future needs to be directed at efficient implementation of policies, alternative livelihoods, and lasting solutions to enhance women in the construction industry, towards a more equitable and respectful working life.

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