

A Study on the Conditions of Women Construction Workers in Guwahati

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Preface: The passion for this research stems from the desire to understand the position of women in the vulnerable parts of the informal economy. The study is predominantly based on women construction workers of Guwahati. The construction industry and its biasness along gender lines is something which is very much prevalent and needs continuous research. This research explores around the social security, working conditions and economic inequalities faced by the women construction workers. The research was demanding, but it has helped in discovering many different issues and perspectives on the topic.

Keywords: Informal labour, construction workers, gender, discrimination

I. INTRODUCTION

The nature of labour employment in the current scenario is uneven which renders certain group of people in vulnerability, increasing the gap between the mass of the unskilled category of workers and the highly skilled ones. The term informal sector was first given by Keith Hart in 1973 where the key variable is the degree of rationalization of work; that is whether or not labour is recruited on a permanent and regular basis for fixed rewards (Hart, 1973). The informal sector of the economy remains the most vulnerable sector, as there is no definite regulatory mechanism for it and often escapes the guidelines formulated for the formal sector workers. The informal sector has been increasing rapidly in the age of industrialization and service sector growth, as it leads to massive diversification of labour and products. This sector consists of economic units which produce legal goods and services but the operations remain unregistered and beyond regulation by the fiscal, labor, health and tax laws (Agarwala, 2007). It is characterized by large scale use of physical labor, ease of entry and exit and operations are mainly small scale.

At a time when women's labor is seen as unpaid and unproductive, women in informal sector struggle through deplorable conditions. They have to toil both in the public and the private sphere. The availability of employment is uneven and has been restricted with majority of women finding employment in the informal sector. With the structures of production becoming increasingly flexible and the blurring relationships between the employer and the employee, the distinctions between the public and private spheres become ambiguous. Therefore issues of family, such as childbearing, education, lack of healthcare become crucial. In addition to this, marriage, home ownership etc. are intertwined with the conditions of work (Agarwala, 2007). The feminisation of

labour is taking place at a time when paid work is becoming increasingly informal. Women's economic activity is always characterized by a considerable degree of informality (Kabeer, 2010). At times when the male member of the household is seen as the breadwinner for the family, female workers are often neglected through sharp differentiation of work and wage discrimination.

The construction industry as a part of the informal sector is a victim of its terrible conditions. Building worker has been defined as a person who is employed to do any skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled, manual, supervisory, technical or clerical work for hire or reward, whether the terms of employment be expressed or implied, in connection with any building or other construction work and does not include people in managerial or administrative capacity and who draws wages exceeding one thousand six hundred rupees per exercise or mensem, according to the Building and Other construction Workers' Act, 1996. The plight of construction workers knows no bounds with high risk to their health along with the other unsecured nature of work of the informal sector.

The women of the construction industry face large scale discrimination in terms of wages, facilities and work. They are given double burden of work, managing both work and family and being exploited both in the public and private sphere. Sexual exploitation is prevalent in the construction sites as seen from the literature available. Within the exploited construction industry of the informal sector, women become the greatest victims. In order to formulate new regulations for the benefit of the women, it is important to bring out the various issues women face and this research tries to throw light on the discriminations faced by women construction workers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The informal sector of the construction industry, which is ever increasing, suffers from large scale neglect. With the proliferation of new economic policies since the 1980s, firms have been facing competition and in order to reduce labour costs informal workers are hired. They are not protected by the state law (Agarwala, 2007). Among the poor conditions of informal construction workers, women are the more vulnerable ones due to the interaction of various socio-economic factors. Out of all women workers in the country a mere 7.5% are availing membership of registered trade unions. Due to factors like domination of men, scattered location, duties of child care etc. women face organizing

challenges (Geetika, Gupta and Singh, 2011; Mohapatra, 2012). There are various steps undertaken in order to avoid negligence towards this sector, but not much has been achieved as reflected by the literature in the following section.

In India, since ancient times, construction especially in places of worship, due to restrictions which were on the basis of religion and social codes and related to various prejudices, only men were given the permission to perform these jobs and women usually cleaned the premises and fetched materials for the construction process. They assisted men and cleaned the used implements. Construction activities in today's time are dominated by modern technology but the situation remains the same for the women (Kaveri, 1995).

2.1. Building and Other Construction Workers' Act, 1996

The Building and Other Construction Workers', (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 extends to the whole of India, which came into effect from 1st March, 1996. It applies to every establishment which employs or had employed on any day of the preceding twelve months, ten or more building workers in any building or other construction work. Regarding the welfare of the workers, chapter 3 talks about registration of building workers, who has completed eighteen years of age and are below sixty years of age. They will be given identity cards and employers will maintain register for them. The Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Boards mentioned in Chapter 5 functions for the benefit of the workers such as provision of assistance to workers in case of accidents, provision of pension, sanction loans and advances, providing financial assistance for the education of children of the beneficiaries, meet medical expenses for treatment of major ailments and make payment of maternity benefit. There is mention of safe drinking water, toilet facilities, first aid facilities, canteens, and crèches under a trained woman. For accommodation, the employer shall provide free of charges temporary living conditions to all the workers near the worksite with separate cooking, bathing, washing spaces. For working hours, it should include one or more specified intervals and provide for a day of rest in a week. In case of overtime work, worker shall be paid twice his ordinary wages.

2.2. Violation of Act

In the construction industry, the workers have to work long hours which is often 11 to 12 hours in order to meet the deadlines, and these extra long hours do not count as overtime; the contractors deduct money from their wage if the laborers remain absent. As reported by the Deshkal Society in 2004, workers are not provided safety equipments, have to arrange for treatment themselves and with surroundings totally unhygienic (Kumar M, 2013). Many a times the workers are afraid to agitate as they are from a different city, and so payment of regular wages, first aid kits, crèches, canteens, lavatory facilities remain conspicuous by their absence (Dalmia, 2012).

2.3. Plight of Construction Workers

Standardized working hours remain an unknown luxury for the large mass of people with unskilled labour, mainly dependent on physical labour (Bremman, 1996). Several factors make the workers vulnerable like employment which is permanently temporary, the employer-employee relationship is very fragile and short lived and the work has inherent risk of life due to lack of safety, health and welfare facilities. Also being part of unorganized sector, they cannot bargain for fair wages and do not get wages for extra work (Kumar M, 2013). Health hazards are linked to the appalling work conditions which include accidental issues from impact, penetration from scrap metal and sharp objects and crushing, physical problems (Bremman, 1996; Kumar M, 2013). Injuries in female workers include severe muscular pain, intestinal problems, gastric etc. (Kumar M, 2013). Migrant workers face much trouble, availing of smart cards for health facilities and ration cards or food stamps become difficult and so they are exploited on a daily basis (Pattanaik, 2009; Dalmia, 2012). The workers remain unregistered and so lack basic government facilities and in case of injuries workers often spend their own money (Pattanaik, 2009; Kumar M, 2013). There is a general lack of social security, such as old age pension, health insurance. According to ILO the construction industry is characterized by insecurity in employment, abusiveness, lack of insurance in cases of accidents, law enforcement is quite inadequate and relationships among the employees on the site remain unstable and poor (Pattanaik, 2009).

2.4. Differentiation of Work

In the lower economic echelons, there is strong differentiation which is horizontal in nature which offers almost no prospect to the great mass to improve their situation. There remains a noticeable distinction between man and woman; the woman usually fulfils the role of a 'helper' (Bremman, 1996). Women are often employed as unskilled workers confined to sweeping, picking up and throwing rubble from site, assisting mistris by carrying and handing out bricks (Dalmia, 2012). They are engaged exclusively as casual manual laborers in the construction industry and often women do not get the opportunity to acquire skills in the male-dominated trades like carpentry, masonry, plumbing etc. (Baruah, 2010; Devi and Kiran, 2013). In concreting, generally men assemble the materials required for making concrete, women also participate in this activity many times; however the machines are operated only by the men (Kaveri, 1995).

2.5. Wages

Women are made to believe that the type of work they do is inferior and so are paid less. The government clarified in 1976 that male and female workers are to be given equal pay when the nature of work was similar irrespective of the volume of work (Bhowmik, 2012).). According to the 1998 survey by SEWA in Ahmedabad, the average wage for manual labour for male workers was Rs. 128 in a day while that of the

average female wage was Rs. 60 for a day. Women are found to be in longer term contracts as they are okay with low wages and in 2003 while the wages of skilled laborers went up, that of unskilled remained the same or declined slightly (Baruah, 2010). This would mean that the wages of women, who remain mostly unskilled, are very meager. Sixty percent of the women earn wages between Rs. 61 and 70 per day in Delhi. Women construction workers said there was discrimination in wages, with the contractors paying them Rs. 80 per day while paying men Rs. 100 per day (Mumbai). Women face discrimination on the job because even if they have the same skills as the men they are not given the same work (Devi and Kiran, 2013; Kumar M, 2013). Women do not receive wages directly; their husbands or fathers receive on their behalf and wage books do not have the accurate information. Therefore the concept of money is relative for them which they calculate based on their expenses (Dalmia, 2012). In a study conducted by SEWA in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, 10% of the women were employed as semi-skilled workers and despite this these women were more often paid the same wages as unskilled female workers (Baruah, 2010). The minimum wage in Assam since June 1, 2018 is Rs. 254.91 for the unskilled workers in Construction or Maintenance of Road or Building Operations and Stone Breaking or Stone Crushing.

2.6. Double Burden of Work

According to a report on National Commission on Women 2005, women work till the last day of pregnancy and come back soon after delivery (Kumar M, 2013). Along with the paid labor, women have to be busy with all sorts of domestic activities like preparing meals, caring for the children, washing, cleaning. While the men come back demanding rest, care and attention women are expected to continue their work in the private sphere (Bremar, 1996). Women have to manage the household and prepare food for the family as the contractors do not provide food (Kumar M, 2013). Most women combine housework and caring roles along with the economic work in both home based economic work or waged work outside; globalization and liberalization has impacted to increase the workload for women across the whole spectrum of the working population in India (Kalpagam, 2011).

2.7. Vulnerabilities and Lack of Opportunities

Women occupy better position numerically in the informal sector but their position in the work hierarchy and income is low and their types of work can be easily replaced by technology. In the construction industry the task of carrying building materials to the work site and carrying baskets of crushed stones in the heads which is mainly done by the women can be performed using conveyor belts and consequently when this is done women lose their jobs. Women workers are also unable to access the work of carpentry, plumbing, electrical work etc. which are categorized as masculine jobs (Bhowmik, 2012). Women are often compelled to take up this work because of lack of skills and economic compulsion. Their prior issue remains ending

the exploitation committed by the middlemen (Geetika, Gupta and Singh, 2011; Mohapatra, 2012).

Citing Shramshakti Report, it has often been noticed that whenever there is high demand for labour in this sector, the female employment rates is much higher than that of males. On the other hand, whenever there is any shrinkage in the workforce, female workers are the one who will be removed from the work force compared to males (Devi and Kiran, 2013). In her case studies, Dalmia brings out issues of alcoholism of the husbands and draining out the family income, domestic abuse, inability to locate education and health facilities in the vastness of the unfamiliar city, appropriation of a considerable part of wages by thekedars. There are difficulties in opening bank accounts by the women as there are no documents available in their names, place of origin and other details (Dalmia, 2012). Women and children have always featured as 'associated' migrants and are more vulnerable due to reduced economic choices and lack of social support in the new area (Kumar M, 2013). It is easier for women to acquire the skills than to find employment as skilled workers; women face immense social and cultural barriers to entering the traditionally 'macho' construction industry. There has been lack of funds in the Karmika School of Training for women under SEWA Mahila Housing Trust due to entrenched prejudices (Baruah, 2010). Lack of financial control despite being earning members, lack of knowledge and information about their rights and about the city leaves the women burdened and vulnerable (Dalmia, 2012). The extreme cruel conditions of the sector lead to bottled-up aggression among the workers which has to find an outlet and it is hardly surprising that the weakest members are most victimized in the milieu (Bremar, 1996).

2.8. Sexual Exploitation

The nature of employment is insecure which creates a vicious trap for women where they are forced to please the contractor so that they get work and do not remain unemployed; also some older women force the young girls to please the contractors in order to get employment (Devi and Kiran, 2013). Women workers are often exploited by the supervisors and give less strenuous work to women they find attractive hoping to lure them. Desperate to earn money, many women also become prostitutes (Dalmia, 2012). Male workers have no other alternative but to be silent and leave their spouse and children in the temporary house which has no security for the sake of wages even though they are well aware of the atrocities against women in construction site (Kumar M, 2013).

2.9. Rationale

The construction industry has been growing rapidly along with increase in urbanization. Of the total construction workers in the country, about half (51%) of them are women, according to Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WEIGO). Being female workers adds to the plight of being in the informal sector of the economy. The

existing literature has given insights upon the range of disadvantages that the women workers face. Research on this topic is important in order to know about the impact of the welfare measures and also to formulate new policies in the future. This research will be carried out in order to grasp more information and knowledge about the discriminations against women construction workers.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Problem Statement

The welfare measures of the Building and Other Construction Workers' Act, 1996 is often violated by the contractors and the employers in the construction industry. As a result of this the women workers become the most vulnerable and ultimate victims of the industry, who are often seen as the weaker sex of the society. Not having a say within the household, they also lack access to information and knowledge about their rights and illiteracy makes them all the more vulnerable.

Women workers lack the control of financial resources even though they earn due to the patriarchal system of the society, which lead to further negative implications. Women construction workers face socio-economic inequalities, facing exploitation of labour in the public as well private sphere, along with sexual exploitation. Women workers often fall prey to sexual exploitation by the employers along with the abuse and exploitation of the husbands in the private sphere. Along with the performance of unpaid labor of the household, women workers are discriminated at the workplace and not given fair wages.

3.2. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse gender based differences of work at the construction site.
2. To understand the working conditions faced by women at the construction site.

3.3. Research Questions

1. What is the nature of difference in work assigned to men and women at the construction site?
2. Is there a hierarchy based on gender at the construction site?
3. Is there wage discrimination based on gender?
4. What is the basis of wage discrimination?
5. What are the challenges that the women construction workers face?
6. How do the challenges have an impact on their position in the socio-economic plane?
7. How are the rules meant for welfare applied at the site?
8. How much are workers aware about the welfare measures?

3.4. Research Approach

The research approach adopted for this research is mixed method. With the mixed method, both quantitative and

qualitative research methods are integrated which will help to give a complete understanding on a particular phenomenon. For this research, combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is required to understand both the profile and issues of women workers. It is used in understanding the degree and extent of the differences along with the understanding of the nature and dimensions of differences and discrimination.

3.5. Research Design

The research design used is exploratory for this study, so as to explore the research questions of the study. The exploratory design helps to clarify dimensions regarding the discrimination faced by women construction workers and useful in getting a better understanding of the problem.

3.6. Sampling

The sampling method adopted for this research is purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling. In purposive sampling, sample is selected based on experience or knowledge of the group and which is compliant with the research objectives. It is also known as judgmental sampling. Deliberately choosing the samples will provide relevant information for the study. The sampling size has been kept as 20 female construction workers.

3.7. Tools for Data Collection

The tool used for data collection is interview schedule; a semi-structured interview method was adopted. A semi-structured interview is a set of pre-determined questions which does not follow a formalized rigorous set of questions. It contains open-ended questions designed to gather focused data and allow questions to evolve from the discussions.

3.8. Sources

The sources for data collection include basically primary data, constituting of the respondents i.e. the female construction workers at the worksite. Secondary sources like articles, journal articles and books have been used for the Literature Review.

3.9. Ethical Concerns

Ethical concerns in a research address the issues that concern the behavior of social researchers and the consequences that it brings to the subjects of the study. The ethical concerns adopted for this research was mainly not asking the names of the individuals, voluntary participation and kindness and politeness in approach. Informed consent of the respondents, respect for privacy and confidentiality and responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the whole process is according to the ethics and no one is harmed due to this, has been taken care of.

3.10. Limitations

1. The researcher did not get the opportunity to interact with the respondents in a closed setting according to the comfort of the respondents.

2. The researcher got to interview in a single locality and did not go to unfamiliar areas due to the irregular nature of the job.
3. Some of the respondents were not aware about the wage difference between the skilled and unskilled category of workers.

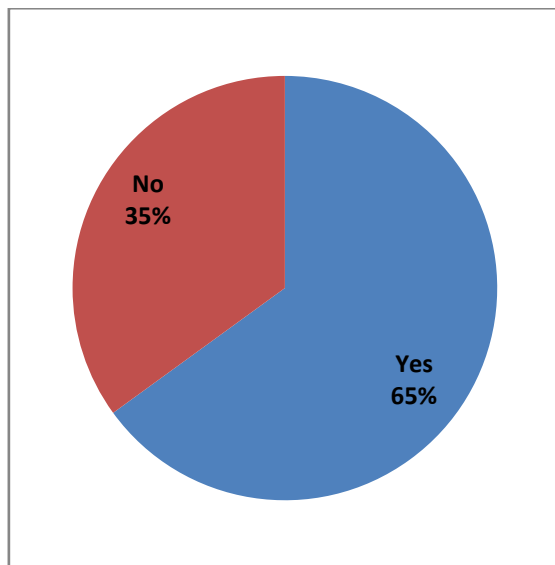
IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The 20 respondents for this research were taken from the construction site of Bharalumukh area and the Bhootnath labour market. Maximum of the workers are in the age group of 45-50 years i.e. 35% and the group with the lowest frequency is 15-20 years which is 5%. 55% of the workers are full time workers and 45% are part time workers. Out of 20 respondents, 1 was skilled and 19 of them were unskilled. Of the total workers, 90% were Muslims. The respondents were migrants from the rural areas of Lower Assam and staying on rent here, in Doulki area of Guwahati.

4.1. Gender Based Difference in the Nature of Work

There is consensus among the respondents regarding the difference in the nature of work between men and women. In such difference in the nature of work, there remains a hierarchy. The women are always appointed as unskilled workers and the men reach the level of skilled workers. The women are appointed as helpers and hardly become masons. According to one respondent, ‘Sometimes I receive differential treatment in the form of different kinds of work given on the basis of gender.’

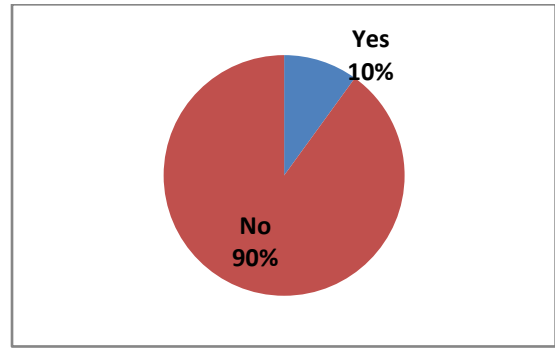
Figure 1: Presence of Gender Based Difference in Work



Source- Primary data

From the above figure it is seen that 65% of the respondents said that there is the presence of gender based difference in work.

Figure 2: Provision of acquiring new skill



Source- Primary data

4.1.1. Lack of training among women.

One of the main reasons for having gender based differences in work has been cited as lack of informal training among the women. Women are never provided the opportunity to learn the skills of the skilled workers. There are a handful of women who rise to the position of Rajmistri or mason just by observation and through own experience after many years of engagement in the work. The women are unable to take up those tasks performed by men as they are never trained like that. One respondent said, ‘Not many women can reach that stage. Women remain the most vulnerable in the construction industry.’ The lack of any kind of training reinforces the traditional gendered notions on division of labour.

As can be seen from the figure 2, 90% of the women denied any provision of acquiring new skill. Without acquiring any kind of skill it is clear that the women cannot climb up the ladder of hierarchy.

4.1.2. Internalization of gendered division of labour.

More than half of the workers believed that there is a necessity of gendered division of labour and it is the norm. According to them, there are certain tasks that women cannot perform, like going up to the top of the building. They believe that women are not physically fit to carry out the tasks of the men. Therefore lack of training which leads to gendered division of labour, has been so prevalent that women and men have begun internalizing such gendered division of labour.

4.1.3. Meaning of work for women.

One respondent was saying that both women’s and men’s work is complementary to each other and without the women; men cannot carry out their part. Another respondent said, ‘Our work is equally harder.’ Although there is difference in nature of work based on gender and they have internalized it, both the types of work are equal from the viewpoint of the women. They are content with the division of work and consider themselves as being productive if they can dutifully do their part. The respondents think that they are no less than the men and are equally contributing for the whole work.

Table 1: Wages of Women Construction Workers in a Day

Wage Per Day (In Rs.)	Frequency
100-300	4
300-500	14
500-700	2
Above 700	0

Source- Primary data

The above table shows that maximum workers earn between Rs. 300 to 500, which is followed by the wage group of Rs. 100 to 300 and then Rs. 500 to 700. The workers getting wage of Rs. 500-700 are the skilled workers and those getting Rs. 100-300 and Rs. 300-500 are unskilled workers.

Table 2: Savings of Women Construction Workers in a Day

Savings (In Rs.)	Frequency
0-50	8
50-100	7
100-150	0
150-200	4
200-250	1

Source- Primary data

As can be seen from table 2, the workers do not have much opportunity to save. Of them, 40% save only Rs. 0 to 50, followed by 35% in Rs. 50-100, 20% in Rs. 150-200 and 5% in Rs. 200-250.

4.2. Wage Difference for Similar Nature of Work

Some of the respondents agreed that there is the prevalence of wage difference for similar nature of work. Among the respondents some of them were unhappy about this fact while most among them justified it along gender norms. The respondents were not sure why such discrimination existed and had no clear views on this. One respondent said, ‘Men need more money to run the household.’ There were also opinions that just because they are men they are paid more.

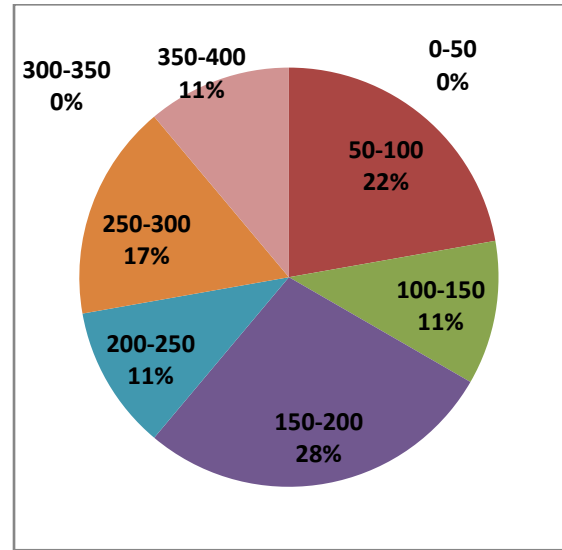
Table 3: Wage Difference between Men and Women for Same Type of Work

Wage Difference For Same Work (In Rs.)	Frequency
0-50	3
50-100	6
100-150	0
150-200	3
200-250	0
250-300	1

Source- Primary data

From the table 3 it can be seen that there is presence of wage difference between men and women for similar kind of work which is as high as Rs. 300.

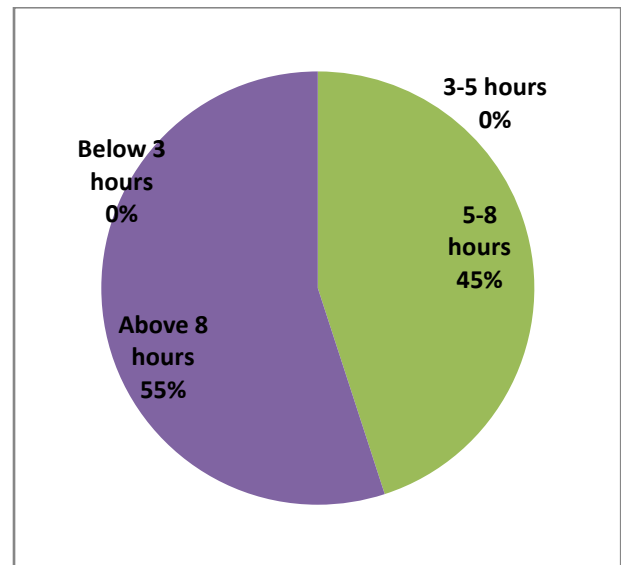
Figure 3: Wage Difference between Skilled and Unskilled Workers



As can be seen from figure 3, difference in wages between the skilled and unskilled workers range from Rs. 50-100 to Rs. 350-400, with the highest frequency in Rs. 150-200. As women are mostly unskilled and there is presence of men in the skilled category, this data also shows the wage difference between men and women in the construction sector.

The workers are made to work for more than 8 hours a day as can be seen from figure 4, 55% of them work for more than 8 hours and 45% work between 5-8 hours. This shows exploitation of labour for which no overtime wages are given.

Figure 4: Daily Work Hours for Women Construction Workers



Source: Primary Data

4.3. Irregular Wages

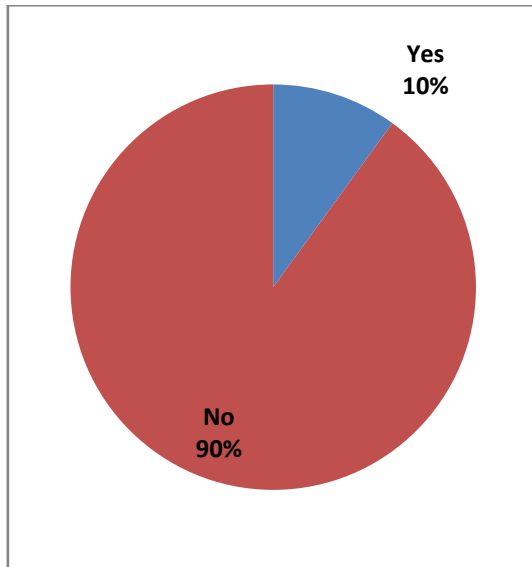
Due to the mobile nature of the work and presence of multiple employers wages are not regular. The contractors (Sordars) cheat the workers while giving them wages. One of the

interviewees opined, ‘Some of the Sordars are really bad and do not give us proper wages.’ If the workers work directly under an owner, the wages are regular. But if there is a middleman like the contractor, some amount of the wages provided by the owner goes in his hands. Another respondent said, ‘We work under the different contractors. During the payment of wages, the contractors push responsibility to each other to give wages.’ Also wages are not uniform everyday for the same kind of work. One of the respondents said, ‘Although I do similar kind of work always, the wages are not uniform and I get varying wages every day.’

4.3.1. No overtime dues.

The workers are not given wages for overtime but they are made to work for more than 8 hours a day, as seen from the quantitative data in figure 4. One respondent said that, ‘When there are no materials at the site, we just sit there idly for long time. And when the materials arrive, we are made to work till late. If we ask for overtime we are not given. And while asking for overtime dues, we are being kept quiet by excuses like “Remember you sat idle that day?”, “Remember that day there wasn’t much work?”’

Figure 5: Availability of Overtime Dues



Source- Primary data

4.3.2. Lack of bargaining power.

All the respondents are unaware about the concept or presence of any kind of trade unions or association of workers. Therefore they lack bargaining power and have no idea about making any demands or raising their voices against the discriminatory attitude of the contractors. A respondent said, ‘We do not have the information on the contractors and so cannot contact them for that.’ Another respondent said, ‘Some people cheat us and we do not even get the chance to ask our part.’

Table 4: Knowledge of Trade Unions among the Women Construction Workers

Knowledge Of Trade Unions	Frequency
Yes	0
No	20

Source- Primary data

As can be seen from figure 5, 90% of the workers do not get overtime wages. They cannot confront the employers as they lack bargaining power which is reflected by the lack of knowledge on trade unions from table 4.

4.4. Lack of Basic Welfare Facilities

The construction workers are not provided any medical facilities or first aid when they get injured at the worksite. One respondent, showing an injury in her hand, said, ‘Nothing is provided for medical assistance. It is your fault that you are injured.’ Proper toilets are not always available; some of the sites have and some do not. Another respondent said, ‘We are not given any of the facilities. We are not even aware of them.’ The maternity benefits were provided by the individual government maternity schemes and not through welfare fund of the Building and Other Construction Workers’ Act, 1996.

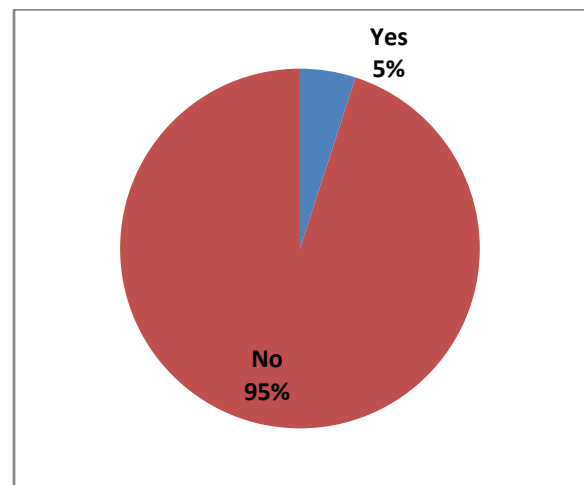
From the figures 6, 7 and 8 given below it is seen that the basic welfare measures are not met for the workers. Table 5 given below shows the negligence on the part of the employers for the safety of the workers at the workplace. The workers are never given any safety equipments or measures by the employers.

Table 5: Availability of Safety Measures at Construction Site

Provision Of Safety Measures	Frequency
Yes	0
No	20

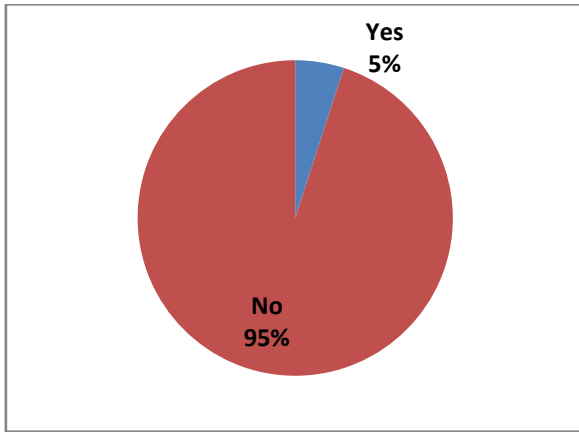
Source- Primary data

Figure 6: Availability of Maternity Benefit



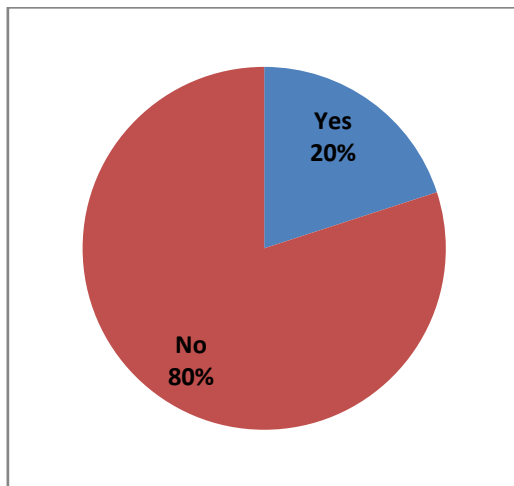
Source- Primary data

Figure 7: Availability of Creche Facility at the Site



Source- Primary data

Figure 8: Availability of Proper Toilets at the Site



Source- Primary data

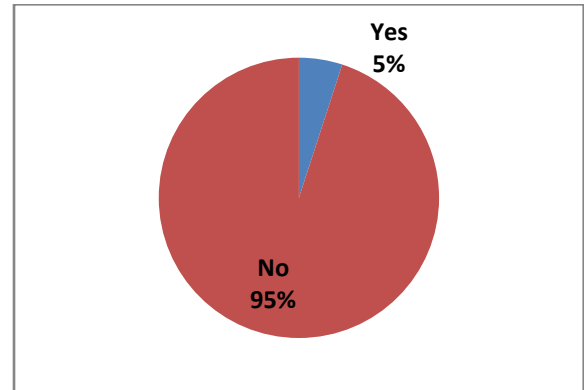
4.5. Irregular Nature of the Job

The job in the construction industry is irregular and the respondents were of the opinion that they do not get employment every day. The workers come in the morning in search of employment but they go back to their homes if no one picks them up for the day. One respondent said, ‘Work is not regular, like 3 days we won’t get and 1 day we will get.’

4.5.1. Part time nature of the workers.

Some of the construction workers are part time workers, and it reflects about the mobile nature of this sector. The workers work as domestic workers, engage in road work and also in the vegetable market, screening the vegetables against the rotten ones. The irregular nature of the construction sector compels the workers to look for other types of unskilled work too. According to them, the construction sector pays a better amount than the rest that they can do within their capacity; therefore they pursue construction work.

Figure 9: Regular Employment in a Week



Source- Primary data

4.6. Evaluation of Implementation of Building and Other Construction Workers’ Act, 1996

Table 6: Availability of Medical Facilities during Accidents

Availability Of Medical Facilities	Frequency
Yes	1
No	19

Source- Primary data

Table 7: Availability of Loan Facilities

Availability Of Loan	Frequency
Yes	3
No	17

Source- Primary data

Table 8: Availability of Financial Assistance for Children’s Education by the Respondents

Availability Of Financial Assistance For Children’s Education	Frequency
Yes	0
No	20

Source- Primary data

Table 9: Availability of Overtime Dues by the Respondents

Availability Of Overtime Dues	Frequency
Yes	2
No	18

Source- Primary data

Table 10: Presence of Safety Committee at the Site

Presence Of Safety Committee At The Site	Frequency
Yes	0
No	20

Source- Primary data

The five indicators for the evaluation of the implementation of Building and Other Construction Workers' Act, 1996 is operating very poorly as can be seen from the tables 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Availability of financial assistance for children's education and presence of safety committee is not at all available for the workers. Also, none of the workers were registered under the Act. Therefore the implementation of the Act remains a failure.

4.7. Findings

From analyzing the data, it is seen that there is higher propensity to consume among the workers, given their income and expenditure level. Also, in this part of Assam, religion is an important aspect when it comes to construction workers. The women construction workers are mostly Muslim migrants. Some of the respondents got wages below than what is recommended in the Minimum Wages Act w.e.f. June 2018. Formation of Trade Unions in the construction sector is not common and not easy, due to which they lack bargaining power. Therefore it is seen that there is violation of the Building and Other Construction Workers' Act. There is also difference in nature of work among men and women and lack of opportunities for women construction workers.

4.8. Observations

During the interview, it was observed that at the construction site, the machines are mainly operated by the men. In most of the sites, the number of male construction workers is more than that of the female workers. Although the workers denied any form of sexual harassment at workplace, in one instance it was seen that a male worker was pulling a female worker to work even after refusing to do so by her.

V. CONCLUSION

The study analysed the gender based differences of work present at the construction site. There have been wide differences in gendered division of work due to the prevailing patriarchal notions of the society. This work difference leads to the difference in wages between men and women by not providing the women the opportunity to earn higher than the men. This contributes to putting male workers in a superior position. The working conditions of women at the site is very poor; the women remain unaware of their rights and even lack the bargaining power to demand it.

From this research it is seen that women actually face discrimination in the construction sector. The gendered division of work stems from the lack of any kind of informal training due to the entrenched prejudices and internalization of gender roles. Even in the similar nature of work the men are found to earn higher than the women, and the women cannot voice against this due to lack of bargaining power. Therefore the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 has not been implemented here in this sector, which says that men and women are to be provided equal pay when nature of work is similar irrespective of the volume of work. The wages are found to be irregular; some are below the Minimum Wages

for unskilled workers in Assam w.e.f. June 1, 2018. Often the middlemen or the contractors cheat these workers during payment of wages.

The welfare schemes of the Building and Other Construction Workers' Act of 1996 has not been implemented at the sites. Provisions of safety mechanisms remain unavailable and the workers avail medical facilities out of their own expense. The women workers do not get maternity care and crèche facilities, making it difficult for them to engage in construction activities during that time. There is also exploitation of labour and no overtime dues are given to the workers.

The existing disadvantages faced by the women in the construction sector suggest that a lot of steps need to be taken towards this. The workers need to be made aware about their rights and about the various schemes available to them. The various organisations associated with the informal sector are required to look after the functioning and processes in the construction sector. It also becomes necessary to make the male workers aware of such issues. The findings from this research incites for further research in the field and find out the perspectives of the employers and also the authorities associated with the regulation of this sector, questioning the loopholes associated with it.

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