



A Study of Empowerment of Women Construction Workers in Thoothukudi District of Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

The construction workers constitute one of the most significant types of workers in the unorganised sector. Construction in recent years has occurred as a growing activity; the growth rate in labour absorption recorded by construction sector is almost thrice as large. It has been generating employment at a rate faster than the industrial sector and thereby manifesting its significance in the city's development. Eminent economists argue that liberation from poverty, inequality, unemployment, illiteracy and mass deprivation should recognise as the outstanding goals of any development efforts. Construction workers, as an essential constituent of the labour stock and supply, contribute considerably to the effort of realising them grand goals. Hence, the present study is an exertion to analyse the socioeconomic conditions of women construction workers and their empowerment in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. It shows that the relationship between age and their level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and consumption and educational upliftment of children after joining construction work of the respondents in both rural and urban areas. As the calculated value of Chi-square is superior to the table value at 5 percent level of significance, there is a relationship between age and level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and educational upliftment of children after joining construction



work of respondents in rural and urban areas. Thus, construction work no doubt empowered the women and contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of rural women.

Key words: construction workers, empowerment, inequality, unemployment, food acquisition, educational upliftment

INTRODUCTION

India's rapid economic growth over the last decade has placed tremendous stress on its limited infrastructure and increasing demand. Investment in construction is on the rise, with more than US\$ 500 billion worth of investment planned to flow into India's infrastructure by 2012¹. Construction workers number over two crores in India and 30 percent of them are women and children². In India, the construction industry is one of the oldest organisations of human societies employing a large segment of unorganised workers.

The growth of this industry is because of the growth of urban population leading to expansion of road, railways, river, dams which are made by manual workers and the most important being housing work³. The building industry has a yearly turnover of Rs. 2,10,000 crores⁴. The construction industry has contributed an estimated US\$ 67.4 billion (8%) to the national GDP in 2010-11⁵. Nearly 16% of India's working population depends on

¹ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2009), 'infrastructure in India: A vast land of construction opportunity'. URL: <http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/engineeringconstruction/emerging-markets/publications-infrastructure-in-india-a-vast-land-ofconstruction-opportunity.jhtml> (Accessed: 2013, March 21).

² R. Geetha, "Will Their Struggle Bear Fruit", The Hindu, April 4, 1999, p.V

³ S. N. Tripathy, Unorganised Women Labour in India, (Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 1996), p. 6.

⁴ Government of India, (2008a), Planning Commission, Volume II: Social Sector, Chapter6: Towards Women's Agency and Child Rights. Eleventh five year plan 2007 -2012, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, P.189.

⁵ Business maps of India (2012), 'India GDP 2010-2011', URL: <http://business.mapsofindia.com/india-gdp/2010-2011.html>, (Accessed: 2013, June10)



construction for its livelihood⁶. It contributes about 78% to the gross capital formation⁷. In India, the construction sector is the largest employer of unorganised labour next to agricultural sector⁸. It has been generating employment at a rate faster than the industrial sector and thereby manifesting its significance in the city's development⁹.

It is also a valuable generator of broad markets for manufacturers and suppliers of building materials and equipment. Sometimes it is also called an engine of growth¹⁰. The construction sector is an essential component in gross capital formation activity in the country's economy. It is a productive activity as it results in the creation of assets. These assets will further used for productive purposes.

Practically, all the sectors have construction components in them of varying degrees such as 40 percent in transport and communications, 75 percent in power, 80 percent in irrigation and flood control to 100 percent in housing¹¹. Demand on the construction industry is for investment goods for which the ultimate use is as a means to further production (e.g. factory building) as an addition to or improvement of the infrastructure of the economy (e.g.

⁶ The Indo-Italian chamber of commerce and industry (2008), 'overview of the construction industry in India'. URL: <http://www.ukessays.com/essays/management/constructionindustry-in-india-construction-management-essay.php> (Accessed: 2013, March 20)

⁷ Iyer, K.C, Jha, K.N (2006), 'Critical factors affecting schedule performance: Evidence from Indian construction projects', *Journal of construction engineering and management*, ASCE/August 2006.132:871-881

⁸ Laskar, A. and Murty, C. V. R. (2004) *Challenges before Construction Industry in India* Indian Institute of Technology: Kanpur. Retrieved July 25, 2009 from website: http://www.iitk.ac.in/nicee/RP/2004_Challenges_Construction_Industry_Proceedings.pdf

⁹ KK Subrahmanian, D.R. Veena and K.P. Bhanumathi, *Construction Labour Market-A Study in Ahmedabad*, (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1982), p.162.

¹⁰ Roy, Satya R. Kar, "Major Problems of construction sector in India", *Indian Construction*, 22(12): 21, 1989, p. 3

¹¹ Roy, Satya R. Kar, "Problems and Challenges for providing Shelter to all", *Indian Construction*, 22(6): 17, 1989.

roads); as a social investment (e.g. hospitals); and as an investment good for direct enjoyment¹².

The contribution of construction sector in India to the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) at factor cost in 2006–07 was Rupees 1,965,550 million, registering an increase of 10.7% from the previous year and the share of building in GDP had increased from 6.1% in 2002–03 to 6.9% in 2006–07.¹³ The construction sector is the world's largest industrial employer with seven percent of total world employment and 28 percent of industrial employment¹⁴.

Around 16 percent of India's working population depends on building construction for its livelihood and the Indian construction industry today employs about 31 million people and creates assets worth over Rupees 200,000 million annually.¹⁵ Therefore, the present study is an exertion to analyse the socioeconomic conditions of women construction workers and their empowerment in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu.

Employment in Construction Industry in India

The Table reveals employment in the construction industry in India, by significant states in 2011.

EMPLOYMENT IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN INDIA

States	Rural	Urban	Total
Andhra Pradesh	9.8	4.2	7.0
Assam	13.3	6.7	11.8

¹² Patriciam Hill Bront, op.cit., p. 15

¹³ Government of India, (2008b) Planning Commission, Volume III: Agriculture, Rural Development, Industry, Services and Physical Infrastructure, *Chapter 8- Services and Construction*. Eleventh five year plan, 2007 – 2012, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, p.239.

¹⁴ Improving Working and Living Conditions in Construction (2004) Draft Recommendations and Technical Guidance from the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers, p.3), Retrieved June 25, 2007 from website: www.ifbww.org/files/Improving_Working_and_84E5F.pdf

¹⁵ India Infra Guru (2008) *Jobs, Construction*. Retrieved August 14, 2009 from website:<http://www.indiainfraguru.com/construction.html>

Bihar	17.0	10.3	15.8
Gujarat	4.1	1.1	2.6
Haryana	8.4	9.4	8.7
Himachal Pradesh	6.2	-0.3	5.9
J & K	11.3	6.3	10.1
Karnataka	9.4	3.0	5.3
Kerala	3.6	8.9	5.4
Madhya Pradesh	16.7	8.2	13.3
Maharashtra	8.2	3.1	5.2
Orissa	13.2	4.3	11.4
Punjab	10.7	4.2	8.9
Rajasthan	9.7	5.5	8.9
Tamil Nadu	12.2	3.9	8.8
Uttar Pradesh	14.2	7.5	12.6
West Bengal	14.1	3.8	9.9
All India	11.7	4.9	9.3
CGR	43.88	-9.52	41.43
Average	10.71	5.32	8.92
SD	3.91	2.89	3.44

Source: NSS Employment and Unemployment Surveys, 2011 (published reports).

It is evident from the table that in 2011, only about 4.9 percent of the construction workers are employed in urban areas, while around 11.7 percent of the construction workers employed in rural areas in India. In the case of Tamilnadu, only about 3.9 percent of the construction workers are employed in urban areas, while around 12.2 percent of the construction workers are employed in rural areas respectively.

Table examines the growth rate for construction workers in India. In rural areas, the Compound Growth Rate was found to be 43.88. Average and Standard Deviation values were 10.71 and 3.91 respectively. In urban areas, the Compound Growth Rate was found to be -9.52. Average and Standard Deviation values were 5.32 and 2.89 respectively. However, in both rural and urban areas, the Compound Growth Rate was found to be 41.43. Average and Standard Deviation values were 8.92 and 3.44 respectively.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The field study has the following objectives

1. To study the socio-economic outline of the women construction workers.
2. To understand the motivational and encouraging factors behind women construction workers.

3. To analyse the level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and consumption and educational upliftment of children after joining construction work of the respondents
4. To examine the employment of the growth rate for construction workers in India.

METHODOLOGY

The study confined to Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. Thoothukudi district has a large number of construction workers, and the construction industry has shown significant growth in the district. Both primary and secondary data have used for the present study. Thoothukudi district is the universe for the study. The primary data obtained 175 respondents from rural and 125 respondents from urban areas, totally 300 women construction workers were selected for the study.

The women construction workers selected from construction sites. The personal interview method carried with a pre-tested schedule. The primary data collected about the year 2016-17. Secondary data collected from various Government reports, Office of the Labour and Employment in Thoothukudi district, research reports, journals, libraries, magazines, books, newspapers internet and various institutions. The data to be collected from primary and secondary sources is to be analysing with the help of some statistical tools like average, percentages, standard deviation, Compound Growth Rate, Chi-square test, Garrett's ranking techniques etc.

Analysis and interpretation

AGE-WISE ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Age (In years)	Number of Respondents		Total
		Rural	Urban	
1.	Below 30	24(13.71)	12(9.60)	36(12.00)
2.	30 – 40	91(52.00)	65(52.00)	156(52.00)
3.	40 – 50	41(23.43)	34(27.20)	75(25.00)
4.	50 and above	19(10.86)	14(11.20)	33(11.00)
	Total	175 (100.00)	125 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Source: Primary data.

Note: Numbers in brackets represent the percentage of the total.

It inferred from Table that in the case of rural women construction workers the majority of the women workers (52.00percent) belong to the age group of 30 to 40 years followed by 40to50 years (23.43 percent). 13.71 percent of the women workers belong to the

age group of below 30 years, 50 years and above (10.86 percent). The mean age of rural women workers worked out to be 34.61 years.

A similar trend was found in urban women construction workers also. About 52.00 percent of the women construction workers belong to the age group of 30 to 40 years, followed by 40-50 years (27.20 percent). 11.20 percent of the women construction workers belong to the age group of 50 years and above, below 30 years (9.60 percent). The mean age of urban women construction workers worked out to be 38.79 years.

Thus, it may be decided from the analysis that the majority of women construction workers belong to the age groups 30 to 40 years in both rural and urban women construction workers.

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Education	Number of Respondents		Total
		Rural	Urban	
1.	Illiterate	18(10.29)	12(9.60)	30(10.00)
2.	Primary	109(62.29)	69(55.20)	178(59.33)
3.	Middle school	22(12.57)	14(11.20)	36(12.00)
4.	Secondary	26(14.85)	30(24.00)	56(18.67)
	Total	175 (100.00)	125 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Source: Primary data.

Note: Numbers in brackets represent the percentage of the total.

From Table it has been revealed that out of 175 respondents in rural areas a maximum of 62.29 percent of the women construction workers are having primary school level education, followed by 14.85 percent with Secondary school level education and 12.57 percent of the women construction workers have Middle school level education, and 10.29 percent of the women construction workers are Illiterate.

In the case of urban women construction workers out of 125 respondent majorities of 55.20 percent of the women construction workers are having primary school level education, followed by 24.00 percent with Secondary school level education and 11.20 percent of the women construction workers have Middle school level education, and 9.60 percent of the women construction workers are Illiterate.

Thus, it may be concluded that the majority of the respondents studied first – 5th Std in urban women construction workers of Thoothukudi district.

MARITAL STATUS

Sl. No.	Marital Status	Number of Respondents		Total
		Rural	Urban	
1.	Unmarried	26(14.86)	17(13.60)	43(14.33)
2.	Married	139(79.43)	99(79.20)	238(79.33)
3.	Widow	10(5.71)	9(7.20)	19(6.33)
	Total	175 (100.00)	125 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Source: Primary data.

Note: Numbers in brackets represent the percentage of the total.

Table reveals that out of 175 workers in the rural area maximum of 139 (79.43percent) construction workers are married while 26 (14.86percent) are unmarried and 10 (5.71percent) are widowed.

Whereas in the case of urban women construction workers a maximum of 99 (79.2percent) women construction workers are married, while 17 (13.60percent) are unmarried and 9 (7.20percent) are widow respectively. Thus, it may decide from the analysis that the majority of women workers married in rural and urban women construction workers.

FAMILY SIZE OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Sl. No.	Family Size	Number of Respondents		Total
		Rural	Urban	
1.	Below 3	39(22.29)	21(16.80)	60(20.00)
2.	3 – 5	114(65.14)	87(69.60)	201(67.00)
3.	5 and above	22(12.57)	17(13.60)	39(13.00)
	Total	175 (100.00)	125 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Source: Primary data.

Note: Numbers in brackets represent the percentage of the total.

A maximum of 114 (65.14percent) of women construction workers in rural areas have a family size of 3 – 5 members, followed by 39 (22.29percent) having a family size of below 3, only 22 (12.57percent) have a family size of 5 and above.

While, in the case of urban women construction workers a maximum of 87 (69.60percent) have a family size of 3 – 5 members, followed by 21 (16.80percent) having a family size of below 3, only 17(13.60percent) have a family size of 5 and above. It observed from Table 4.8 that majority of them have a family size of 3 to 5 members. The average size

of the family in rural and urban women construction workers worked out to be 3.81 and 3.94 respectively.

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS TO JOIN CONSTRUCTION WORK

Sl. No.	Motivational factors	Rural		Urban	
		Average Score	Rank	Average Score	Rank
1.	For better standard of living	62.87	II	64.31	I
2.	Monetary requirement	68.45	I	59.27	II
3.	Family members in this work	40.82	VI	45.32	IV
4.	Simply obtainable	56.57	III	38.57	V
5.	Illiterate	47.66	V	34.16	VI
6.	For children prosperity	51.98	IV	50.18	III

Source: Computed from Primary Data

It is evident from Table the prioritised motivational factors for choosing the occupation by the sample respondents in both rural and urban women construction workers. It is inferred that by using Garrett’s score.

In the case of rural areas, the first rank for choosing the occupation was assigned to financial requirement followed the better standard of living. Third and fourth ranks were given to merely obtainable and for children prosperity respectively. Illiterate and family members in this work were ranked fifth and sixth respectively.

Whereas, in the case of urban women construction workers, the first rank for choosing the occupation assigned to better standard of living followed by the financial requirement. Third and fourth ranks were given to for children prosperity and family members in this work respectively. Merely obtainable and illiterate were ranked fifth and sixth respectively.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN AGE OF THE RURAL WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT

Age (in years)	Level of empowerment		
	Changes in Food Acquisition	Educational upliftment of children	Total
Below 30	18 (11.2)	6 (12.8)	24

30 – 40	48 (42.6)	43(48.4)	91
40 – 50	12 (19.2)	29(21.8)	41
Above 50	4 (8.90)	15(10.1)	19
Total	82	93	175 (100)

Source: Computed from Primary Data.

Note: Figures in brackets represent Expected Value (E)

Table shows that the relationship between age and their level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and consumption and educational upliftment of children after joining construction work of the respondents. To catch out whether there is any correlation between the age and level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and educational upliftment of children after joining construction work of respondents, chi-square test has applied. The results of the Chi-square test provided below.

Calculated value of Chi-square = 19.1

Table value at 5 percent level = 7.815

Degrees of freedom =3

As the calculated value of Chi-square is superior to the table value at 5 percent level of significance, there is a relationship between age and level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and educational upliftment of children after joining construction work of respondents in rural areas.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN AGE OF THE URBAN WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT

Age (in years)	Level of empowerment		
	Changes in Food Acquisition	Educational upliftment of children	Total
Below 30	9 (6.24)	3 (5.76)	12
30 – 40	44 (33.8)	21 (31.2)	65
40 – 50	9 (17.7)	25 (16.3)	34
Above 50	3 (7.28)	11 (6.72)	14
Total	65	60	125 (100)

Source: Computed from Primary Data.

Note: Figures in brackets represent Expected Value (E)

Table shows that the relationship between age and their level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and consumption and educational upliftment of children after joining construction work of the respondents. To catch out whether there is any correlation between the age and level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and educational upliftment of children after joining construction work of respondents, chi-square test has applied. The results of the Chi-square test provided below.

Calculated value of Chi-square = 23.1

Table value at 5 percent level = 7.815

Degrees of freedom =3

As the calculated value of Chi-square is superior to the table value at 5 percent level of significance, there is a relationship between age and level of empowerment of nutritional food acquisition and educational upliftment of children after joining construction work of respondents in urban areas.

CONCLUSION

Empowering women is not just for summit their economic requirements but also universal social development. Thus, it may conclude from the analysis of the findings of the present study that the life of the women tends to be better economically after joining construction work in both rural and urban areas. For those families involved in construction work, there have been improvements in their economic status and quality of life. Thus, construction work no doubt empowered the women and contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of rural women.