



Double burden of harsh work and gender issues faced by underprivileged women workers in unorganized work section

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ABSTRACT

Working women have to bear the double burden of domestic and work life in all walks of profession. If the employment is in unorganized work sector, specially in construction sector, her condition can be very pathetic. Present study was therefore conducted to examine their work and working conditions and commonly prevalent gender biased issues they have to face at construction sites in Punjab state; where they generally migrate with family and work as a group. Eighty such women were personally interviewed with the help of pre-structured interview schedule and results statistically analyzed. Results revealed that maximum number of respondents (58 %) were able to earn more than Rs. 4000/- per month. However, their assets were negligible as most of them lived in temporary huts and hardly few of them possessed a cycle. They were all engaged in unskilled manual work as 3/4th of the respondents were just carrying concrete cement and crushing stones. 60-70 per cent of these women were engaged in brooming the site, carrying bricks, sorting and washing bricks and mixing concrete cement. Use of foul language, fearing of touching of body parts, intentional degrading and hostile attitude of male workers and employers were the commonly under reported gender biased issues as experienced by more than 50 per cent respondents. Therefore, there is a strong need to draw the attention of government and non government agencies for immediate redressed to their plight.

INTRODUCTION

Underprivileged women are the deprived ones lacking opportunities or advantages enjoyed by other women. In a still developing country like India, this category of women is in abundance owing to lack of education and their low socio-economic status. In the urban areas, these women are primarily employed in the unorganized sectors. According to Census of India 2001, number of such women workers outnumber women workforce in organized sector. Majority of these women are engaged in agriculture, construction and domestic services.

As per the survey carried out by National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) 60th Round (2001), total employment in both organized and unorganized sectors in the country was in the order of 39.7 crore. Out of this, 36.9 crore were in the

unorganized sector (1.7 crore were employed in construction industry). This occupation spontaneously comes to them when they migrate with family for employment in cities. However, these women remain underprivileged in terms of economic parity and low gender biased status, even when she tries to sharing responsibility with males of the family. She is merely employed as unskilled labourer, a helping hand to husband or male coworkers and paid lowly (Chauhan and Sharma, 2003).

According to 60th NSSO Round (2001), these women work mostly as unskilled workers hired mainly to carry concrete and bricks. Work on construction sites is invariably divided along gender lines. The types of work that men do are labeled as 'skilled' work and fetch higher wages than the work that women are allowed to do. Women are restricted to stone crushing, fetching and carrying of materials and this type of work is