

PSYCHOLOGY FOR HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND HARMONY

VOLUME-I



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12. A study on Psycho-social Problems of Women Workers in Construction sites : Special reference to Nellore town

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Abstract: The area of work affects the person's ability and the performance. The study exploring some of the facts and insights about women workers, who are working at construction sites, to fulfil their basic needs of their families. In this study primarily focus was on psycho-social problems of women workers in construction sites. Construction Industry provides job opportunities to large number of skilled as well as unskilled workforce. The workforce employed in the construction sites have to face several difficulties at the work place. Several issues related to health, stress, and injuries at work place are the major concern of the research among researchers. The present study attempts to study the problems of women work force employed in construction sites in Nellore. The major focus of the study is to identify the key factors related to the women workers in the construction sites. Women work as unskilled labour and face several other difficulties in comparison to males. Sexual Harassment, gender bias, wage discrimination are the major factors due to which the working environment becomes difficult for them and women's are remains at the same level of skill even after working few number of years.

Key words: *Construction sites, women workers, health problems, stress*

Introduction:

India's three crore construction workers are literally the builders of modern India. Construction workers are the backbone of the economy as they create the infrastructure necessary for industrial growth. The Construction Industry in India is an important indicator of the development as it creates investment opportunities across various related sectors. The construction industry has contributed an estimated 6,708 billion to the national GDP in 2011-12 (a share of around 9%). Modernization and industrialization have paved a good way to the construction industry. Small towns and cities become more urbanized and, the construction sector too has got a boost. Expanding and fast growing construction sector and, in general, lack of greater employment opportunity elsewhere has drawn large numbers of workers in this sector. Around 16% of the India's working population depends on building construction for its livelihood .The Indian construction industry today employs about 35million people and creates assets worth over Rs 200,000 million (India Infra Guru, 2008) annually . These construction labourers are one of the most vulnerable segments of the unorganized sector as there is no permanent job opportunity for them. The construction industry has an annual turnover of Rs 2, 10,000 crores.

Types of works in construction industry: a) Construction workers contribute in infrastructural development of India by building; b) Roads and highways; c) Railway tracks; d) Airports and ports; Dams & bridges Information and Technology (IT) cities; e) Call centre's ; f) Mega malls and g) Resident apartments etc.,

Need and importance of the study

Construction workers, who are creating the base of the new economy, themselves live in a time warp, trapped in low skilled, low paid, insecure working conditions, bound by feudal working

relationships, often literally in bondage. About one-third of these workers are women and children. Women work as unskilled labour and face several other difficulties in comparison to males. They perform various unskilled jobs in the industry like cleaning building sites, carrying bricks, gravel, mortar and water up to the skilled carpenters and masons, irrespective of the number of years they worked, they are not upgraded from unskilled to skilled as males (Jhabvala & Kanbur, 2002; Baruah, 2008). Their skills are always at the same level and are not upgraded as they assist only the male work force at the workplace. There is gender discrimination in paying of wages, and in employment of women. There is a dearth of studies on women working at construction sites; this study is a humble attempt to find out the problems of women working at construction sites.

Objectives of the study:

- The present study attempts to study the problems of women work force employed in construction sites in Nellore.
- To study the socio-demographic details of the respondents
- To identify the key factors and problems related to the women workers in the construction sites.

Methodology:

Research Design:

A descriptive research design was utilized to obtain quantitative data to meet research objectives of the researcher. Interview techniques and observation methods are used while collecting data.

Sampling Design:

The researcher by using simple random sampling method 60 women workers were selected from various construction sites of Nellore.

Tools for Data Collection:

The researcher used semi structured interview schedule to collect the information regarding socio-economic and demographic details, and problems of women workers at construction sites, which was validated by the field experts. The researcher approached respondents and explains the purpose of the study and taken their consent to elicit information regarding study objectives and who were not willing to participate were excluded from the study. Respondents extended their co-operation and they provided the details which are necessary for the research. The researcher used observation method and interviewed the women workers who were comes under inclusion criteria and collect data with semi- structured interview schedule, which took about 30-40 minutes. In this way, about 5-6 members were interviewed on each day.

Analysis of Data: The data collected was coded and frequencies, percentages were calculated. The researcher used appropriate statistical techniques and interferences were drawn based on those results.

Results: Overall 60 respondents were participated in the study. Out of 60 respondents 65% of respondents are in the age group of 25-30 years, 90 % of respondents have no formal education, 81.67% are belongs to Hindu religion, 70% of respondents have income of Rs.5000/- to 7000/- per month and belongs to nuclear family, and 90% of respondents are from Scheduled caste/ scheduled tribe community and 70% of respondents were married.

Table-1: Socio-demographic variables of the Respondents

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Age in years	15-20	5	8.33
	20-25	16	26.67
	25-30	39	65
	Total	60	100
Education of the women worker at construction sites	No formal Education	54	90
	Primary Education	06	10
	Secondary education	0	0
	Total	60	100
Religion	Hindu	49	81.67
	Muslim	2	3.33
	Christian	9	15
	Total	60	100
Income per month	Below 3000/-	5	8.33
	3000/- to 5000/-	11	18.34
	5000/- to 7000/-	42	70
	7000/- to 9000/-	2	3.33
	Total	60	100
Type of Family	Nuclear family	42	70
	Joint family	3	5
	Extended family	15	25
	Total	60	100
Caste	OC	2	3.33
	BC	4	6.67
	SC/ST	54	90
	Total	60	100
Marital status	Married	42	70
	Unmarried	18	30
	Total	60	100

All the respondents (100%) reported that feeling of unsatisfactory life, stress, workload, burnout (90%), feeling of helplessness (90%), worried about low wages & irregular employment (90%), depression and demotivation in the work (90%), lack of toilet facilities (100%), lack of educational facilities for their children (65%), lack of social security measures(compensation for accidents) (85%), low wages even though they have 10 years of experience (90%) , sexual harassment by contractors and other male workers (68%), worried about abusive language used by the supervisors (72%), Lack of time to look after their children (65%), elder siblings forced to look after the younger siblings (50%) and 43% of respondents expressed menstrual problems etc. were reported by the respondents in the study.

Discussion:

The current study highlights the important psycho-social problems of women workers in construction sites of Nellore town. 90% of respondents expressed that stress and mild depression, 43% of respondents reported that facing gynaecological problems during menstruation and also almost all the respondents facing the chronic health issues like headache, body pains, vomiting

sensation, insomnia (sleeplessness) due to heavy workload and also carrying of 9-12 bricks (each weighing 2.5 kg) on their head for each time. In the study, it is observed that poverty leads the respondents to migrate from Srikakulam (native place) to Nellore along with their husband or father. Continuous work stress and irregular work hours affect the duration of sleeping hours and affect their self and their health status. 90% of respondents reported that they are not paid minimum wages and wage discrimination even though they have 10 years of experience. All these psychological issues lead to head ache, body pains, vomiting sensation, insomnia, fever and injuries etc. It was observed that problems directly affect the family and social life. Child care, No extended family support, forced the elder siblings to look after the younger one, no school facilities due to migration from one area to another area, feel difficult to send their children to nearby schools, no time to look after their children's psychological conditions and behaviour, partner's satisfaction, domestic activities were affected. Therefore they suffered from various family conflicts and psychological disorders, not able to take or provide nutritious food to their children due to their irregular and uncertain duty hours and location. Sexual Harassment, gender bias, wage discrimination are the major factors due to which the working environment becomes difficult for them and women's are remains at the same level of skill even after working few number of years. Same results were observed in other studies also (Jhabvala & Kanbur, 2002; Baruah, 2008).

Conclusions:

- All the women are from poor, migrated families.
- All the women came along with their either with husband or with father.
- Majority of the women have no formal education
- All the women suffering with heavy workload along with household chores.
- They are live in slums where one does not get proper (at all) civic amenities viz.. no proper facilities for drainage, toilet, potable water, electricity, recreation etc.
- The surroundings are totally unhygienic.
- There are no local medical facilities, hospital, school, no ration shops.
- No social security measures were taken.
- Gender-based discrimination, proneness to different health hazards, physical problems, psychological problems like insomnia, nausea, headache, and other adverse outcomes. And health problems of their children suffered women working at construction sites more.

Suggestions are as follows: a) Government of India must take care about the facilities and problems of women and children working at construction sites; b) The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and conditions of Service) Act, 1996 must implement strictly and immediately and provide social security & labour welfare measures; c) Attitudes of society must change against gender discrimination; d) Literacy levels of women working at construction sites must be increased; e) Regulate the employment, conditions of work and services; f) To provide minimum employment guarantee; g) To provide health and safety measures; h) Social workers need to develop appropriate intervention programme for women workers and must create awareness among the women workers about their rights and how to protect themselves and their children. By providing counselling, emotional support, and through interventions, we can assure the quality of life to the women workers at construction sites.

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