EXAMINING THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing urbanization in Tamil Nadu, akin to several other states, has significantly bolstered the construction industry's expansion. This sector becomes a primary source of employment for many unskilled and semi-skilled laborers seeking livelihood opportunities as it permeates our state. However, the migration from rural to urban areas in pursuit of improved working and living standards often proves to be an elusive prospect. The reality at destinations like Tamil Nadu is frequently harsh, distressing, and dismal for migrants, yet the influx persists due to even more precarious conditions prevailing in their places of origin, where basic survival is not assured.

This study examines the experiences of 500 migrant women laborers engaged in construction work in Chennai, shedding light on their struggles. Predominantly originating from neighboring states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, and West Bengal, these women have migrated over the past four decades. Roughly 80% of them belong to Scheduled Castes and are landless agricultural laborers, finding it challenging to sustain themselves in their hometowns, prompting their migration to Tamil Nadu with hopes and aspirations for a better life.

Furthermore, the paper deliberates on the significance of offering skill development opportunities and the role of social safeguards by aiding construction workers in registering and availing benefits under state provisions like the 'Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996,' and the 'Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare CESS Act, 1996.' Despite substantial funds allocated for workers' welfare, the lack of coherent planning, dedication, and sensitivity in utilizing these funds often results in their underutilization. Most migrant women laborers reside in slums, facing challenges similar to those in their places of origin, with many toiling strenuously to make ends meet. Injuries and accidents are prevalent among them, yet they rarely receive compensation and are often dismissed, particularly if the accidents lead to disabilities.

Basic amenities and improved living conditions remain elusive for these individuals, who essentially constitute the backbone of urbanization through their contributions to construction work in cities. The diverse characteristics of the female workforce, coupled with the escalating informal nature of employment and lack of visibility, emphasize the urgent need to enhance employability standards and expand social protection measures.

Keywords: Women Workers, Construction, Accidents, Chennai, Association.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of urbanization, a pervasive force shaping the socio-economic landscape of Tamil Nadu and numerous other states, stands intricately interwoven with the rapid expansion of the construction industry. Within this industry lies a critical nexus—a source of livelihood for unskilled and semi-skilled laborers seeking economic sustenance in urban environments. However, the trajectory of migration from rural hinterlands to bustling urban centers in pursuit of improved living standards paints a narrative fraught with challenges and elusive promises.

The allure of better prospects and livelihood often leads migrants to densely populated urban locales, prominently observed in the context of Tamil Nadu. Here, the migrant experience, particularly for women laborers engaged in the construction sector, unfolds as a narrative echoing hardship, distress, and a constant struggle for survival. Despite the harsh realities that characterize their lives, this influx continues, primarily driven by the dire and precarious conditions prevailing in their native landscapes—places where the certainty of basic sustenance remains a distant aspiration.

This scholarly inquiry embarks on a comprehensive examination, focusing on the lived experiences of 500 migrant women laborers actively engaged in construction work within the urban sprawl of Chennai. Their narratives, etched by migration patterns spanning four decades, predominantly emanate from states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, and West Bengal. It's imperative to note that approximately 80% of these resilient women belong to Scheduled Castes, tilling the land as agricultural laborers without land ownership—a reality that renders sustenance a formidable challenge and propels their migration to Tamil Nadu, harboring dreams of a more promising life.

Moreover, this thesis delves into the imperative facets of facilitating skill development opportunities and emphasizes the pivotal role of social safety nets. It critically analyzes the barriers constraining construction workers from registering and availing themselves of entitlements stipulated under state provisions like the 'Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996,' and the 'Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare CESS Act, 1996.' Despite substantial budget allocations earmarked for the welfare of these laborers, the systemic lacuna in planning, execution, and sensitivity in utilizing these funds invariably results in their underutilization. Consequently, the majority of migrant women laborers find themselves residing in impoverished slums, grappling with challenges reminiscent of their native lands, toiling arduously to make ends meet.

Injuries and accidents plague this demographic, yet compensation for their toils or redress for injuries remains an elusive luxury, particularly when such incidents lead to disabilities. The absence of proper compensation and the propensity for dismissal perpetuate a cycle of

vulnerability among these women, rendering them more susceptible to the perils of their laborious work.

In the midst of their invaluable contribution to the urbanization narrative through construction work, these women remain bereft of basic amenities and improved living conditions. Their labor, a cornerstone of urban development, is camouflaged within the informal folds of employment, shrouded in invisibility, and underscored by the urgent need for heightened employability standards and expansive social protection measures.

The intricate tapestry woven by the multifaceted female workforce, combined with the burgeoning informal nature of their labor, serves as a clarion call for urgent action—a call to fortify employability standards and fortify social protection measures, safeguarding the dignity and rights of these resilient women migrant workers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
The gender disparities within the construction industry present a distinctive landscape, primarily due to the limited presence of women in the workforce. Women constitute a minority within this sector, often engaging in unskilled roles, encountering distinct challenges and requirements compared to their male counterparts. Their employment predominantly involves menial tasks, accompanied by lower wages in comparison to men. Tamil Nadu, a prominent state, attracts migrant populations from neighboring regions, yet lacks adequate facilities such as retiring rooms, childcare facilities, and proper sanitation facilities. This absence exposes female workers to various forms of gender-based harassment encompassing verbal, sexual, and physical abuse. This research paper delves into this multifaceted issue, examining it in alignment with legal and legislative frameworks, particularly within the context of Chennai City, Tamil Nadu.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
   ➢ To study the demographic profile of the respondents.
   ➢ To examine the association among the demographic variable related to the study

HYPOTHESES
H_a1. There is an association between Migrated along with famiy and Age.

H_a2. There is an association between Secured feeling at workplace and Age.

H_a3. There is an association between Migrated along with famiy and Marital status.

H_a4. There is an association between Frequency of visit to home and Age.

H_a5. There is an association between Type of ID card and Type of employer.

H$_a$6. There is an association between Frequency of visit to home and Marital status.

H$_a$7. There is an association between Secured feeling at workplace and Marital status.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research focuses exclusively on female construction laborers, although many of the challenges identified are likely prevalent among migrant workers in various other industries. Furthermore, the dependability of the conclusions and deductions made in this study might only be established by investigating a metropolitan area comparable to Chennai. Consequently, the reliability of the findings will be limited to the specific demographic under study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kim et al. (2007) delved into the realm of female migrant workers in India's expansive construction industry. This sector, employing nearly 30 million people, boasts a substantial 30% female workforce, many of whom are migrants. Rather than merely outlining these women's situations, the study aimed to unravel the intricate fabric of their experiences. Through interviews with 110 female migrants in Delhi from diverse Indian regions, the research offered a qualitative dive into their lives, spotlighting hidden challenges and advantages associated with both migration and informal labor. Notably, the findings highlighted societal pressures that hindered these women from openly expressing the true motivations behind their migrations.

Singh et al. (2015) shifted the focus from conventional economic-driven migration to another form: marriage-related migration among females. They sought to elucidate the dynamics of this migration pattern concerning distance, using statistical modeling to reveal the relevance of the Weibull distribution in understanding this phenomenon.

Tyutyunov et al. (2010) took a scientific angle, deriving the Patlak-Keller-Segel population density flow equation. Their work challenged common assumptions about the movement of benthic organisms in water masses, constructing a model that demonstrated how specific migration behaviors, influenced by stimulus concentration, lead to organism aggregation in high-stimulus areas. Their numerical models underscored that the nature of individual migration frequency in response to stimulus concentration influences the distribution patterns of these organisms.

Govindharaju (2021) highlighted the plight of women workers in construction, outlining issues such as wage disparities, sexual harassment, and inadequate sanitation. Emphasizing the correlation between sanitation and population growth, the study revealed that a significant portion of construction workers faced sanitation-related challenges. This comprehensive study, based on primary data, detailed the socio-economic status, income, and employment patterns of migrant women workers in Coimbatore City. Notably, it found that low wages in their native places propelled these women to migrate in search of better-paying opportunities, significantly impacting their migration decisions and economic situations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research conducted herein is primarily descriptive, utilizing a combination of primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data, sourced from various outlets including websites, books, and journals, was collated.

Primary data, obtained through a structured questionnaire, involved 200 female migrant construction workers in North Bangalore, utilizing convenience sampling. Statistical analysis tools such as Factor Analysis, Chi-Square Analysis, one-way ANOVA, and Weighted Average Rank were employed for data analysis.

The study was carried out in construction sites adjacent to the Kurali-Siswan road, Mullanpur/UT boundary SAS Nagar. A sample of 40 participants was selected using the snowball sampling technique due to the unidentified study population.

The research design employed was descriptive in nature. Primary data was gathered through interview schedules with female migrant workers employed in the unorganized sector of construction sites along the Kurali-Siswan road, Mullanpur/UT boundary SAS Nagar. Secondary data, on the other hand, was collected from relevant books, websites, newspapers, and journals.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS
PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Table 1
Percentage Analysis

Age Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
18-25	44	18
26-35	88	35.9
36-50	80	32.7
Above 50	33	13.5
Total	245	100%
Marital Status Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
Married	115	46.9
Unmarried	130	53.1
Total	245	100%
Education Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
Illiterate	241	98.4
Literate	4	1.6
Total	245	100%
No. Of Children Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
One	50	20.4
Two	84	34.3
Above Two	77	31.4
None	34	13.9
Total	245	100%
Wages Per Day Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
500-600	48	19.6
600-700	79	32.2
700-800	84	34.3
Above 800	34	13.9

Total	245	100%

Have You Migrated Along With Your Family? Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
Yes	116	47.3
No	129	52.7
Total	245	100%

Which State Are You From? Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
Bihar	24	9.8
Uttar Pradesh	40	16.3
Assam	49	20
Chattisgarh	50	20.4
Uttarkandh	54	22
Others	28	11.4
Total	245	100%

Type Of Id Card Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
Aadhaar	49	20
Election Id	68	27.8
License	91	37.1
No Id Card	37	15.1
Total	245	100%

Type Of Employer Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
Company	36	14.7
Contractor	81	33.1
Agent	87	35.5
Others	41	16.7
Total	245	100%

How Often Do You Visit Your Home? Group	No. of. respondents	Total Percentage
Twice In A Year	27	11
Once In A Year	80	32.7
Once In Two Years	94	38.4
More Than Two Years	44	18
Total	**245**	**100%**
Where Do You Stay? Group	**No. of. respondents**	**Total Percentage**
Construction Place	64	26.1
Rented Place	118	48.2
Others	63	25.7
Total	**245**	**100%**
Do You Feel Secured In Your Work Place? Group	**No. of. respondents**	**Total Percentage**
Yes	119	48.6
No	126	51.4
Total		**100%**

Table 1 showcases various demographics and aspects related to a group of respondents, likely representing a population involved in construction work or related industries. The age distribution reveals a dominant presence of individuals between 26 to 50 years old, accounting for nearly 82% of the respondents, indicating a significant middle-aged workforce. The majority of respondents are married (almost 47%) compared to unmarried individuals, and an overwhelming majority are illiterate, signifying potential limitations in educational opportunities within this group.

When considering family size, a substantial portion of respondents have two or more children (approximately 66%), possibly indicating larger family responsibilities within this community. In terms of wages, a significant proportion of respondents earn between 600 to 800 rupees per day, with relatively fewer earning above 800 rupees.

The data also highlights migration patterns, with nearly half of the respondents having migrated with their families.

Geographically, the respondents hail from various states, with Uttarkandh, Chattisgarh, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh being the primary origins. Regarding identification, a notable number possess Aadhaar cards, election IDs, or driving licenses, while a small fraction lacks any identification.

The nature of employment is diversified among contractors, agents, and others, demonstrating multiple engagement models prevalent in this workforce. When it comes to the frequency of visits home, a significant percentage visit annually or less, suggesting potential separation from their families due to work commitments.

Housing arrangements reveal that nearly half of the respondents stay in rented places, possibly due to temporary or migratory work nature, while approximately a quarter reside at the construction site itself.

The perception of workplace security is divided, with almost an equal number feeling secure and insecure, indicating a split sentiment regarding safety within their work environments. Overall, the data underscores the diverse demographics, living conditions, and experiences of individuals engaged in construction-related work, shedding light on potential areas for support and improvement within this community.

CHI-SQUARE TEST
Chi-square Test on Migrated along with famiy and Age

Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Migrated along with famiy and Age.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is an association between Migrated along with famiy and Age.

Table 2
Chi-Square Test on Migrated along with famiy and Age

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.314a	3	0.026
Likelihood Ratio	1.315	3	0.725
N of Valid Cases	245		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.62.			

In order to test the association between Migrated along with famiy and Age, chi-square is tested. Here the Migrated along with famiy and Age have been measured in a nominal scale.

By applying chi-square test at 5 percent level of significance, it is observed that there is an association between Migrated along with famiy and Age. The p value should be less than 0.05.

The P value is 0.026 and therefore, the Alternate hypothesis is accepted, and the association do exist. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 1.314a.

Table 3
Cross Tabulation for Migrated along with famiy and Age

Crosstab						
Count						
		Age				Total
		18-25	26-35	36-50	above 50	
Have you migrated along with your family?	yes	23	38	40	15	116
	no	21	50	40	18	129
Total		44	88	80	33	245

Chi-square Test on Secured feeling at workplace and Age
Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Secured feeling at workplace and Age.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is an association between Secured feeling at workplace and Age.

Table 4
Chi-Square Test on Secured feeling at workplace and Age

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.624a	3	0.044
Likelihood Ratio	1.631	3	0.652
N of Valid Cases	245		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.03.			

In order to test the association between Secured feeling at workplace and Age, chi-square is tested. Here the Secured feeling at workplace and Age have been measured in a nominal scale.

By applying chi-square test at 5 percent level of significance, it is observed that there is an association between Secured feeling at workplace and Age. The p value should be less than 0.05. The P value is 0.044 and therefore, the Alternate hypothesis is accepted, and the association do exist. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 1.624a.

Table 5
Cross Tabulation for Secured feeling at workplace and Age

Crosstab		
Count		
	Age	Total

		18-25	26-35	36-50	above 50	
Do you feel secured in your work place?	yes	18	45	41	15	119
	no	26	43	39	18	126
Total		44	88	80	33	245

Chi-square Test on Migrated along with famiy and Marital status

Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Migrated along with famiy and Marital status.

Alternate Hypothesis: There is an association between Migrated along with famiy and Marital status.

Table 6
Chi-Square Test on Migrated along with famiy and Marital status

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.782a	1	0.047
Likelihood Ratio	0.783	1	0.376
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.779	1	0.378
N of Valid Cases	245		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 54.45.			

In order to test the association between Migrated along with famiy and Marital status, chi-square is tested. Here the Migrated along with famiy and Marital status have been measured in a nominal scale.

By applying chi-square test at 5 percent level of significance, it is observed that there is an association between Migrated along with famiy and Marital status. The p value should be less than 0.05. The P value is 0.047 and therefore, the Alternate hypothesis is accepted, and the association do exist. The Pearson Chi-Square value is .782a.

Table 7
Cross Tabulation for Migrated along with famiy and Marital status

Crosstab				
Count				
		Marital status		Total
		Married	Unmarried	
Have you migrated along with your family?	yes	51	65	116
	no	64	65	129
Total		115	130	245

Chi-square Test on Frequency of visit to home and Age
Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Frequency of visit to home and Age.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is an association between Frequency of visit to home and Age.

Table 8
Chi-Square Test on Frequency of visit to home and Age

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.996a	9	0.438
Likelihood Ratio	9.261	9	0.414
Linear-by-Linear Association			
N of Valid Cases	245		
a. 2 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.64.			

In order to test the association between Frequency of visit to home and Age, chi-square is tested. Here the Frequency of visit to home and Age have been measured in a nominal scale.

By applying chi-square test at 5 percent level of significance, it is observed that there is no association between Frequency of visit to home and Age. The p value should be less than 0.05. The P value is 0.438 and therefore, the Null hypothesis is accepted, and the association do not exist. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 8.996a.

Chi-square Test on Type of ID card and Type of employer
Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Type of ID card and Type of employer.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is an association between Type of ID card and Type of employer.

Table 9
Chi-Square Test on Type of ID card and Type of employer

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.201a	9	0.514
Likelihood Ratio	8.285	9	0.506
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.079	1	0.779
N of Valid Cases	245		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.44.			

In order to test the association between Type of ID card and Type of employer, chi-square is tested. Here the Type of ID card and Type of employer have been measured in a nominal scale.

By applying chi-square test at 5 percent level of significance, it is observed that there is no association between Type of ID card and Type of employer. The p value should be less than 0.05. The P value is 0.514 and therefore, the Null hypothesis is accepted, and the association do not exist. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 8.201a.

Chi-square Test on Frequency of visit to home and Marital status

Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Frequency of visit to home and Marital status.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is an association between Frequency of visit to home and Marital status.

Table 10
Chi-Square Test on Frequency of visit to home and Marital status

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.235a	3	0.745
Likelihood Ratio	1.25	3	0.741
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.553	1	0.457
N of Valid Cases	245		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.67.			

In order to test the association between Frequency of visit to home and Marital status, chi-square is tested. Here the Frequency of visit to home and Marital status have been measured in a nominal scale.

By applying chi-square test at 5 percent level of significance, it is observed that there is no association between Frequency of visit to home and Marital status. The p value should be less than 0.05. The P value is 0.745 and therefore, the Null hypothesis is accepted, and the association do not exist. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 1.235a.

Chi-square Test on Secured feeling at workplace and Marital status

Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Secured feeling at workplace and Marital status.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is an association between Secured feeling at workplace and Marital status.

Table 11
Chi-Square Test on Secured feeling at workplace and Marital status

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.048a	1	0.826
Likelihood Ratio	0.048	1	0.826
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.048	1	0.827
N of Valid Cases	245		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 55.86.

In order to test the association between Secured feeling at workplace and Marital status, chi-square is tested. Here the Secured feeling at workplace and Marital status have been measured in a nominal scale.

By applying chi-square test at 5 percent level of significance, it is observed that there is no association between Secured feeling at workplace and Marital status. The p value should be less than 0.05. The P value is 0.826 and therefore, the Null hypothesis is accepted, and the association do not exist. The Pearson Chi-Square value is .048a.

CONCLUSION

To ensure favorable living conditions and sustainable livelihoods, it's crucial to follow specific guidelines. All government initiatives should be accessible to construction workers. This includes regulated work hours, allocated medical leave, and provision of essential identity cards like Aadhar, BPL, and voter IDs. Additionally, an independent committee must be established to investigate instances of wage exploitation, denial of medical benefits, sexual or physical abuse by authorities against workers. Labor department hotlines must be available at every site. Basic amenities such as clean drinking water, gender-segregated bathing and restroom facilities, separate resting areas for men and women, secure shelters, and effective implementation of RSBY for comprehensive healthcare coverage are essential.

In case of injuries or fatalities, comprehensive support is crucial. This involves complete coverage for treatment, compensation for the family in case of death, and job placement for eligible family members. Adequate funds should be provided for proper funeral rites. Companies engaged in construction, as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), should allocate a mandatory 2% of their yearly profits to enhance the well-being of construction workers. This effort should focus on their health, children's education, and ensuring basic living standards. These initiatives aren't mere acts of charity but fundamental rights for construction workers who significantly contribute to urban development and economic growth. Companies can sponsor children's education in nearby government schools, ensuring seamless enrollment even if families relocate. Additionally, establishing childcare facilities at construction sites with minimum-wage compensation for appointed female supervisors is essential..

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3584