

THE MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION WORKER'S VISIBLE PROBLEMS AND ITS POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS IN THIRUVALLUR DISTRICT

A. SHAJI GEORGE¹, Dr. V. SARAVANAN²

¹ Ph.D. Research Scholar, P.G. & Research Department of Economics, Sir Theagaraya College, Chennai -600 021, Tamil Nadu, India

² Assistant Professor, P.G & Research Department of Economics, Sir Theagaraya College, Chennai -600 021, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

The construction sector of India is mostly composed of the informal workforce, which utilizes more than 36 million labourers. Due to the unemployment crisis, many of the migrants have joined as a casual labourers in the construction sector. These migrant labourers are paid low wages as well as more work burden when compared to the non-migrant labourers in the same sector (or) construction work. The Migrant construction labourers live in small huts, in the nearby building site or they live in the slums in and around the urban centers.

Their community and working or living conditions are extremely outrageous and vulnerable. The requirement and the supply of migrant labourers will be handled through the contract method. Contractors and subcontractors play a vital role in providing essential facilities and getting desired job opportunities within a short time period. However, they will face social and psychological challenges such as the social stigma associated with unskilled labour, social isolation, and racism encountered by migrant construction workers. At the Same Time, these problems influence both male and female workers, several of such challenges are specific by gender.

In general, the majority of the migrant construction labourers migrate along with their family, both husband and wife are working together in the field of the construction sector, they are facing a lot of difficulties from their children, in the form of childhood education, whereas, their children's first language (local) is different from their mother tongue of Migrant construction workers. Hence, migrant construction labourers are facing numerous

numbers of challenges on the worksite and their entire livelihood period. Moreover, they are not actively engaged in work in the monsoon period which prevails in the Study Area.

Thus, this paper is mainly focused on the Migrant construction labourers in Thiruvallur district.

Keywords: *Migrant Construction workers, Construction labourers, Welfare of BOC Workers, BOCW Act, Informal sector.*

INTRODUCTION

In India, the Construction sector is considered to be one of the biggest contributors to economic activity, following the agriculture sector. Construction employs an approximate 35 million people in this sector. As stated by India's National Commission for Enterprises in the Informal Sector, over 92 per cent of India's workforce was working in the informal sector, as well as this amount has been constantly growing. This means that over 92 per cent of the Indian workforce is vulnerable to job and income uncertainty, violation of civil rights, abuse, and lack of effective judicial protection. The construction industry is the single largest non-agricultural sector in the commercial world. Construction labourers have been, treated generally as second-class citizens, lacking means to defend their pride.

In India, the construction industry is a growing sector, as well as in the last five decades it has been witnessed flourishing, particularly in major cities such as Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, and Bangalore. Moreover, the increase in the number of job opportunities in the sector has proven to be significant it is considered to be one of the most significant industries for national growth. Special emphasis on the construction sector takes into the image some key issues that are related to work conditions, living conditions, migration, poverty, and phases of exploitation in urban and semi-urban areas.

The Migrant construction labourers in India, are essentially poor, illiterate, and unskilled labourers. Initially, migrant workers join as the casual labourers in the construction field without any experience, after that they gradually learn the construction work either partially or fully. Within a few years, they can work as construction labourers in our society. The

Migrant construction labourers are totally engaged in the urban and semi-urban housing work and also multistoried buildings etc. Due to lack of job security, the migrant construction workers are ready to work as much as they can, day and night without any concern for their health and ready to work for extra hours as well with low wages.

Since migrant construction labourers are a major boon of the Indian informal sector. They should be treated more fairly in our society and their lives should be elevated to a dignified condition; our nation will also be benefited.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study mainly focuses on the following objectives.

- ✚ To find out the causes for the presence of migrant labourers in the field of the construction sector.
- ✚ To analyse the working conditions of migrant construction labourers in the study area.
- ✚ To point out the living conditions of migrant construction labourers in the study area.
- ✚ To study the government welfare schemes for the benefit of migrant construction labourers in the study area.
- ✚ To identify the enhancement of livelihood betterment measures of migrant labourers in the study area.
- ✚ To study the legal framework support for migrant construction labourers in India
- ✚ To Find out the health Insurance scheme only meant for Migrant construction workers at the National and state level in India.

METHODOLOGY:

- ✚ Presently this study is focused on the Migrant construction labourers in Thiruvallur district
- ✚ This work has been mainly identified by the migrant men and women construction labourers, respectively.
- ✚ This present work has highlighted upon the disparities of wage level and the nature of work of both the migrant and non-migrant construction labourers in the study area.

- ✚ This study is mainly bringing out the living conditions of migrant construction workers.
- ✚ This study is primarily based on the researcher's observation with the help of a suitable questionnaire.
- ✚ In this work, one substantiates the secondary data sources with regard to migrant construction workers.

WORKING CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION LABOURERS

Working Conditions: Even though these workers form the backbone of Chennai's efforts to create world-class infrastructure, they encounter many forms of marginalization and discrimination in the city. They are internalized as ordinary and unskilled labourers and have been excluded from skilled work such as masons or carpenters. They will receive very little pay and are not paid or are underpaid by their contractors and employers. Women migrant's construction workers are widely assumed to be merely wives to be accompanied by male migrant Construction workers. Normally these workers work an average of 8 to 10 hours a day doing both paid and unpaid jobs around construction sites, their accommodation rooms, and in gaining access to basic amenities nearby.

They have been working on trembling platforms and rough terrain, in dangerous conditions. They were allowed to take a small number of breaks, due to the fact that the building materials need to be continually provided for quick work. Women are mostly employed as workers where they lift and take, sand, cement, concrete, and water from one location towards the other. We discovered that employers assigned the job of lifting and handling materials at construction sites to women. This job was not seen at the same level as the forms of work done by the men, as well as it is paid a smaller amount, justified on the grounds that women do similar laborious unpaid work which is regarded as unskilled.

Harassment: Several of the interstate migrant labourers encountered police harassment, particularly when they travel late at night to go to work on construction sites. Numerous internal and interstate migrant labourers do not possess any personal identification proof, for

example, a ration card or voter ID card. The absence of Identity card, as well as the inability to vote because of social mobility, indicates that politicians have no interest in working to achieve the wellbeing of migrants.

Wages: Most of the migrant labourers are illiterate and unskilled that makes them susceptible to being abused by either the subcontractors or contractors. They possess low negotiating power and worry that they could not get a job frequently if they demand higher wages.

A significant proportion of the unskilled labourers in Construction paid salaries mention in Table:1 It depends upon the sub-contractor or contractor. These Migrant labourers work under the contractors they will get their wages E.g. Mason Rs.1,200 but they pay the workers Rs.700 middleman (Contractor) will take the money which obviously demonstrates that the workers obtain the minimum wages specified by the state.

TABLE: 1 CONSTRUCTION WORKERS DAILY WAGES

WORKERS CATAGORIES	ACTUAL SALARY (RS)	PAID SALARY
MASON	1200	700
LABOUR MASON ASSISTANT (MALE)	700	450
LABOUR MASON ASSISTANT (FEMALE)	500	350
CARPENTERS	1200	700
PLUMBERS	900	600
PAINTERS	1000	600
ELECTRICIANS	1200	650

The labourers work from 8 a.m.to 6 p.m., along with a one-hour lunch break. Nearly All of the skilled and unskilled workers work for approximately 9-10 hours in a single day. In accordance with the labour law, labourers must be paid for twice the amount of the real salaries for working overtime, however not any of the contractors on the examined sites compensated them any overtime salaries. With the exception of two sites, in all the other sites, there is a big difference in wages between female and male workers, that is, in the case

where a female worker receives Rs 350, the male worker receives Rs 450 for the same kind of work. The woman labourers have agreed to this as they think that male workers work harder so they receive Rs 100 additionally. The statistics comprise basic wages in addition to the allowance for, (Tea and Snacks) for morning and evening required to be paid in addition to the main wages to everyone in the Category of workers at the site.

Generally speaking, intra-state labourers receive a higher salary when compared to inter-state migrant labourers since they are more conscious of the domestic market rates and can bargain best with the contractors. Many intra-state migrant labourers do not depend on a single subcontractors or contractor and are convinced that they are able to obtain work effortlessly from several other contractors. Weekly one day is a holiday on Sunday for all the workers; though inter-state migrants do not possess their families along with them, they would prefer to work half a day on Sundays and make money.

Cheated by Contractors: The migrant labourers entrust their money to the subcontractors as they are unable to safeguard their money. They split the money and give one half to the subcontractors and keep the remaining half with them. This is what makes them susceptible to irresponsible contractors who vanish overnight together with their money. These labourers are not familiar with the principle contractors due to which they not only lose their money but also their job. During such a situation the labourers become helpless as they don't have enough money to go back home.

Worksites Safety Measures: From the sixteen construction sites visited, the workforce was supplied with helmets only on five construction sites. Additional safety measures like the use of spectacles while welding, as well as the stone cutting, have not been observed in any of the construction work sites. On the remaining 14 construction sites in which the labourers go to work for small contractors, there had been no safety official and not any safety measures have been followed. In certain cases, the contractors have supplied helmets although the employees do not wear them. This is particularly true of women who are shy and are likewise not conscious of the significance of helmets. labourers are susceptible to tiny accidents such as getting cut by nails resting on the construction sites, that leads to infections or dropping

from a height whilst performing plastering or roof moulding work, etc. Most of the migrant and non-migrant labourers have health or life insurance.

And understand in the construction sector, several migrant workers have not been registered in accordance with the Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board, abandoning which they have been at the mercy of builders and contractors.

LIVING CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION LABOURERS

Tamil Nadu has one of the biggest industrial estates in the nation, receives thousands of migrant construction workers every day from north India. Construction industry and manufacturing are the two main industries in which these migrant labourers are positioned. According to the information, approximately 50 per cent of migrant labourers are working as well as living in Chennai, Kanchipuram and Tiruvallur districts.

Most of the labourers working as unskilled workers and are usually those who live in a situation of poverty with no proper houses, water, and sanitation. There is a view that inter-State migrant labourers are mainly in the construction industry due to the fact it is visible to everyone. More than 85percent of the construction workers were from six States of India — Uttar Pradesh, Odisha Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Assam.

The exact nature of housing facilities of the migrant construction workers is primarily determined by the sector of work as well as their level of salaries and expertise. Several live at the construction site, in the temporary sheds or shacks in common empty lands nearby the construction site, in single room temporary sheds, one-room tenements or a single room houses and many of them are living in an open area or commonplace lands in huts made of old plastic sheets or waste tin sheets.

The migrant labourers also stay in tiny shelters and cabin type of small huts. The lands in these cases belong to the local residents, for whom they paid lease. Those Are The tiny huts are also covered by the old waste tin or plastic sheeting and did not have any the essential

amenities such as cooking facilities, or bathroom facilities and the latrine. Where they get facilities, they are the simplest to the least.

There are cases of open defecation as well. The sanitary conditions throughout such areas are pitiful and the locations are scattered with garbage. All regular activities such as Cooking, drinking, eating and sleeping are being conducted in open areas, and nearly all of the residents are low-skilled workers with low wages. Across most sites, the workers live and cook their food together at the site. Usually, a group consisting of 4 to 12 persons cook the food including breakfast lunch and dinner for everyone.

Most of the group members come from the same village as well as a few of them are family members and their relatives and are headed by a leader. Each person contributes on a daily basis for the buying of food. But the expenditure to be shared and settlement of account all is done during the weekend or holidays, possibly because, in the construction industry salaries are often paid on the weekends for the workers engaged by them. Huge numbers of the migrant workers live in tiny houses or rooms where suitable latrine facilities are not available. At the Same Time, 70 per cent share the latrine with others and 30 per cent have limited toilet to use. The circumstance has consequence not only about the health of the specific migrant worker but at the same time about public health.

Accessibility of water, access to clean drinking water and sewage service and all the essential amenities are the fundamental issue in most of the construction workers accommodation. It was discovered that the greater part 75 per cent does not have drinking water. They use public water for sourcing drinking water and the same water for other purposes. 25 per cent have water in the working location, they live in temporary shelters and living near to the construction site or sometime in the unfinished site inside itself.

Natural cleanliness is excessively poor, the entry and the premises are covered with container masala folios, Beedi, nails and other waste. A large portion of the labourers working in the construction sector lived in little houses relying on their salary. There was insufficient

provision for sanitation just 70 per cent respondent that there has no sanitation provision. Just 30 per cent have sanitation provision. They live in leased houses.

All of them are cooking in common places, only 25 per cent are the various groups of labourers, in accordance with the location of origin and kind of work, have been living in separate shelters with isolated cooking facilities. Nearly migrant workers around 75 per cent living in the tiny room are being used as kitchen places in which their food is cooked utilizing the kerosene stove positioned at the ground.

The settlement was a significant issue for the migrant workers, as the study showed uncovered lamentable living and working circumstances of the workers. The greater part of them was living in impermanent shelters homes with tin sheets and was living in crowded dormitories with minimum facilities.

These migrant labourers were physically attacked, emotional and public humiliation, mistreatment at work locations and lack of health insurance are amongst the most significant issues encountered by inter-State migrants involved in the construction sector across Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME FOR MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Social security and Health insurance scheme for migrant construction workers has been recently introduced by the government. *What is BOC:* The central government welfare scheme for Building and other construction workers is called BOC.

According to the information about the scheme it will cover i) Health and Maternity Cover ii) Children Education iii) Housing iv) Skill development and v) Pension. Set free insurance policy and monthly retirement benefits of Rs 1,000 after 60 years of age, grants scholarships for children, repayment of medical fees and Life, and disability cover, these are the scheme for the welfare of building and other construction (BOC) workers.

The scheme proposes to share the labour premium through the Center and the states to provide life and disabled care under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana equal sharing for Rs 171. The combined plan will provide Rs 2 lakh for natural death and Rs 4 lakh for the accidental death. In addition to This, it additionally offers people with disabilities benefits.

Education: The scheme also provides minimum financial support for the education of wards of the recipients should be given for each child per annum from grade 1 to post-graduation courses.

Health care and Maternity Insurance: A suitable plan would be prepared to extend health & maternity advantages to BOC labourers and their families through ESIC. The State government BOC Welfare Boards can do the contributions as necessary in order to bring BOC workers in accordance with the ESIC fold.

The program is also proposing to give additional benefits to workers like housing, ability development, and pension. There being a total lack of awareness of Social Security and health scheme for the migrant construction workers, it is important for the State and Central Government and NGO's to make awareness programs to those labourers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

There are several reasons for migration which is split into two – push factors and pull factors. **Push factors** involve abandoning a place due to problems such as lack of employment opportunities, drought, poverty. **Pull factors** consist of relocating to a place due to more employment opportunities in construction work, reasonable wages, better sheltering, and better comfortable livelihood.

The Migrant construction labourers suffer from a heavy work burden. Since the migrant labourers are mostly are illiterate and unskilled that makes them susceptible to being abused by either the subcontractors or contractors. They possess low negotiating power and worry

that they could not get a job frequently if they demand higher wages when compared to the local construction labourers.

The living condition of migrant construction workers is very poor. They live in at the construction site, in the temporary sheds or shacks in common empty lands nearby the construction site, in single room temporary sheds, one-room tenements or a single room houses and many of them are living in an open area or commonplace lands in huts made of old plastic sheets or waste tin sheets.

Many of the construction labourers die due to improper safety measures caused by technical errors and carelessness.

With regard to migrant construction workers, the welfare scheme promised by KattidaThozhilalar Sangam guarantees education scholarship for the children of migrant construction workers. The association claims cash compensation for the injuries gained during the time of work and in the case of sudden death if they enroll as the member of the organization. The central government has introduced a welfare scheme called BOC which covers i) Health and Maternity Cover ii) Children Education iii) Housing iv) Skill development and v) Pension. The central and state government has also announced the health care plans for migrant construction workers under the E.S.I Schemes.

To improve the livelihood of the migrant construction labourers, National ID card (Aadhar card) and ration card should be provided to receive the government schemes without any delay. Since migrant labourers are frequently relocating to different states the ration card should be applicable wherever they go. Hence, the government has launched numerous schemes and plans for the welfare of migrant construction labourers. At the same time, migrant construction labourers have been constantly trying to elevate their status.

CONCLUSION:

Migrant construction labourers in Thiruvallur district are comprised of mostly bachelors and men working with their family. Although these labourers work hard they earn inadequate wages. The migrant construction labourers have a weak physical, societal, and mental quality of life, but their livelihood is average when in comparison with the studies done in other areas of Tamilnadu, it was considerably linked with higher wages, who lived in mediocre accommodation. Most of the labourers are addicted to tobacco and alcohol, greater than current evidence are present in this workers category. We suggest policies to improve their physical, societal, and mental health of this susceptible population through strict legislations. In order to overcome this problem, the government and the Ministry of labour should promulgate the suitable law for prescribed minimum wages and the additional welfare measures to improve livelihood opportunities for the migrant construction labourers in India.

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