

A Study on Gender Based Discriminations Faced by Unorganized Women Construction Workers of Coimbatore

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Abstract: *Construction employs the second-largest number of unorganized workers in India, after agriculture, and there is a significant wage gap between female and their male counterparts. This study analyses the wage gap between unorganized construction workers of Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu and the reasons behind this gender-based discrimination as evidenced by personal interviews and research. This study discovered gender-based discrimination in wages, and this study also found that gender-based prejudices and hardships stop women from acquiring specific skills and developing their careers. Women begin as unskilled workers and continue to be so until the end of their working lives.*

Keywords: Women Construction

I. INTRODUCTION

Over 92 per cent of India's workforce was employed in the informal economy in 2017, according to India's National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector, and this number has been steadily rising. This means that over 92 per cent of India's workforce is vulnerable to job insecurity, exploitation, human rights violations, and a lack of adequate legal protection. In the capitalist world, construction is the single most crucial non-agricultural activity. On the other hand, construction workers are frequently treated as second-class citizens with no means of defending their dignity. However, India's construction industry is suffering from a severe scarcity of workers, particularly those with the necessary skill sets to keep up with the country's tremendous growth in the infrastructure and housing sectors. The construction sector's skilled workforce has shrunk from 15.34 per cent in 1995 to 10.57 per cent in 2005, while the proportion of unskilled workers has increased from 73.08 per cent in 1995 to 82.45 per cent in 2005 (Government of India, 2008b, p.240), indicating that there is a high demand for skilled workers. To compensate for the lack, it is necessary to turn semi-skilled or unskilled female workers into skilled workers. Because labor-intensive technologies are economically viable for most building processes, this industry offers a lot of potential for job creation. Due to its interconnections with other sectors, the construction industry can provide both backward and forward employment linkages with other sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing, transportation, commerce, and financial services.

The challenges of women workers are still not adequately addressed by both legislators and employers. Women continue to be under-represented in the construction sector, including occupational and organizational discrimination. Women's hurdles to admittance into the industry start with early socialization and schooling and continue through training and recruiting. Barriers are exacerbated by an industry that continues to promote a male-dominated image and is rooted in a culture that devalues women. Even though women are mostly unskilled laborers who confront major work-related issues such as pay discrimination, gender and sexual harassment, toxic work relationships, and lower earnings, the construction business draws many female workers. Their abilities are seldom improved since women are only permitted to conduct particular jobs and are typically assigned to help the male workforce.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out to answer two main questions

Is there a wage gap between men and women in the unorganized construction sector of Coimbatore?

What factors stop women workers (chithal) from becoming mason?

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2.1 HYPOTHESIS

There is gender-based discrimination in the unorganized construction sector which affects women's wages and creates a wage gap between men and women

These discriminations also affect the job prospect of women to become a mason

2.2 OBJECTIVE

The case study aimed to determine the wage gap between men and women in the unorganized construction sector of Coimbatore and the gender-based discrimination that stops women workers (chithal) from becoming a mason.

2.3 SIGNIFICANCE

Gender-based discrimination in the construction affects minorities economically and psychologically. The wage gap in unorganized women construction workers is often overlooked when discussing the wage gap in general because of the common misunderstanding that bricklayers are predominantly a dominant male sector. This causes authorities and social justice voices never to take gender discrimination against unorganised women construction workers as a serious issue. We should deduce and analyse the root causes of this discrimination and mitigate it.

2.4 METHOD

This was a cross-sectional survey that took place in March 2022 and enrolled all-female construction workers at a randomly selected construction site. The participant's responses were studied using a pre-designed semi-structured questionnaire. To support the findings, an in-depth interview technique was applied. The sample consists of 50 male and female unorganised construction workers in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. The statistical significance of the finding was tested using numerical data analysis when the results were obtained.

2.5 CASE

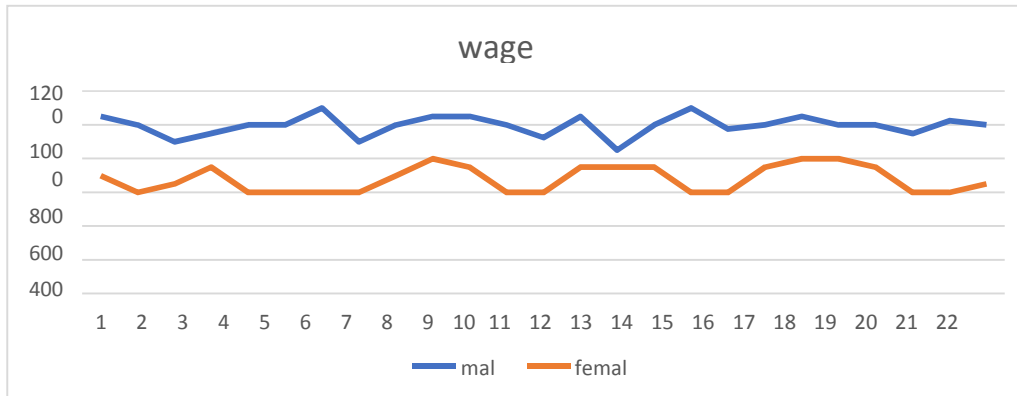
A cross-sectional survey was used to find the gender discrimination faced by women workers. There is a pre-designed semi-structured questionnaire was chosen because a structured questionnaire would not capture the unique experience of the women workers toward gender-based discrimination gathered information on age, sex, wage, and work experience, and we also asked about the job prospect to become a mason, gender-based discrimination faced by them. In addition, notes were gathered on clients' thoughts on female mason. Before the actual data collection, few in-formal interviews with female workers were conducted to establish rapport with them and learn about their lifestyle and living conditions. An in-depth interview guide was created, including all of the topics that needed to be discussed. Based on the findings of in-depth interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire was designed to investigate the participant's reactions. Wages of 50 workers' (male & female) have been recorded, and data related to other variables mentioned above are recorded only for females to understand the correlation between variables and the wage gap.

2.6 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

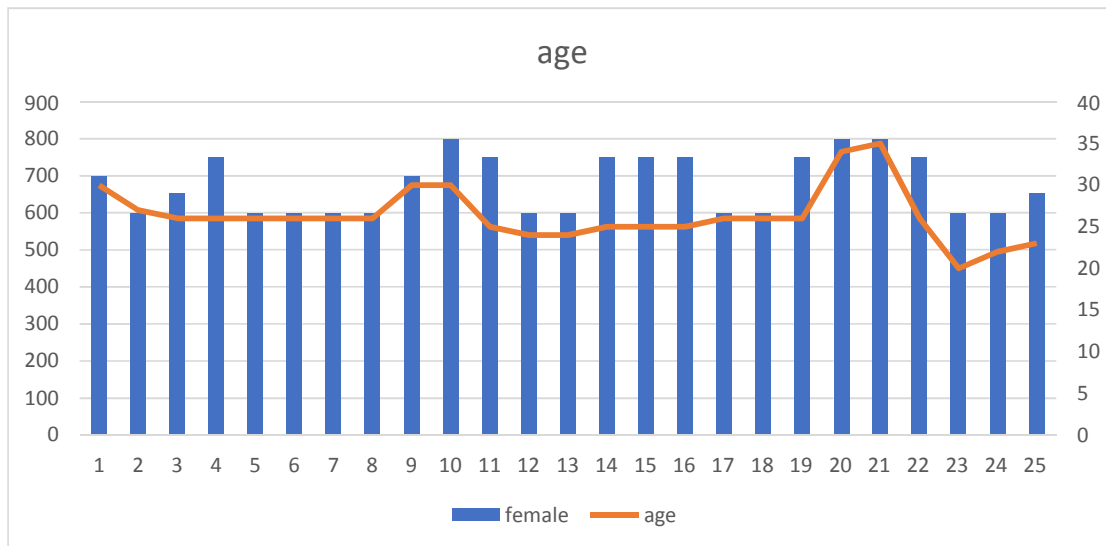
WAGES GAP

First, we looked into the per day minimum wages of 25 men and 25 women of the same job position (chithal) to find the wage gap. These men and women are randomly selected from multiple construction sites.

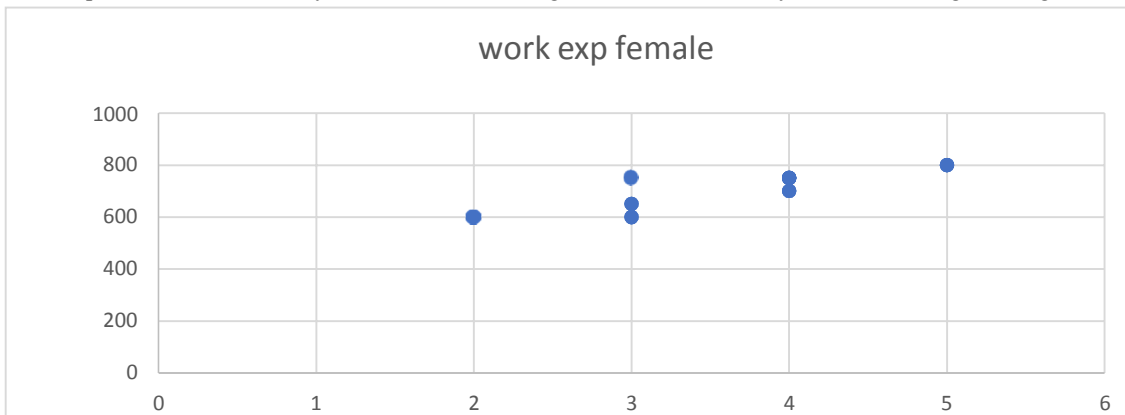
The pay of construction employees is not consistent. Wages are set based on work competence, capacity to work, nature of labour, and gender, which is a common factor taken into account. Men, on average, earn 997, whereas females, on average, make 678, which is 47% (approx.) lower than what men earn on average. This wage gap is two folds higher than any organised and formal sector across the board. The pay gap discrepancy may have minor variations from reality because of the small sample population, but still, this massive gap in every sense. This still did not include the mason because there are wildly few female masons around; an average male mason earns 1700 per day. This wage gap also does not have any transgender people, so we are not sure about the wage gap between cisgender males and transgender females. The correlation value of gender and wage is 0.918104415, a high degree of positive correlation, indicating high gender-based discrimination in wages. We can also deduce that gender plays an integral part in wage determination.



WOMEN'S AGE AND WORK EXPERIENCE



The average age of female construction workers is 26.36, and we can see from the above graph that as we can see that age does not always play an essential role in determining the wage. Even though this sample population is relatively young, there is no surety that the older they get, the more they earn. The correlation value between age and wage is 0.563320072, which is positive and moderately correlated with this signifies that there is only little effect of age on wage determination.



When we look into the work experience, we can find that the more the worker experiences, the more they earn; the correlation value between the work experience of female workers and wage is 0.930744403; there is a positive high degree

correlation, and this signifies that the work experience plays an essential factor in wage determination it's good that thing that the experience pays off. Still, this increment in wage because of experience is very low compared to the increment in wage for the male worker because of experience. This correlation between wages and work experience can be seen in the graph below.

III. DISCUSSION

The gender bias and the patriarchal structure have created a very subpar working environment for the unorganized women construction workers. They get paid less and have little to no job prospects. This affects the women both psychologically and financially. They have no other choice other than to work in these poor conditions. The government should address the wage gap in the unorganized construction sector. These women should get accurate information about the labour union and be provided with the means to register in the construction labour union. The women in the construction sector should get an appropriate place for changing clothes. The women's help groups should look at sexual harassment in the workplace. The Labour Welfare Department is in charge of overseeing contractors and employers and putting safety measures and basic amenities at building sites. NGOs and the state government should hold free health check-up camps regularly. The contractor must be informed of the socioeconomic and legal implications of employing women in the construction business. These laborer's living conditions were deplorable due to a lack of basic sanitary facilities.

Females had no privacy, even while bathing and cleaning their clothes. Adequate government intervention was required to ensure the construction workers' health, safety, and welfare. Construction laborer's problems might be mitigated by ensuring fair working conditions and adequate contract arrangements and providing primary health care. Contractors and masons do not offer official masonry training for males. Still, men laborer's begin working as mason's assistants and acquire informal, practical instruction for roughly a year in exchange for compensation. In India, women construction workers do not receive informal training.

Similarly, it is advocated that women in this industry be encouraged to get practical experience by working as mason's assistants. This would ensure that women get paid during their training period. Unions in the building industry must be encouraged to collaborate with masons who are members of the associations to provide informal training for women by employing women as job assistants.

Masons' relatives have worked as a team on numerous building projects since they all relocate to cities together. As a result, the team's male masons may provide informal training to their wives, sisters, and relatives. Women trained as masons can work independently, receive higher earnings, and provide informal instruction to other women, empowering many women in the building industry.

IV. CONCLUSION

The construction sector substantially contributes to the country's overall economic growth. It is also a significant labor-intensive sector, employing 14 per cent of the entire female workforce. But a massive proportion of the unorganized & organized women workers has been affected by gender-based discrimination. One of the most significant wage gaps can be seen in the unorganized construction sector; this needs to be addressed. Since there is no past data available, we can't be sure about the chronological fluctuations of the wage gap. The present 47% wage gap should be brought down by 50% in the coming years to get some visible changes in the construction sector. Getting unorganized women workers organized is one of the efficient ways to shrink the wage gap; this organizing women workers include getting them registered with the construction labor union. The state government should benefit from a committee to help these women get registered with the union; these might only help in the short term. A women's construction union should be formed to uphold their rights in the long run.

Women in the construction industry do only unskilled labor. Their potential as masons has yet to be realized. This study found that women don't get the proper training to become a mason. Since the mason training is provided informal, women are not seen as potential masons and are not given training. Construction labor unions should provide proper formal training for mason, and there should be equal opportunity for women in this training. The local body government should employ women masons in construction work so that we can reduce the preconception that women masons are not as good as the male ones. This would also help the women financially, and women spend more on family than the male, so this would, in return, increase spending and household savings. Given the importance of the construction sector in establishing

mass employment, effective welfare measures would boost the productivity of this essential sector by improving the working and living circumstances of informal women laborers among this group of workers. They are particularly prone to addiction and violence because of a lack of social security and family support. Alternative methods of providing healthcare for these ladies should be sorted out as soon as possible. These women's living arrangements should be adequate and sanitary.

Furthermore, vulnerabilities caused by gendered skill gaps and societal norms result in men being employed in the industry ten times more than women, with incomes 40-50% lower than their male counterparts, particularly in urban regions. We must fight the notion that women are not capable of doing skilled work like bricklaying and other masonry work to see some real change which may be as easy as it sounds, but we got to start somewhere to see some progress in gender equality in the construction sector.

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