Gender Discrimination among Construction Workers With Reference To Vijayawada

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Abstract

Gender-based discrimination is a universal phenomenon. Women comprise half of the world's population and perform two thirds of the work, but earn only a third of the total income and own less than a tenth of the resources. The most discriminated people in the world are usually the ones who lack economic power (Saksena-2004). Construction Industry is the largest employer in the world and in India. More than 31 million people work in the construction industry, second only to agricultural Industry. More than 35 per cent of construction workers are women and they get poor remuneration and are discriminated in the payment of wages (ILO, 2001a). When men construction workers have promotional opportunities, women have no opportunities to acquire skills and become masons or supervisors. They need to be empowered to grow in their profession. This study is an effort to identify gender discrimination among construction workers and identify the means of empowering women construction workers with special reference to Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Key words: Construction Industry, Women workers, Gender discrimination, Obstacles…..

Introduction

Construction usually is done or coordinated by general contractors, who specialize in one type of construction such as residential or commercial building. Cost structure of the construction industry is dominated by raw material cost and subcontracting cost. Raw material cost which is the major cost accounts for 30-50% of the total cost and subcontracting cost accounts for about 20-40%. The raw materials consumed by Construction Industry in any country mainly include cement and steel. The Consumption of steel by construction industry has grown of 16.1% over past 5 years whereas cement consumption has registered of 9.6%. Unprecedented rise in prices of these two raw materials has a direct impact on the cost of the project and in turn margins of construction companies. Profitability also depends upon the diversity of the projects a company can execute. Companies having strong presence in segments like power and industrial segment which are complex to execute, tend to enjoy higher margins.

Today Indian sub continent is the second fastest-growing economy in the World. The Indian construction industry has been playing a vital role in overall economic development of the country, growing at over 20% Compound Annual Growth Rate over the past 5 years and contributing ~8% to GDP.

Indian Construction Industry at a Glance in 2012 - 2013

The FY2012/13 had a growth of 6.0% for the Indian construction Industry. Due to monetary issues and other related policies the Indian construction industry showed a lackluster performance in 2012-13. But the outlook for the construction Industry beyond FY2012/13 is brightening up. Not only are monetary conditions likely to improve for construction companies in FY2013/14, but the government is also making pertinent efforts to remove bottlenecks that are delaying infrastructure projects in India.
India' construction Industry is to reach 7.6% growth in FY2013/14.

In 2012 the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) have launched the first version of the credit enhancement scheme or infrastructure bond guarantee scheme. This risk-sharing facility will partially guarantee INR7.2bn (US$128mn) of rupee-dominated bonds issued by Indian companies to finance infrastructure projects. In 2012, the government announced that it is planning to set up a National Investment Board (NIB) to speed up infrastructure development within the country.

The NIB will focus on fast-tracking the execution of approved projects by getting all regulatory clearances. In 2012, the Indian government finalized the long-delayed bill for land acquisition, paving the way for the bill to be introduced during the current parliamentary session. The final draft of the bill now proposes that land for public-private partnership (PPP) and private projects can be acquired with a two-thirds majority from affected landowners - an improvement from the earlier requirement of 80%.

Review of Literature on Women Construction Workers

In India, various empirical studies have shown that the wages of the women workers in the unorganised Industry, particularly in the construction industry, have been significantly below the minimum wage (Anand, 1998; Cherian & Prasad, 1995; Khanna & Mathew, 1979; Sinha & Ranade, 1975).

Although formally there is no discrimination against women a worker, wagedifferentials and gender discrimination does happen in the job market, both in organized and in the unorganized Industrys. Women are often seen to be employed in the lower paying jobs. Other than wages, discrimination against women workers is also found at the level of recruitment, selection for skilled jobs and promotions. The employers are prejudiced against employing women, especially in jobs where workers have always been men (Sarma, 1990). In some cases the wage differentials are fixed by Wage Boards based on geography, occupation and industry. Still several studies have shown severe wage discrimination against women.

According to Harilal (1986) construction workers in India are overwhelmingly rural Landless migrants compelled to seek employment in the construction Industry due to indebtedness, inadequate employment and insufficient income.

Research Methodology

This is a descriptive study as the problems and gender discrimination faced by Women construction workers and the reasons for not undertaking masonry work are determined with an aim to empower them.

Objectives of the Study

- To recognize the obstacles and problems faced by women construction workers.
- To determine the factors that influences the awareness of construction workers of Gender discrimination among construction workers.
- To verify the factors that influences the wages of men and women construction Workers.
- To determine the means of empowering women construction workers.

Coverage

The aim of this study is to show through econometric analysis the presence of gender discrimination among construction workers and to test the hypotheses about which factors are contributing significantly to emergence of women as masons. From this we can generalize the findings obtained from the sample to the total study population. The study is micro in nature and data were collected from Vijayawada only. Every effort was taken to make sure that all the areas of Vijayawada were covered.

Area of Study

The gender discrimination among construction workers and the ways to empower Women construction workers in Vijayawada are studied. It is situated in the centre of the state and on the banks of the River Krishna.

Design of the Study

Descriptive studies involve describing the characteristics of a particular situation, event or case. This is a descriptive study as the problems faced by women construction workers and the reasons for women not undertaking masonry work are determined. This study aims at describing and quantifying the distribution of certain variables in the study population at one point of time. They cover the following - Socio-economic characteristics of men construction workers, women construction workers and contractors such as their age, education, marital status, number of children and income, the problems faced by women construction workers, the reasons for not involving women in masonry work, women construction worker's willingness to be trained as masons and willingness to become masons and willingness of men construction workers and contractors to train and accept masons are described.

Sampling Method

Various strategies can be used to collect quantitative data. However in this study, stratified sampling was carried out. A sample of 440 women construction workers in Vijayawada was interviewed to find out their views on equal wages and motivation levels to be trained as women masons. A sample of 440 men construction workers in Vijayawada was interviewed to find out the suggestions for removing the gender disparity and women involving in masonry work. A sample of 51 Contractors/ Engineers in Vijayawada was asked to fill questionnaire to find out their views, ideas and suggestions on women in construction work. The construction workers were selected from Santhai (place where they are recruited for work), workplaces and wage disbursement centers.

Sample Size – 880 construction workers (440 women construction workers and 440 men construction workers).

Sources of Data Collection

The method of data collection adopted for the study is primary. The Primary data collected, is through interview schedule, which was collected from the men and women construction workers, and questionnaire was used to collect data from contractors in the study area. As majority of the construction workers are illiterates, two schedules were prepared, one for women construction workers and another for men construction workers, and the construction workers were interviewed in the local language (Telugu) and the responses were noted in the schedule. The tools used for data collection is schedule and questionnaire. This was pre-tested by conducting a pilot study through which primary data was collected from 70 respondents. Analysis was done and changes were made in the schedule to overcome the errors.

Scope for Further Research

This research is undertaken in Vijayawada, to remove gender discrimination in the construction industry in wages as women are paid less than men for the same job. There is a need to educate, train and motivate the women to take up the job as masons. There is also a need to educate the supervisors/ contractors and other male masons to train and accept women masons and pay them equal salary like male masons and eradicate gender discrimination. This training of women masons can be done as experimental research.

Limitations

A pilot study was conducted and primary data were collected from 75 women construction workers. Analysis was done and certain difficulties were experienced. However these were isolated and methods to overcome these hindrances were incorporated. The final data were collected from 440 men and 440 women construction workers and 51 contractors. The population of construction workers is scattered and coverage was a major problem.

Result and Discussion

Table - 1 Personal, Social and Educational Background of Construction Workers

Socio Demographic Characteristics		n_1 (Total=440)	% of n_1	n_2 (Total=440)	% of n_2
AGE	<18	18	4.1	10	2.3
	19-20	32	7.3	59	13.4
	21-25	75	17.0	78	17.7
	26-30	117	26.6	93	21.1
	31-35	80	18.2	77	17.5
	36-40	56	12.7	49	11.1
	41-45	38	8.6	42	9.5
	>45	24	5.5	32	7.3
MARITAL STATUS	Married	261	59.3	282	64.1
	Unmarried	94	21.4	156	35.5
	Divorced	20	4.5	1	0.2
	Widow	65	14.8	1	0.2
ONLY EARNING	Yes	158	35.9	259	58.9
	No	282	64.1	181	41.1
COMMUNITY	SC	182	41.4	127	28.9
	MBC	95	21.6	83	18.9
	BC	146	33.2	212	48.2
	FC	17	3.9	18	4.1

Widow/ abandoned by

Entry Why

Husband- no other employment
Forced by Poverty
Many family members in this job
Parents died to look after younger ones
Own choice

75	17.0	121	27.5	
249	56.6	47	10.7	
44	10.0	115	26.1	
7	1.6	2	0.5	
65	14.8	155	35.2	

LITERACY	Illiterate	225	51.1	90	20.5
	Literate	215	48.9	350	79.5
EDUCATION	Nil	185	42.0	64	14.5
	3rd Standard	84	19.1	46	10.5
	8th Standard	110	25.0	162	36.8
	SSLC	50	11.4	129	29.3
	HSC	11	2.5	26	5.9
	UG	0	0.0	10	2.3
	PG	0	0.0	3	0.7

n1 – Number of women construction workers, n2 - Number of men construction workers
FC - Forward Caste, BC - Backward Caste, MBC - Most Backward Caste, SC - Scheduled Cast
SSLC – Secondary School Leaving Certificate, HSC – Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate, UG – Under Graduate, PG – Post Graduate.

Interpretation

Most of the construction workers are between the age 25 and 40 years and only a few work after 45 years of age. As age increases, the number of women working in this Industry decreases. Above 40 years of age, women workers are less as they are not able to do the hard work. There are also more widows (14.8%) and divorced (4.5%) among women construction workers, when compared to men (only 0.2%). Nearly one out of three women (35.9%) in construction are the only earning member of their family. This shows that majority of construction workers' families are women headed household with no men or without any other family member to support them. This is consistent with the findings of the study (Habitat, 1997) which gives four case studies - from India, Mexico, Ghana and Jamaica and reports that in India, a relative large number of construction Industry women are widows or other female heads of households. In the sample studied, majority (41.4%) of women construction workers are from the Scheduled Caste.

Scheduled Caste men are 28.9 per cent. More than half of women and men construction workers are from Backward Caste and Most Backward Caste but only a few are from 207Forward Caste. This is consistent with the report (Madhok, 2005) that majority of construction workers come from Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes. Nearly three out of four women are forced to enter into construction work because of their poverty, misery and unemployment. Educated women do not consider this job as there is no promotion for women and the work is unskilled with fewer wages. Educated men enter this Industry because the pay is more for men and they can progress in their career and get promoted with higher wage.

Table – 2 Residence and Transportation of Workers

Socio Demographic Characteristics		n_1 (Total=440)	% of n_1	n_2 (Total=440)	% of n_2
AREA OF WORK	Rural	178	40.5	202	45.9
	Urban	262	59.5	238	54.1
RESIDENCE	Rural	275	62.5	361	82.0
	Semi-urban	70	15.9	20	4.5
	Urban	95	21.6	59	13.4
NATIVE	Vijayawada	284	64.5	177	40.2
	Immigrant	156	35.5	263	59.8
DISTANCE FROM HOME (in Kms)	<1	116	26.4	73	16.6
	1-5	133	30.2	69	15.7
	6-10	47	10.7	61	13.9
	11-15	41	9.3	60	13.6
	>15 km	65	14.8	112	25.5
	Accomodation provided	38	8.6	65	14.8
TRANSPORT	Walk	105	23.9	64	14.5
	Cycle	14	3.2	83	18.9
	Bus	240	54.5	207	47.0
	Lorry	37	8.4	4	0.9
	Van	6	1.4	17	3.9
	Accommodation	38	8.6	65	14.8

n_1 – Number of women construction workers, n2 - Number of men construction workers

Interpretation

More than half of the construction workers work in the urban areas but most of them live in rural areas. More men workers (59.8%) are immigrant from other places, when compared to women (35.5%). This is because men who are unemployed and live below Poverty lines in rural parts move to urban centres like Vijayawada for employment.

More than half of the women (56.6%) prefer to work near their home (within 5 kms), When compared to men. Both men and women construction workers prefer traveling by walk or bus or cycle because it is the cheapest mode of transport for these poorly paid workers. On Comparison with women, men travel long distances. Nearly half (47%) of the men and more than half of the women (54.5%) use the bus, and the rest walk or go by cycle to the work spot.

Table - 3 Harassment of Women Construction Workers at Workplace

Harassment at home		n_4 (Total=346)	% of n_4
HUSBAND DRINKING	Yes	131	37.9
	No	215	62.1
HUSBAND BEATING	Yes	41	11.8
	No	305	88.2
HUSBAND WITH AFFAIR	Yes	34	9.8
	No	312	90.2
HUSBAND ABSENT FROM HOME	Yes	20	5.8
	No	326	94.2
HUSBAND GIVES NO MONEY	Yes	14	4.0
	No	332	96.0
HUSBAND TAKES GOOD CARE OF	Yes	157	45.4
FAMILY	No	189	54.6

n_4 - Number of Married Women Construction Workers

Interpretation

Table 3 summarizes the harassment and discrimination of women construction workers at work place. 45.7% of women construction workers say that they are verbally abused whereas only 24.8% of men are of the opinion that women are verbally abused at work. Women are verbally abused at work. Even though less agree to it, a visit to the construction site shows that women are regularly abused verbally at work as they are economically weaker and have no way to talk back to their employers.

3.4% of women construction workers agree that they are eve teased whereas only 1.4% of men agree. Women are eve eased at work even though only fewer women admit it. It is a problem which they face and they cannot voice their opinion. But if they work along with their family members, they escape this type of harassment. Regarding opinion about women's' work criticized, 8% of women agree that work is criticized while 15.2% of men say so. Regarding opinion about women's' beaten at workplace, only 0.7% of women and 0.5% of men agree to women being beaten at workplace. Regarding opinion about sexual harassment of women in workplace, only 1.4% of women and 0.5% of men agree to women being harassed at workplace. More men (54.5%) than women (34.5%) agree that women face harassment at work. It is a fact that cannot be denied. But not all accept it.

Regarding opinion about contractor attitude towards women in workplace. 16.6% of women say that contractor is arrogant whereas only 6.1% of say contractor is abusive. Regarding opinion that women face harassment at work, 65.5% of the women agree that they face harassment at work. Women admit that they face harassment but are scared of admitting what type is prevalent in the workplace. They are exploited and have affairs with the masons and other workers.

Table – 4 Discrimination in Wages and Work

Socio Demographic Characteristics		n_1(Total=440)	% of n_1	n_2(Total=440)	% of n_2
FAMILY INCOME (in Rs)	<1000	11	2.5	0	0.0
	1000-2000	146	33.2	32	7.3
	2001-3000	156	35.5	147	33.4
	3001-4000	94	21.4	141	32.0
	4001-5000	23	5.2	93	21.1
	>5000	10	2.3	27	6.1
PERIODICITY OF WAGES	Daily	62	14.1	24	5.5
	Weekly	372	84.5	411	93.4
	Monthly	0	0.0	4	0.9
	Completion of work	6	1.4	1	0.2
COMMISSION PAID	Yes	52	11.8	22	5.0
	No	388	88.2	418	95.0
COMMISSION (in Rs)	<5	6	1.4	2	0.5
	5-10	43	9.8	18	4.1
	>10	3	0.7	2	0.5
	Not Applicable	388	88.2	418	95.0
NO REGULAR EMPLOYMENT (W)	Yes	54	12.3	63	14.3
	No	386	87.7	377	85.7
DAYS OF WORK PER MONTH	0 - 5	0	0.0	3	0.7
	6 -10	9	2.0	9	2.0
	11- 15	33	7.5	7	1.6
	16 - 20	141	32.0	105	23.9
	21-25	257	58.4	316	71.8
RECEIVE_WAGES ON TIME	Yes	429	97.5	434	98.6
	No	11	2.5	6	1.4
DAILY WAGES (in Rs)	51-60	14	3.2	0	0.0
	61-70	14	3.2	0	0.0
	71-80	55	12.5	8	1.8
	81-90	63	14.3	2	.5
	91-100	218	49.5	13	3.0
	101-110	41	9.3	12	2.7
	111-120	17	3.9	10	2.3
	121-130	11	2.5	45	10.2
	131-140	6	1.4	31	7.0
	141-150	1	0.2	74	16.8
	151-160	0	0.0	3	0.7
	161-170	0	0.0	16	3.6
	171-180	0	0.0	43	9.8
	181-190	0	0.0	23	5.2
	191-200	0	0.0	53	12.0
	201-210	0	0.0	29	6.6
	211-220	0	0.0	12	2.7
	221-230	0	0.0	9	2.0
	231-240	0	0.0	1	0.2
	241-250	0	0.0	49	11.1
	>250	0	0.0	7	1.6

n_1 – Number of women construction workers, n_2 - Number of men construction workers

Interpretation

Table 4 shows that among the men construction workers there are no one with less than Rs.1000 monthly income whereas there are 11 (2.5%) women. This shows the poverty among women construction workers is more. Similarly there are only 32 (7.3%) men with an income between Rs.1000-2000 whereas there are 146 (33.2%) of women. Thus majority of women who work in construction are from families which earn less than Rs.2000. As the income increases, the number of construction workers decreases.

More men (71.8%) get work for 25 days whereas only 58.4% of women get work for 25 days. Similarly 7.5% of women and only 1.6% of men get work for 11-15 days. Women construction workers are employed for less number of days when compared to men. It is found that most (93.4%) of the men are paid weekly wages, while a minority are paid daily wages. More women (14.1%) are paid daily wages when compared to men.

Regarding commission paid to contractors/masons, 5% of men pay commission whereas more than 10% of women pay commission. Regarding receiving wages on time, 97.5% of the women receive wages on time while 98.6% of the men receive wages on time.

Regarding wages, it is found that wages of women range from Rs. 51 to Rs. 150. The wages of men range from Rs 71 to more than Rs. 250. The average wage for women is only Rs. 92 whereas the average wage for men is Rs. 170. Men on the average get nearly twice the wages of women.

Table – 5 Discrimination in Promotional Opportunities

Characteristics		n_1 (Total=440)	% of n_1	n_2 (Total=440)	% of n_2
CONSTRUCTION TYPE	Domestic	187	42.5	186	42.3
	Commercial	126	28.6	159	36.1
	Government	116	26.4	88	20.0
	other	11	2.5	7	1.6
CONTRACT TYPE	Daily basis	172	39.1	210	47.7
	Project	268	60.9	230	52.3
CONTRACTOR	Remains the same	276	62.7	236	53.6
	Change often	164	37.3	204	46.4
EXPERIENCE (in Years)	<5	213	48.4	170	38.6
	6-10	129	29.3	141	32.0
	11-15	61	13.9	61	13.9
	16-20	25	5.7	39	8.9
	21-25	4	0.9	17	3.9
	>25	8	1.8	12	2.7
JOB TITLE	*Chithal*	440	100	25	5.7
	Others (painters, carpenters)	0	0.0	59	13.4
	Centering labourers	0	0.0	34	7.7
	Periyal	0	0.0	87	19.8
	Manvettial	0	0.0	43	9.8
	Mason	0	0.0	192	43.6

n_1 – Number of women construction workers, n_2 - Number of men construction workers

Interpretation

The discrimination in promotional opportunities are summarized in Table 7. Regarding construction type, it is found that 42.3% of the men are in domestic construction, 36.1% in commercial construction and 20% in government construction. It is found that 42.5% of women are in domestic construction, 28.6% in commercial construction and 26.4% in government construction. Regarding contract type, it is found that 47.7% of men are working on daily basis and the rest in projects while women prefer projects (60.9%).

Regarding contractor type, it is found that 53.6% of men work under the same contractor and the rest change contractors often. Regarding experience, it is found that 48.4% of women have less than five years of experience, 29.3% have 6-10 years of experience. As the number of years of experience increases, the number of women workers decreases. Only 38.6% of men have less than five years of experience, 32% have 6-10 years of experience, 13.9% have experience between 11 -15 years of experience, 8.9% have 16 – 20 years of experience, 3.9% have 21 – 25 years of experience and 2.7% have more than 25 years of experience. Regarding job title, it is found that among men only 5.7% are designated as *chithal (*which means one who is small in the local language), 7.7% are centering labourers, 19.8% are *periyal* (one who is big*),* 9.8% are *manvettia*l(one who digs) and 43.6% are masons. Among women all are *chithal.*

Table – 6 Other characteristics of men and women construction workers

Characteristics		n_1 (Total=440)	% of n_1	n_2 (Total=440)	% of n_2
DEPENDANTS (numbers)	Nil	73	16.6	57	13.0
	1	43	9.8	28	6.4
	2	104	23.6	81	18.4
	3	66	15.0	78	17.7
	4	78	17.7	89	20.2
	5	56	12.7	76	17.3
	>5	20	4.5	31	7.0

Children						
None < 6 years >6 years						
Both < 6 yrs and > 6 yrs						
		167	38.0	190	43.2	
		69	15.7	62	14.1	
		193	43.9	180	40.9	
		11	2.5	8	1.8	
OTHER WORK	Agricultural work	137	31.1	130	29.5	
	Other work also	37	8.4	54	12.3	
	Only construction	266	60.5	256	58.2	
HOURS OF WORK	8	376	85.5	409	93.0	
	9	50	11.4	25	5.7	
	10	14	3.2	5	1.1	
	>10	0	0.0	1	.2	

n_1 – Number of women construction workers, n_2 - Number of men construction workers

Interpretation

From Table 6, regarding number of dependants of women, it is found that 16.6% have no dependants, 9.8% have one dependant, 23.6% have two dependants, 15% have three dependants, 17.7% have four dependants, 12.7% have five and 4.5% have more than five dependants. It is found that 13% of men have no dependants, 6.4% have one dependant, 18.4% have two dependants, 17.7% have three dependants, 20.2% have four dependants, 17.3% have five and 7% have more than five dependants.

Regarding children, it is found that 38% of women have no children, 15.7% have children below 6 years of age and 43.9% have children more than 6 years of age and 2.5% have children both below six and above six years of age. Regarding working only in construction 60.5% of men and 58.2% of women do only constructions work. Majority of men and women construction workers work for eight hours a day.

Table -7 T Test for Area and Wages, Age, Family Income, and Experience, Days of work and Distance from home (Women Construction workers)

VARIABLES	t[a]	df[b]	Sig.[b](2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Error Difference
WAGES	-5.453	438	0.000	-0.743	0.136
AGE	-2.650	438	0.008	-0.439	0.166
FAMILY	3651	438	0.000	0.360	0.099
INCOME	-2.809	438	0.005	-0.298	0.106
EXPERIENCE	1569	438	0.117	0.110	0.070
DAYS OF WORK	4.228	438	0.000	0.673	0.159
DISTANCE					

[a]T-Statistic, [b]Degrees of Freedom, [b]Significance

From the above table it is found that there is a significant difference among the women Construction workers who work in rural and urban area, with respect to wages, age, Family income, experience and distance from home. It is significant at 0.01 level.

Conclusion

The findings of the study show that many women construction workers are illiterate, widows, only earning members of the family, from depressed class and from low income families when compared to men construction workers.

Women construction workers face harassment at home and work place, and they are discriminated in wages and promotion. The findings of the study also show that the important reasons why women are not promoted as masons is the gender bias which men and women have, and women construction workers are not given an opportunity to be trained informally like men in the construction Industry. It is 236 found that women are willing to become masons, and men, especially the contractors, are willing to accept them, train them and give them placements in the construction Industry. The findings also show that women construction workers are competent enough to be trained to become masons and they could be first formally trained and then informally trained to become mason in the construction Industry in India.

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