



Problems Of Building Construction Workers In Kanyakumari District Of Tamil Nadu

K.Ponnaian¹, Dr. T. Iyappan (Supervisor)²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Vivekananda College, Tamil Nadu

²Associate Professor, Arignar Anna College, Aralvoimozhi

Abstract: This paper aims to analyse the problems of workers in construction industry. Construction industry is one of the most important sector which generates employment opportunities and improve the standard of living of many people in rural and urban areas. In fact, majority of people depend on this industry for employment and income. It is important to note that this an unorganized sector which is the basis for economic development. The workers engaged in construction works are socially and economically backward and so that they are unable to organize themselves in pursuit of their common interest. This is because of certain constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance, illiteracy lack of mobility poverty, small scattered size of establishment and lack of co-operation among the workers. Consequently, construction workers face a lot of problems such as lack of work security, low wage, more hours of work, and lack of social and medical welfare facilities. Generally construction workers face financial problems, health problems, diseases, mishaps and even loss of life. Moreover, lack of social welfare measures and social security and medical benefits affect the construction workers.

Key Words: Construction sector, employment, illiteracy, medical benefit, occupational diseases, social security, welfare measures.

INTRODUCTION

The problems of construction workers differ from place to place and work to work depending on the noise, chemicals, tools or equipments, availability of safety measures, height and environment. However, the problems faced by the construction workers are more than that by the workers in other sectors. Hence, the study of problems of construction workers is important and it has drawn the attention of researchers throughout the world. So, the present study also analyses the issues of construction workers in Kanyakumari District. It is seen that construction workers undergo various problems such as casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy, wage discrimination, irregular work, absence of social security, uncertain working hours, unsafe working environment, occupational diseases, injuries, improper implementation of labour law, lack of labour welfare activities, bad habits, exploitation, noise, temperature and ultra violate radiation, excessive vibration, working at height, non-availability of raw materials, delay in wage payment, and cost of materials in the study area.

STUDY AREA AND SAMPLES

The present study is conducted in Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu, South India. This district consists of four taluks namely Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam, Thovalai and Vilavancode. Therefore, equal importance is give to each taluk and wherefrom 25 samples randomly selected. Thus,

the total sample respondents are 100 engaged in different construction activities such as constructing, carpentering, electrifying, painting, plumbing and helping. Personal interview was conducted in order to discern the problems faced by the workers in construction industry at micro level.

PROBLEMS OF WORKERS

1. Casual Nature of Employment

The nature of employment in construction industry remains casual and uncertain. In fact, no one either contractor or owner gives an assurance of job to the workers. It is seen that construction activity is slack in rainy seasons which reduces the demand for workers. On the other hand, shortage of water in summer season also affects the demand for workers in construction industry. The study shows that out of the total respondents, 89 per cent workers suffer due to this problem. Hence, this is one of the most important problems faced by the construction workers. It affects the family income and standard of living and it develops tension, stress and dependency in the construction workers.

2. Absence of Social Security

The workers in the building construction are far away from the benefits of social security and labour welfare programmes run by the government. As a result, workers



work under the conditions like uncertain work, no medical facilities, unsafe working environment and lack of fair wages and insurance facilities. Thus, there is a total absence of social security schemes in construction sector. It affects the hope of the workers and discourages them. Therefore, this study analyses the views of workers in construction about the absence of social security. Most of them realize that this is one of the problems which affect their interest and attitude towards construction sector. It is seen that out of the total respondents, 93 per cent suffer due to lack of social security. Thus, this problem cannot be neglected in construction industry.

3. Uncertain Working Hours

Uncertain working hours is another problem faced by the workers in construction sector. There is a fixed hours of work in government and non-government departments or organized sectors. Generally, the working hours of workers ranges between 6 or 8 and 10 in all sectors except the construction sector. It is true in almost all types of construction works such as painting, plumbing, electricians, welding and building. Normally, construction works begins at 8 or 8.30 a.m. and continue upto 4.30 or 5.0 p.m. every day. However, this working hours is not possible on all occasions, sometimes construction workers should work upto 5 or 6.30 p.m. In other words, they should work more than the normal hours. Out of 100 respondents, 54 per cent faced this problem in the study area.

4. Unsafe working conditions

Construction works require safe conditions to protect the workers from getting injuries, mishap and occupational diseases or at least keep themselves safe in the working environment. The construction workers should have equipments, made of rubber, plastic or metal to protect the skin, nose, lungs, eyes and hands and safety drinking water. Such measures help to maintain the efficiency and health of the workers in construction sectors. Lack of safe working conditions causes labour absenteeism, sore sickness, feebleness, allergy and despondency. So it is essential for work and health. The lack of safe working conditions has drawn the attention of scholars and researchers and they carry out a host of studies which conclude that safety measures and good working environment are necessary to avoid injuries, mishaps and even loss of life. The study found that out of the total respondents, 57 per cent have this problem. Therefore, the study observes that unsafe working condition is one of the problems found common in the construction sector.

5. Occupational Diseases

The respondents face occupational diseases in construction sector. In fact, the study observes the diseases like cough, asthma, allergy, lungs, body pain and bronchial diseases. This is because the construction workers work in unsafe conditions in mud, stone, cement, steel and iron nails, sand, bricks, and unhygienic water. Most of the masonry works depend upon cement mix material. Moreover, the workers do not wear socks or gloves, or shoes or any other safety devices. Similarly, carpenters smoke wood dust and cement mix which affects the respiratory system. Further, helpers who engage in construction activities do not use or wear any safety measures. Thus, construction workers get affected by any one or two of the occupational diseases. The study of occupational diseases of construction workers has drawn the attention of scholars and researchers at national and international level. The study displays that out of the total respondents, 31 per cent suffer from occupational diseases. It is also understood that some occupational diseases affect the respondents chronically whereas others frequently. However, construction works are subjected to occupational diseases. Consequently, they have to lose their health and wealth.

6. Injuries

Construction activities are subjected to get injuries which cause physical, mental and fiscal problems. This happens when they use hammer, cutting machine, sickle, spade, big axe, chisel and other sharp equipments and tools fastly and carelessly. The careless handling of such instruments causes severe pain, wounds and loss of blood and even they may cut nerves or fingers. Thus, masons, carpenters, electricians, painters, lumbers and helpers get injuries and face many problems. It is seen that out of the total respondents, 29 per cent got injured. Hence, this problem is felt seriously in the construction sector.

7. Noise

The use of modern technology causes noise which affects the hearing capacity and working efficiency of construction workers. In fact, cutting machines, drilling machines, breaking equipments and concrete preparing machines create intolerable noise. Noise causes giddiness, vibration and loss of hearing. Moreover, sudden and violent noise shocks the workers. As noise disturbs the workers in construction sector, the study examines the views of sample respondents. The study found that out of the total respondents, 49 per cent suffer from noise pollution. Therefore, the problem of noise in construction sector



cannot be ignored because it affects a certain percentage of workers. In fact, out of the total respondents (100), 35.8 per cent accept that they suffer due to noise pollution. Hence, efforts should be taken to minimize noise in order to improve the efficiency of construction workers.

8. Working at High Places

It is seen that height of the houses and buildings is higher than that of the past one. In fact, the height of buildings increases from second floor to third floor, third floor to fourth floor and so on according to need and fiscal power of the owners. The workers who work at high places face the problem such as fearness, tension, shivering, giddiness, head ache and leg pain. These problems cause labour absenteeism, sickness and low labour efficiency. Thus, a number of construction workers are affected by the height of the working places. It is seen, out of the total respondents, 44 per cent have such problem. Hence, the study considers it as one of the major problems. Moreover, most of them consider it as an unsafe working condition in the construction sector.

9. Non Availability of Raw Materials

Construction sector generates employment and income opportunities for crores of people in India. However, the creation of employment opportunities in construction sector depend on the availability of raw materials, such as granite, bricks, cement, sand, iron materials, wood, paint, water etc. The non-availability of raw materials affects the employment and income opportunities of workers who depends on construction activities. Thus, the overall study indicates that out of the total respondents (100), 62 per cent have faced this problem. Hence, it is accepted that the non-availability of raw materials is one of the major problems faced by construction workers in the district.

10. Lack of Co-operation and Satisfaction

Construction workers get employment continuously only when they cooperate with the owners or contractors and work to their satisfaction. Otherwise, they may change the labourers which affect the workers who have been already working in the construction sector. Lack of co-operation and satisfaction with the contractors or owners cause many problems that they face in the construction activities. It is observed that about 23 per cent workers are affected by this problem.

The present study observes various problems faced by the workers in construction sector. The problems such as casual nature of employment, absence of social security, lack of labour welfare activities, uncertain working hours, unsafe working conditions, occupational diseases, injuries, wage exploitation and differentiation, noise, working at high places, non-availability of raw materials, mobility of labour, lack of co-operation and satisfaction and bad habits affect the workers and reduce their labour efficiency in construction sector. Hence, efforts should be taken to reduce or eliminate such problems with a view to maintain the health and wealth of the construction workers. In fact, every individual has the right to earn and enjoy life. Hence, it is the responsibility of the government to provide those facilities which protect the construction workers and improve their life in all respects.

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CONCLUSION