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## LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

**Dr. L. Rengarajan**

Associate Professor,  
Department of Commerce  
Rajapalayam Rajus' College,  
Rajapalayam

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### Abstract

*The major thrust of this paper is to analyze the living and working conditions of women workers in construction industry. The study analyses the wage structure, income and expenditure pattern, working conditions and living conditions of women construction workers. This study is an empirical one, based on survey method. Both primary data and secondary data have been used. Primary data have been collected from 600 women workers who are working in the construction industry in the Virudhunagar district, Tamil Nadu, with the help of an interview schedule. Secondary data have been collected from journals, magazines, and books.*

**Keywords:** *Living and working conditions - women workers – construction work.*

### Methodology of the Study

The population of Virudhunagar district is 19,42,288 as per census 2011. The total number of women workers in construction Industry is estimated around 55,000. 600 women workers are selected as a sample on convenience basis. The Virudhunagar district includes Eight Taluks namely Kariapatti, Thiruchuli, Aruppukottai, Sattur, Virudhunagar, Sivakasi, Srivilliputhur, and Rajapalayam. Data were collected during August 2014 to June 2015. The data collected with the help of an interview schedule from the women workers, are narrated in Tables. The data thus tabulated are interpreted by using percentage analysis. To find out the association between age, educational qualification, and marital status of the women workers and their satisfaction towards wages, opinion about construction works and the reasons for choosing the construction work, Chi-Square Test has been applied. A set of factors that influence socio-economic conditions of the livelihood have been selected from each respondent respectively for the study purpose. These included age, level of education, marital status, family members, religion, residence information, transportation facilities, wage, overtime, income and expenses, problems faced by them and related solutions.

### Objectives

1. To study the wage structure, employment, working conditions and living conditions of women workers in Construction industry.
2. To analyze the income and expenditure pattern and the standard of living of women workers in Construction Industry.

### Results and Discussion

#### Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

The socio - economic profile of women workers are presented in the following table.

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## Socio - Economic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency/Percentage
Age	20-30 Years	118 (19.70)
	31-40 Years	158 (26.30)
	41-50 Years	192 (32.00)
	Above 50 Years	132 (22.00)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
Educational Status	Illiterate	300 (50.00)
	Primary School	184 (30.70)
	High School	84 (14.00)
	Higher Secondary	32 (5.30)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
Marital Status	Married	492 (82.00)
	Unmarried	24 (4.00)
	Divorced	54 (9.00)
	Widow	30 (5.00)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
Family Type	Joint Family	114 (19.00)
	Nuclear	486 (81.00)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
Religion	Hindu	514 (85.70)
	Muslim	54 (9.00)
	Christian	32 (5.30)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
Community	BC	244 (40.70)
	MBC	134 (22.30)
	SC / ST	222 (37.00)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
Family Size	2 Members	38 (6.30)
	3 Members	82 (13.67)
	4 Members	124 (20.67)
	5 Members	116 (19.35)
	6 Members	106 (17.68)
	More than 6 Members	134 (22.30)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>

Women workers go to construction work after their marriage. The result shows that 58.30 per cent of the selected respondents are in the age group of 30 to 50 years. Due to their family economic situation they go to the work even after 50 years. Regarding their educational level the survey indicates that almost 50 per cent of surveyed workers are illiterate and 30 per cent of them have only primary school level education. As their level of education is low, they have less bargaining power. Hence they get poor wages for their hard work. Majority of the women workers (82 Per cent) are married and 9 per cent of workers are divorced due to some social causes. Only 19 per cent of the selected sample workers are living in Joint family system and the remaining are in the Nuclear family system. The individual effort and hard work put in by

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a member in the Joint family system is shared among all members. Religion plays a significance role in allowing women in construction work. 86 per cent of the surveyed women workers are Hindus. The survey found that out of 600 workers 41 per cent belong to backward community, 22 per cent belong to most backward community and 37 per cent belong to scheduled caste community. The most important factor that influences the expenditure pattern and standard of living of workers is their family size. The study reveals that 80 percent of workers family has 4 and more than 4 members.

#### Job Profile

<b>Wages per day</b>	Rs.200	154 (25.70)
	Rs.200 - Rs.250	406 (67.70)
	Rs.250 - Rs.300	40 (6.70)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Opinion about Wages</b>	Highly satisfied	40 (6.70)
	Satisfied	228 (38.00)
	No opinion	162 (27.00)
	Dissatisfied	132 (22.00)
	Highly dissatisfied	38 (6.30)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Period of wage Revision</b>	Once in a year	366 (61.00)
	Once in two Years	234 (39.00)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Working days in a week</b>	Three days	12 (2.00)
	Four days	34 (5.70)
	Five days	84 (14.00)
	Six days	470 (78.30)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>

Unskilled Labor Market is very cheap. Construction workers are unorganized and unskilled hence they are paid low wages. The survey has verified the fact. Almost 68 percent of women workers are paid from Rs.200 to Rs. 250 per day and 26 percent workers are getting Rs.200 only. 45 percent of the interviewed workers are satisfied with their wages and the remaining 55 percent workers are not satisfied. The study reveals that 61 percent of the respondents have opined that their wages are revised every year and remaining 39 percent workers wages are revised once in two years. The nature of construction work like carrying Bricks, Stones and Mortar under direct sunlight is very difficult. Hence it is not possible for women workers to work for all the seven days. However due to poverty they have to work at least 6 days in a week. The study reveals that 78 percent of workers work six days in a week and only 14 percent workers work for five days in a week.

#### Living Conditions

<b>Nature of House</b>	Own House	368 (61.30)
	Rental House	210 (35.00)
	Leased House	22 (3.70)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>

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<b>Type of House</b>	Hut/Thatched	68 (11.30)
	Tiled House	264 (44.00)
	Concrete House	268 (44.70)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Facilities in House</b>	Electricity	600 (100.00)
	Toilet and Bathroom	86 (14.30)
	Water supply	54 (9.00)
<b>Articles</b>	Cycle	310 (51.70)
	Gas Stove	342 (57.00)
	Television	434 (72.30)
	Furniture	444 (74.00)
	Mixer / Grinder	468 (78.00)
	Two Wheeler	72 (12.00)

The living condition of the women workers is indicated by the ownership of their residence. 61 per cent of the workers are living in their own house and the type of the house is also analyzed. Among 368 respondents (61 per cent) who have their own house 151 (25.16 per cent), are living in concrete houses and 149 (24.83 per cent) are living in tiled houses, and 11.30 per cent workers have their own thatched house. Basic amenities like electricity, toilet, bathroom and water supply also indicate the living status of women workers. Electricity facility is available in all workers houses where as 14 per cent of surveyed workers have toilet and bathroom facilities and 9 per cent have water supply facilities in their houses. Most of the workers have to depend on public water supply at the street and public toilets. 310(51.07 per cent) workers have cycle, 342 have gas stoves, 434 have televisions and 468 have mixer and grinders in their houses. Only 72 workers have two-wheeler.

## Monthly Income and Expenditure

<b>Monthly Income</b>	At Rs.15,000	448 (74.70)
	Rs.15,000 - Rs.20,000	126 (21.00)
	Above Rs.20,000	26 (4.30)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Food Expenses</b>	Rs.2,500-Rs.3,000	26 (4.33)
	Rs.3,001-Rs.3,500	166 (27.67)
	Rs.3,501-Rs.4,000	238 (39.67)
	Above Rs.4,000	170 (28.33)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Fuel Expenses</b>	Rs.300 - Rs.350	31 (5.17)
	Rs.350 - Rs.400	246 (41.00)
	Rs.400 - Rs.450	296 (49.33)
	Rs.450 - Rs.500	27 (04.50)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Electricity Expenses</b>	Rs.200 - Rs.250	214 (35.67)
	Rs.250 - Rs.300	296 (49.33)
	Rs.300 - Rs.350	63 (10.50)
	Rs.350 - Rs.400	27 (4.50)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>

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<b>House Rent</b>	Less than 500	96 (41.38)
	500 – 700	102 (43.96)
	700 – 900	34 (14.66)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>232 (100.00)</b>

Income influences the level of expenditure and savings. The monthly income of the 75 per cent respondents is amounted Rs.15000 and only 4 per cent of respondents' monthly income is more than Rs.20000. The monthly expenditure of the women workers is analyzed in terms of food, fuel, electricity and house rent. Generally the workers get rice, kerosene, doll, sugar, cooking oil and other items at subsidized price through the Public Distribution System. Hence their food expenses may be less. The monthly food expenditure of 40 per cent of the surveyed workers family ranges from Rs.3500 to Rs.4000. The average food expenditure for family is Rs.3710. Fuel cost includes the cost of firewood, kerosene and or Gas. 50 per cent of the sample workers have incurred the fuel cost around Rs.450 per month. Electricity supply is available at houses of all the selected workers. The monthly electricity expenses of 85 per cent of the workers family range from Rs.200 to Rs.300. Out of 600 workers, 232 are living in rental house. 83 per cent of 232 workers have paid monthly rent from Rs.500 to Rs.700.

## Annual Expenditure

<b>Cloth Expenses</b>	Rs.5,000	92 (15.33)
	Rs.6,000	222 (37.00)
	Rs.7,000	207 (34.50)
	Rs.8,000	79 (13.17)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Children's Education Expenses</b>	Rs.1,000 – Rs.2,000	108 (18.00)
	Rs.2,000 – Rs.3,000	194 (32.33)
	Rs.3,000 – Rs.4,000	186 (31.00)
	Rs.4,000 – Rs.5,000	112 (18.67)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Medical Expenses</b>	Rs.500 – Rs.1,000	173 (28.83)
	Rs.1,001 – Rs.2,000	217 (36.17)
	Rs.2,001 – Rs.3,000	168 (28.00)
	Rs.3,001 – Rs.4,000	42 (07.00)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>
<b>Festival Expenses</b>	Rs.500 – Rs.1,000	26 (4.33)
	Rs.1,000 – Rs.2,000	198 (33.00)
	Rs.2,000 – Rs.3,000	213 (35.50)
	Rs.3,000 – Rs.4,000	163 (27.17)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100)</b>
<b>Marriage and other Ceremonies Expenses</b>	Rs.1,000	240 (40)
	Rs.1,500	198 (33)
	Rs.2,000	162 (27)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>

**LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS****Reason for Insufficient Income**

<b>Reasons</b>	Large family size	102 (17.00)
	Inadequate wages	152 (25.30)
	High prices of Goods	204 (34.00)
	Children's education expenses	116 (19.30)
	Major medical expenses	26 (4.30)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>

**Nature of Health Problem**

<b>Nature of Health Problem</b>	No Health Problem	138 (23.00)
	Thyroid Disorders	151 (25.17)
	Leg Pain (Knee)	116 (19.33)
	Head ache	114 (19.00)
	Stomach Pain	36 (6.00)
	Asthma	24 (4.00)
	Diabetes Mellitus	21 (3.50)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>600 (100.00)</b>

The non recurring expenses are called as annual expenses. It includes expenses towards education, cloth, medical, festivals, marriage and other ceremonies. Generally the workers purchase new cloth during festival times. The contractors also give new dress as bonus once in a year. The research study indicates that around 37 per cent of the workers family spends yearly Rs.6000 towards new dress. As most of the selected workers and their husbands are illiterate, they actively interested and involved their children's education. Out of 600 selected workers, 63 per cent workers children's educational expenses amounted to Rs.2000 to Rs.4000. Their children are studying at Government and Government aided educational institutions. The working class people usually take their medical treatment at Government hospitals at free of cost. Sometimes they may go for private hospitals. 64 per cent of the women workers family medical expense range from Rs.1000 to Rs.3000. 69 per cent of the women workers are incurring annual festival expenses from Rs.1000 to Rs.3000. Marriage and other expenses amounted to Rs.1000 to Rs.1500 to 73 respondents.

The reason for inadequate income is analyzed. The surveyed women workers have stated that large family size (17%) inadequate wages (25%), high price of goods (34%) and children's education (19%) are the reasons for inadequacy of income and it results in borrowing. 25 per cent of the respondents have thyroid disorder 19 per cent have knee pain and another 19 per cent have stomach pain problems.

**Association between age and Satisfaction Level of the Respondents with Wages**

To know the association between age of the respondents and their level of satisfaction towards the wages, analysis has been made with the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis**

“There is no significant association between the age and satisfaction towards wages”.

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To test the above hypothesis Chi-Square test is applied and the result is presented in the following table.

**Table – 1 Association between age and Satisfaction Level of the Respondents with Wages - Result of Cross Tab**

		Satisfaction with wages					Total
		Highly satisfied	Satisfied	No opinion	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied	
Age	20-30 years	6	36	44	24	8	118
	31-40 years	14	64	26	40	14	158
	41-50 years	14	68	58	36	16	192
	Above 50 years	6	60	34	32	0	132
Total		40	228	162	132	38	600

Source: Computed Data

From the results of cross table it is found that there is a highest number of 68 respondents in the age group of 41 - 50 years are satisfied with wages. The following table shows the results of Pearson chi-square test.

From the above results it is found that the significance value for chi-square value of 32.163 is less than the acceptance level of 0.05 ( $p = 0.001$ ). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant association between the age of the respondents and their satisfaction towards the wages. It is inferred that the age of the respondents and their satisfaction towards the wage are dependent in nature.

#### Association between age and Opinion about Construction Work

To know the association between age of the respondents and their opinion about construction work, analysis has been made with the following hypothesis.

#### Hypothesis

“There is no significant association between the age and opinion about construction work”.

To test the above hypothesis, Chi-Square test is applied and the result is presented in the following table.

**Table – 2 Association between age and Opinion about Construction Work - Result of Cross Tab**

		Opinion about construction work			Total
		Very hard work	Affects health	Body pain	
Age	20-30 years	30	44	44	118
	31-40 years	50	58	50	158
	41-50 years	74	58	60	192
	Above 50 years	82	22	28	132
Total		236	182	182	600

Source: Computed Data

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From the results of cross table, it is found that there is a highest number of 82 respondents felt that the construction work is very hard work are in the age group of above 50 years. The following table shows the results of Pearson chi-square test.

From the above results, it is found that the significance value for chi-square value of 43.409 is less than the acceptance level of 0.05 ( $p = 0.000$ ). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant association between the age of the respondents and their opinion about construction work. It is inferred that age of the respondents and their opinion about construction work are dependent in nature.

### Association between Age and Reasons for Choosing the Construction Work

To know the association between age of the respondents and reasons for choosing the construction work, analysis has been made with the following hypothesis.

#### Hypothesis

**“There is no significant association between the age and reasons for choosing the construction work”.**

To test the above hypothesis Chi-Square test is applied and the result is presented in the following table.

**Table – 3 Association between age and Reasons for Choosing the Construction Work - Result of Cross Tab**

		Reason for choosing construction work				Total
		Family situation	High wages	Only source of daily employment	Other reasons	
Age	20-30 years	50	8	60	0	118
	31-40 years	68	8	82	0	158
	41-50 years	78	28	84	2	192
	Above 50 years	54	24	50	4	132
Total		250	68	276	6	600

**Source:** Computed Data

From the results of cross table it is found that there is a highest number of 84 respondents in the age group of 41 - 50 years choose the construction work for the reasons of that it is the only source for daily employment. The following table shows the results of Pearson chi-square test. From the above results it is found that the significance value for chi-square value of 27.152 is less than the acceptance level of 0.05 ( $p = 0.001$ ). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant association between the age of the respondents and reasons for choosing the construction work. It is inferred that age of the respondents and reasons for choosing the construction work are dependent in nature.

#### Conclusion

In India the literacy level among women is increasing, but still the gender biasness is a crucial factor for the discrimination which starts from the house when the girl is born and



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continues in each stage of life. In India a large group of female unskilled workers work in the rural area as agriculture laborer. As soon as the season ends, they shift to the construction industry which increases their employment level. By doing so they support to their husband in income generation, for meeting their house hold expenditure. Their job is not easy within the industry as they have to face several adverse situations such as sexual harassment, wage discrimination, injuries and deceases the major factors due to which women even though work hard, they lag behind the men and remain unskilled even after a hardship of lot of years. The scenario can be changed only with the government intervention, by implementing the policies strictly. The contractors should be checked from time to time regarding the working hours and payment of wages to the workers. Stern action has to be taken against all those who harass the employees. The socio – economic status of the women worker can be improved only when major transition in the society occurs with change in mindset of the people. The socio – economic development empowers women self reliant and confident. Women should be provided education and training to enhance their sense of self – worth and self – esteem.