



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN KALABURAGI DISTRICT, KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to explore the socio-economic conditions of construction workers in Kalaburagi district, Karnataka. The construction sector in India plays a significant role in economic development but the workers in this sector often face severe challenges, such as inadequate wages, lack of social security, poor working conditions, and limited access to health care. This study investigates these aspects by focusing on the economic status, working environment, education level, and access to social welfare programs of construction workers in Kalaburagi. Through a combination of primary and secondary data, the study sheds light on the living conditions of these workers, the systemic issues they face, and suggests policy interventions for improving their lives.



KEY WORDS: Construction workers, socio-economic conditions, wages, labor rights, Kalaburagi, Karnataka.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Construction workers form a significant part of the unorganized labor sector in India. These workers contribute to building vital infrastructure but face suboptimal living conditions and socio-economic challenges. Kalaburagi district, known for its rapid urbanization and infrastructure development, employs a large number of construction workers, mostly from marginalized communities. Despite their crucial role, these workers experience economic hardships, poor working conditions, and limited access to basic amenities. This study aims to examine the socio-economic conditions of construction workers in Kalaburagi district.

2. OBJECTIVES:

1. To analyze the income levels and financial conditions of construction workers.
2. To assess the educational qualifications and skill levels of workers.
3. To study the living conditions, including housing, health care access, and sanitation.
4. To understand the challenges related to social security and labor rights faced by workers.
5. To recommend measures for improving the socio-economic conditions of construction workers.

3. METHODOLOGY:

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

3.1 Sample Size and Sampling:

A sample of 200 construction workers was selected from different construction sites in Kalaburagi district. Purposive sampling was used to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, and work experience.

3.2 Data Collection:

Primary Data: Structured interviews and surveys were conducted using a pre-tested questionnaire to collect data on income, education, working hours, health, and housing conditions.

Secondary Data: Government reports, academic papers, and other relevant literature were reviewed to contextualize the findings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

4.1 Economic Status:

Most construction workers in Kalaburagi earn daily wages ranging between INR 300 to INR 500, depending on their skill level. The study revealed that these wages are insufficient to meet the basic needs of families, especially in the context of inflation and rising living costs. Workers often rely on borrowing or multiple income sources to make ends meet.

4.2 Education and Skill Levels:

A significant proportion of the workers surveyed had low levels of education, with many having dropped out before completing secondary school. This lack of formal education limited their access to skill development programs, which in turn affected their earning potential. Skilled laborers earned more than unskilled workers but still faced job insecurity and lack of career progression opportunities.

4.3 Living Conditions:

The majority of workers lived in temporary or semi-permanent housing, often provided by contractors. These accommodations lacked basic amenities like clean water, electricity, and sanitation facilities. Workers also reported limited access to health care services, with many relying on government hospitals that are underfunded and overcrowded.

4.4 Social Security and Labor Rights:

Despite the existence of laws like the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996, most workers in the district were unaware of their rights. Few workers had access to social security benefits like provident funds, pensions, or health insurance. Furthermore, child labor was observed at some construction sites, highlighting the vulnerability of these families.

5. CHALLENGES:

Lack of Unionization: The fragmented and unorganized nature of construction work makes it difficult for workers to form unions or advocate for their rights collectively.

Exploitation by Contractors: Many workers face exploitation in the form of delayed payments, underpayment, and long working hours without overtime compensation.

Gender Disparity: Female construction workers earned less than their male counterparts, despite often performing the same or similar tasks. They also faced additional challenges related to safety and harassment at worksites.

Health and Safety: The study found a lack of safety measures at construction sites, leading to a high incidence of workplace accidents and health issues, including respiratory diseases from prolonged exposure to dust and chemicals.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Improving Wages and Social Security: There is an urgent need to enforce minimum wage laws and ensure that construction workers have access to social security benefits such as health insurance and pensions.

2. Skill Development and Education: Offering vocational training programs tailored to the construction sector can help workers improve their skills and increase their earning potential. Special attention should be given to improving literacy levels among workers.

3. Housing and Sanitation: Government and private sector partnerships could provide better housing solutions for construction workers, ensuring access to clean water, electricity, and sanitation.

4. Health and Safety Regulations: Stricter enforcement of safety protocols at construction sites is necessary. Employers must be held accountable for providing workers with protective gear and ensuring safe working conditions.

5. Gender Equality: Gender sensitization programs and stricter enforcement of equal pay for equal work can address the gender disparity in the sector.

6. Awareness Campaigns: Conducting awareness programs on labor rights, social security schemes, and health care services will empower workers to demand their rightful entitlements.

7. CONCLUSION:

The socio-economic conditions of construction workers in Kalaburagi district reflect broader systemic issues in India's informal labor sector. Despite their critical role in the development of infrastructure, these workers face economic marginalization, unsafe working conditions, and a lack of social security. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to create an equitable and just environment for construction workers. Sustainable improvements in their quality of life can only be achieved through policy reforms, enhanced labor rights enforcement, and access to social welfare programs.

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