

GENDER BASED DISCRIMINATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF SONITPUR DISTRICT OF ASSAM

Anurag Hazarika¹
Samikshya Madhukulya

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ABSTRACT

The study revolves around the issues of discrimination on the basis of gender along with the facets of the various causes that result in the hindrance of the equation as well as an empowered state of women working in several sectors in both the rural areas and the regions that belong to the tribal communities. The sector of construction is chosen in this study as it predominantly succumbs to the not only majority of male workers but is also centred on patriarchal notions of thinking as well as beliefs. The central aim of this research is to locate the discrimination that takes place on the basis of gender in the unorganised sectors. In order to formulate the study, the district of Sonitpur in the state of Assam is being chosen for the regulation of the investigation. Moreover, the objectives of the study are the location of the facets of the gender-discrimination, the socio-economic issues and the measures to mitigate the barriers, along with the correlation between the occupational scenario and the family issues evident in the lives of the women construction workers. In the study, the research philosophy, design and approach that have been chosen are positivism, descriptive and deductive, respectively. The survey is being conducted, and the data collection is taken as the primary technique while the tool of SPSS is taken in order to conduct the process of the analysis of collected data. The results that have been generated through the collection and the analysis of the primary data cater to the regulated objectives of the study. The data analysis brings forth the several issues that the female construction workers in the concerned district of the state face and how it impacts and curbs their livelihood pertaining to the social, domestic as well as economic conditions of living.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The construction industry, which is considered a part of the unorganized sector, is one of those industries which leads in the economic development of the nation and also contributes to the generation of a substantial proportion of employment across India (Saikia & Goowalla 2016). This industry comprises the segment concerned with urban development and real estate,

which encompasses water supply, residential areas, sanitation, transportation and broadly other segments. This unorganized sector, therefore, became a conduit for India in supporting its progressive growth in terms of urbanization, the emerging expectation of the Indian population, industrialization and overall improvement in the living standard of the population. The investment opportunities in this industry in India have therefore led to a significant inflow of FDIs. There have been

¹ Corresponding author: Anurag Hazarika
Email: anuraghazarika2@gmail.com

subsequent development initiatives that are being undertaken by the Indian government through policies for propelling increased economic contribution from this sector. However, policymakers, and the government have been paying more attention to women empowerment and their advancement by eliminating all issues related to gender-inflicted atrocities and exploitation for women in the workplace (Bhattacharyya 2016). But the initiatives aimed at protecting the rights and workplace safety of the women working in the unorganized sector are few, keeping them on the periphery and preventing their emancipation (Singh 2010). There is evidence to support the fact that women's situation in the unorganized sector is incredibly miserable due to urgent problems like wage inequality and the exploitation due to longer working hours, workplace dangers, and a heavy workload, as well as an uncaring attitude from the employers. (Begum 2014). The status enjoyed by women in that society serves as a marker of the advancement of civilization. One of the major effects of globalization can be seen through the negative impact over women with due relation to the increased rate of violation of cultural, economic, and political rights with widespread repercussions, increasing erosion of the "welfarist" or "developmentalist state" aspect, an increased level concerning "feminization of poverty," as well as inequality experienced in terms of recruitment and treatment, especially for women (Das 2011). The widespread marginalization of women is caused by a number of important factors, particularly in the unorganized sector, where factors like lack of technological or machine skills, lack of education or literacy, and inadequate training facilities are a few to be taken into consideration. All these contribute to the use of violence and other forms of gender-based discrimination among this sector of the population. (Gulati 2003). There has been an unprecedented growth that is increasingly being experienced in terms of the unorganized sector with added increase in the rate of the women labour force where approximately 94 per cent of them are engaged with the informal sector, as per the estimates carried out by National Commission for Women in Annual Report, 2010. Despite the significant contribution that women make to the economy of the country through the informal sector, there is a severe lack of recognition and accomplishment of their ongoing efforts. As a result, insecurities have increased which contributes to the level of inequalities that are unfavourable to women workers which has seemed to be raised. This is one of the pertinent aspects that can be highlighted in this regard (Kalita & Goswami 2017). Nearly 25% of the women working in India are employed in the unorganized construction sector as workers. However, the under-representation of women in this sector in India has been a significant factor contributing to their plight which results in discrimination which they experience in this sector, reducing their potential to harness skills necessary for this industry. The construction industry prevalent in

India has been known for its inherent biases on the grounds of gender on the basis of a preconceived work nature and then subsequent trapping of women into low wages, the cycle of late entry, etc., and later its normalization in their work culture. Moreover, the basic discriminations within this industry comprises unhealthy relations with the job, a lower rate of wage, as well as heinous experiences concerning activities related to sexual harassment experienced by the women (Bharati & Hazarika 2022). In regard to this aspect it can be inferred that factors which force women to work in the construction industry are generally because of contributing to family income, improving their economic status, their illiteracy levels which consequently becomes the only door for their employment in the unorganized sector as informal labourers. Despite these issues, the industry has stood as one that overwhelmingly attracted female workers.

As a result, there has been an increase in the number of women working in Assam's construction industry, which is an important sector of the country's economy. The "gender-based discrimination" that women have increasingly experienced at work is due to the delay in implementation of new regulation with regard to the women labourers resulting in unhealthy workplace environment, unequal pay distribution with their male counterparts, inadequate basic facilities, side-helper of the main male labourers etc, are their ending conditions (Saikia & Shome 2023). An intriguing aspect of gender-based discrimination against women in the Goalpara District of Assam that has been highlighted is related to age, which suggests that the women's economic situation is poor and thus forces these women to continue working in the construction sites, even at older ages.

A startling 195 million Indian women work in the unorganized sector, which places them at a disadvantage in the current labour market is due to their lower position in terms of productivity and income, the level of insecurity, as well as their lower share in the overall segment of employment. Thus, these factors paint a bleak picture of the status of women working as unorganized labourers with a consistent experience of disparities and discrimination. (Santha et al. 2016). Despite the fact that the informal sector has been very proactive in contributing progressively to the Indian economy, there have been intrinsic atrocities that are experienced by the workers in this sector. The "workforce participation" and "labour force participation rate" in Assam are suggestive of the dark picture that is demonstrated by the labour market due to the fact that the state is one of those which is relatively backward compared to other Indian states. Besides this, disparities and inequalities existing in terms of getting access to employment in the region have created massive competition in the unorganized sector. Poverty is one of the elementary causes behind the compulsion of women to get associated with the unorganized sector. Tea gardens, where nearly 1 million women labourers produce more than 50% of all tea produced in India and

also contribute to the largest tea production in the world, are one of the most visible examples of gender-based discrimination or exploitation in Assam's unorganized sector. (Kalita 2016). One of the main issues for female labourers in the tea industry has been their working and living conditions, as well as a variety of gender-based violence and discrimination with higher rates of child marriage, maternal mortality, and women trafficking. (Kalita 2016). This discrimination could be seen in activities like hoeing, plucking and pruning where women are engaged and where those are equally tiring for women. In the tea industry of Assam, there are enough pieces of evidence of the aspect of the "glass ceiling", wherein evidences says about the widespread absence of decision-making power of the women as well as their poor negotiation power in the workers' unions. As per the report published by the Assam Human development report, the "Gender Inequality Index", which is estimated at 0.375, suggests the widespread disparity, along with an adverse "sex ratio". The industry of construction demands physical strength, and women labourers are expected to exhibit similar efforts as compared to their male counterparts during the tiring construction tasks. The construction industry of Assam has been employing a significant number of women labourers, and lack of physical strength is determined to be a prominent factor for discrimination against women labourers (Neog 2020). It has been found that most of the women labourers in the respective construction industry lack physical strength and are unable to perform tasks like male labourers, as the women workers are not able to engage in construction works that require greater strength. This has added to the development of wage discrimination against female workers, along with taking into concern their physical conditions and their punctuality of work completion. The construction industry has been found to be extremely hazardous and could result in health issues. Women employees in the construction sector have had a variety of health issues due to their nature of their jobs (Das 2016, Das & Das 2018, Das & Singh 2019). Apart from being susceptible to health issues, construction industry is rife with discrimination and harassment. The female labourers employed in that industry are reported to be more susceptible to sexual exploitation and prejudice. The tribal construction women labourers are often discriminated against and exploited by the contractors or masons during construction work for their own pleasure. Moreover, it has been discovered that many female labourers have been sexually attacked by their male co-workers as well. But due to the fear of the potential repercussions, these women are afraid to expose the injustice against them. Another instance of gender discrimination is the struggle of the women workers with their family life and children along with their work, where casualty towards it would question their competencies and efficiencies (Nagla 2016).

Research Problem Statement

The gap in the measures and policies with regard to women labourers in the unorganized sector of India have percolated at the regional levels too, thus negatively impacting their overall conditions. Prioritization of the concerns related to women is secondary throughout the national and regional level, which subsequently paves the way for experiences of marginalization, will little or no recognition of their contribution. The experience of discrimination faced by women in the unorganized sector, particularly those employed in the construction industry, includes low levels of literacy among women, inadequate skills, and consequently weaker economic and bargaining power. As a result, their continued poverty and invisibility are exacerbated by inadequate health and education infrastructure (Lakhani 2004).

The issues that the female workforce in the unorganized sector faces over time have been shown to revolve around unhygienic drinking water and food facilities, inadequate vocational training sessions for women. Through such scenario, their position gets reduced to only being helpers to their male counterparts, with delayed payments. In addition to the pressing socio-economic issues that they face, the unequal treatment they receive, the women who are socially and economically oppressed in a severely disadvantageous position are more disadvantaged when their psychological and physical well-being is concerned. As shown by the research study conducted by previous researchers in Assam, there is another pressing issue that women employees in the construction sector face is poverty, which subsequently causes anaemia and malnourishment in addition to making victims of sexual assault. (Singhari & Madheswaran 2017). This research will therefore delve deeper into wider aspects of gender-based discrimination that is experienced by the women labourers in the construction industry of Sonitpur District of Assam. The socioeconomic issues that female construction workers in Sonitpur District face are effectively highlighted, along with the relationship with their personal, familial, and professional lives, which are indeed factors undermining their social standing rather than granting them greater economic freedom and negotiating leverage.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives for this research investigation based on which this study will be carried forward cater to the following dimensions:

- To study the socio-economic conditions of workers in the construction sector
- To study the gender-based wage pattern in the construction sector
- To find out the socioeconomic problems faced by women workers in the construction sector

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research investigation which delves into a critical understanding of the gender-based discrimination experienced in the construction sector of Sonitpur District of Assam, has adopted a set of research techniques for accumulating a dataset that is effective in culminating the research investigation into the desired research outcome. Appropriate justification has been elaborated for the purpose of justifying the selected research techniques, which has efficiently contributed to bringing forth the required research result.

Area of the Study

The area of the study selected for the research is from the District of Sonitpur, Assam which holds the position of being an administrative district within the State, with the district's headquarters at Tezpur and the geographical location of the district being in between the Brahmaputra valley and Himalayan foothills (Figure 1). According to the 2011 Census calculation, the total population in the district was estimated to be 1,924,110, holding the position of being the district with the third highest population. There is the existence of no homogeneity within the population as there exists an amalgamation of several ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The sex ratio of the district stood at 946 females to that 1000 males, and the literacy rate has been estimated as 69.96 per cent. (Census 2011) In the total population of the district, the Scheduled tribe makes up nearly 139,033, which is approximately 10.60 per cent, and Scheduled Caste forms a population of 65,367, which is nearly 4.98 per cent of the total population. The Sonitpur district comprises 5.24 square kilometres, with the Brahmaputra being the major river in the district, and it also includes tributaries like Buroi, Jiabharali and Borgang. The location of the district is 172 Km to the west of the capital of the state, Dispur. The district shares its border with Arunachal Pradesh.



Figure 1. The area of study

Source: Google Map

Sampling Technique and Calculation

In this research, the samples of 385 were taken in total out of the “n” number population. The selection of this sample size was carried out through “convenience sampling” technique as both men and women

construction labourers from different construction sites in the Sonitpur district of Assam were considered for this investigation. Due to the absence of documented records with government with regard to unorganized sector workers, therefore, the total population cannot be determined in this context. The selection of the construction workers was considered for this research as a substantial number of women are working in this sector as labourers these days. With respect to 385 as the sample size, the “margin of error” is calculated as 4.99 per cent with a confidence level of 95 per cent (Myin-Germey et al. 2018). This reflects there is only a chance of 5 per cent being wrong in the research result. The “confidence level” and “margin of error” are 2 prominent statistical elements that are representative of the extent to which the chosen samples are effectively represented based on their selection from the wider population base. In this research, the “confidence level” hovered at 95 per cent, suggesting that the survey on gender-based discrimination at construction sites of Sonitpur district, Assam, if conducted 100 times, would result in with just 5 per cent plus or minus (margin of error).

3. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

The collection of data that is contingent upon a systematic approach for accruing appropriate dataset in the context of research for gaining new insights for the purpose of developing knowledge is referred to as the “data collection” procedure (Dźwigoł & Dźwigoł-Barosz 2018). In this current researchwork, a systematic research approach was applied in consonance with the methodology that complies with primary research. After testing the reliability test of the draft interview schedule, the α value we got was ($\alpha > 0.73$) which is more than 0.5 and hence the draft interview schedule can be accepted for research into the study ($0 \leq \alpha \leq 1$). The current research study further supported in getting hold of first-hand information from the construction labourers from different construction sites of Sonitpur district of Assam through a first-hand information that was collected based on conducting a survey which was carried out face-to-face through an interview schedule. The responses gathered were objective in nature with 5 demographic questions, and the rest 17 research closed-ended questions which circumscribed the aspect of gender-based discrimination, comprising queries of experiences related to wage disparities, differential treatment towards men and women construction labourers, socio-economic issues, the aspect related to factors like poverty compelling the women workforce in taking up the work as well as queries on the status of women in their family and the extent to which the women labourers are able to save little savings for themselves after financially contributing to the economic, familial needs. The queries were translated into the local language of the Sonitpur district of Assam for the respondents to be able to understand the

questions and respond accordingly, without any hesitation and ambiguity, which furthermore added to the research efficacy. There was a considerable amount of time spent in different construction sites in the district in order to build a good rapport with the labourers to convince them to participate in the research investigation. There was a successful attempt made to translate the accumulated data into the software for the purpose of analysing it with the help of Pearson's Co-Efficient Co-Relation test as well as presenting the data in a visualised format through statistical evidence. Furthermore, there has been considerable effort put into collecting primary data, which aided in gathering lived experiences of the women construction labourers regarding gender-based discriminations that are being experienced by the women, which could not be otherwise collected with the help of secondary data, as there was the existence of limited information regarding the aspect of gender-based discrimination in the unorganised sector with respect to construction workers of Sonitpur district, Assam.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Correlation Analysis

In the table 1, the Pearson's Co-Relation Test is used to compare the co-relation between the variables. In the table 1, V5 means- Marital Status of the respondents, V6 means- Number of family members of the respondents, V7 means- Compelling factors to take up the job as construction workers, V8 means- Duration of work of the respondents, V9 means- Types of Health issues faced by respondents under the study, V10 means- Savings of wages of the respondents, V11 means- Daily wages of the respondents, V12 means- Experience of Gender based discrimination in the construction sites by the respondents under the study, V13 means- Kinds of gender based discrimination faced by the women workers as respondents under the study, V14 means- Differences in wages amongst the respondents, V15 means- Differences or gap in wages by the respondents as compared to their male counterparts, V16 means- Kinds of wage gaps faced by the respondents, V17 means- Socio-Economic issues faced by the respondents under the study, V18 means- Kinds of Socio-Economic issues faced by the women construction workers under the study, V19 means- Increase in status of the respondents after their economic contribution to the family, V20 means- Incidents of violence being faced by the respondents under the study, V21 means- Preventive measures experienced by respondents as a method to tackle gender based discrimination, V22 means- Opinion on Govt. based measures by the respondents, V23 means- Adequacy of medical care faced by the respondents under the study, V24 means- Ease of Working in the Construction sites as women by the respondents. The value corresponding to "correlation analysis" brought under critical evaluation for

deciphering the correlation between "dependent variable" (DV) "gender-based discrimination" with that of independent variable "compelling factors" has been estimated as 0.136, suggesting a stronger "linear relation" with compelling factors like supporting family and low education, causing gender discrimination, which suggests gender-based discrimination is higher among women who have a lower level of educational qualification. The value of DV in relation to "duration of time in construction sites" is -0.023, and with respect to "health issues faced by the workers" is estimated as 0.151. This implies that there is a greater degree of health issues experienced by the construction sites women as labourers with the inadequacy in healthcare support. The negative value between DV and the independent value "time duration" suggests an inverse relationship between the two variables, suggesting that with the limited duration spent on construction sites by women construction labourers, there is an experience of more gender-based discrimination inflicted or experienced by them due to more stressful work bring carried out by women within a shorter span of time. With respect to "savings from the wages earned", the correlation value of "gender-based discrimination" has been estimated as -0.171, and with respect to "daily wage earnings", the value has been estimated as 0.126. Survey data shows that most of the respondents have pointed to "daily wage" to be one of the primary causes behind widespread discrimination faced by women in the unorganised sector. With respect to the variable "saving a portion of the wage for self", the value has been estimated as negative as -0.171, suggesting that the lower the savings, the greater the degree of gender-based discrimination, with no respect or adequate status enjoyed by women in this sector, suggesting higher savings for self is only possible with a lesser degree of gender-based discrimination that women construction labourers at Sonitpur District, Assam experience. The value analysis related to "experience of gender-based discrimination" is estimated as -0.057, suggesting that women workers working at construction sites are more prone to gender-based violence both at the workplace and at home. The estimation of value concerning "kinds of discrimination experienced" is 0.153, and for "differences in wage payment for the women" have been estimated as 0.033, suggesting that with higher wage payment, experiences and incidents of gender discrimination reduced and also that women workers suffer from wage disparities in the construction sites of Sonitpur District, Assam. The linear correlation between DV and "different types of discrimination" is strong. "Differences in wage" as per survey has been estimated as highest among women labourers, which are further suggested by the value 0.052, suggesting wage disparity to be lower among men labourers in comparison to that of women labourers. The correlation value estimated in relation to "kind of wage gap", "specific socio-economic issues", and that of "different types of socio-economic problems experienced by construction workers" is estimated as 0.013, 0.044 and 0.106, a

prominent correlation between the “DV” and with specific kinds of gender-based discriminations.
 “independent variables”, with the strongest relationship

	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13	V14	V15	V16	V17	V18	V19	V20	V21	V22	V23	V24
V5 Pearson Correlation	1	0.44	0.136	-0.023	0.151	0.171	0.126	-0.057	0.153	0.033	0.052	0.013	0.044	0.016	0.075	-0.030	0.151	0.110	0.91	0.001
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V6 Pearson Correlation		1	0.268	0.445	0.52	0.109	0.012	0.233	-0.062	0.094	0.180	-0.002	-0.037	-0.143	-0.156	0.205	-0.061	-0.133	0.073	0.071
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V7 Pearson Correlation			1	0.137	0.137	-0.238	0.036	0.101	0.108	0.029	0.102	0.139	0.129	0.020	0.099	0.051	0.080	0.012	0.043	0.082
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V8 Pearson Correlation				1	0.135	0.278	0.013	0.298	-0.021	0.060	0.064	-0.036	-0.047	0.065	-0.131	0.235	-0.068	-0.112	0.062	0.043
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V9 Pearson Correlation					1	-0.226	0.146	0.100	0.184	-0.004	0.001	0.162	0.059	0.144	0.134	0.036	0.101	0.134	0.027	-0.072
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V10 Pearson Correlation						1	-0.018	0.092	-0.145	-0.008	0.053	-0.197	-0.212	-0.155	0.159	0.133	-0.139	-0.111	0.108	0.123
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V11 Pearson Correlation							1	0.181	0.152	-0.018	-0.017	-0.052	0.082	0.086	0.257	0.033	0.235	0.161	0.218	0.117
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V12 Pearson Correlation								1	0.051	0.081	0.009	0.031	-0.008	-0.062	-0.068	0.328	-0.013	-0.034	-	-0.002
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V13 Pearson Correlation									1	-0.121	0.109	0.061	0.103	0.249	0.193	-0.005	0.259	0.198	0.108	0.011
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V14 Pearson Correlation										1	-0.009	0.189	0.051	0.010	-0.023	0.147	0.011	-0.084	-	-0.227
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V15 Pearson Correlation											1	0.195	0.058	0.121	-0.026	0.011	0.087	0.063	0.115	0.180
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V16 Pearson Correlation												1	0.197	0.142	0.056	0.078	0.033	0.031	-	-0.051
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V17 Pearson Correlation													1	0.544	0.243	0.081	0.276	0.213	-	0.006
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V18 Pearson Correlation														1	0.475	0.069	0.332	0.236	0.028	0.025
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V19 Pearson Correlation															1	0.160	0.537	0.503	0.131	0.081
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V20 Pearson Correlation																1	0.259	0.107	0.051	0.035
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V21 Pearson Correlation																	1	0.504	0.182	0.039
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
V22 Pearson Correlation																		1	0.253	0.05
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385

Table 1. The Pearson’s Co-Relation Test is used to compare the co-relation between the variables

The survey data for each of these aspects have suggested that most of the respondents have positively responded to socio-economic issues, and a specific type of such issue has been the “increase in status” and the values concerning “incidents of violence” has been estimated as 0.075 and -0.030. The values concerning “preventive measures by the government” have been estimated as 0.151, suggesting knowledge of preventive measures undertaken by the Indian government to redress gender-based discrimination. The value concerning “medical facilities” has been 0.091,

suggesting a lower provision of these facilities, which increases gender-based discrimination and “easy to work in construction sites” as 0.001, suggesting women find it difficult to work in construction sites due to the mentioned reasons.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

In the table 2, V5 mean s- Marital Status of the respondents, V6 means- Number of family members of the respondents, V7 means- Compelling factors to take up the job as construction workers, V8 means- Duration

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
@1.Pleasespecifyyourgender	385	1	3	1.26	.504
@2.PleasespecifyyourAge	385	1	5	2.30	.894
@3.What is your level of education	385	1	6	1.89	.899
V5	385	1	4	1.85	.779
V6	385	1	4	1.92	.841
V7	385	1	5	2.14	.907
V8	385	1	4	1.95	.825
V9	385	1	5	2.35	1.129
V10	385	3	5	3.93	.473
V11	385	1	5	2.21	.933
V12	385	1	5	1.74	.820
V13	385	1	4	2.17	1.040
V14	385	1	2	1.12	.331
V15	385	1	4	2.37	.878
V16	385	1	3	1.81	.811
V17	385	1	5	2.12	.921
V18	385	1	6	2.35	1.105
V19	385	1	5	2.06	1.011
V20	385	1	5	1.76	.884
V21	385	1	5	2.14	.997
V22	385	1	5	2.32	1.047
V23	385	1	5	3.30	1.294
V24	385	1	5	3.18	1.480
Valid N (listwise)	385				

Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

of work of the respondents, V9 means- Types of Health issues faced by respondents under the study, V10 means- Savings of wages of the respondents, V11 means- Daily wages of the respondents, V12 means- Experience of Gender based discrimination in the construction sites by the respondents under the study, V13 means- Kinds of gender based discrimination faced by the women workers as respondents under the study, V14 means- Differences in wages amongst the respondents, V15 means- Differences or gap in wages by the respondents as compared to their male counterparts, V16 means- Kinds of wage gaps faced by the respondents, V17 means- Socio- Economic issues faced by the respondents under the study, V18 means- Kinds of Socio-Economic issues faced by the women construction workers under the study, V 19 means- Increase in status of the respondents after their economic contribution to the family, V20 means- Incidents of violence being faced by the respondents

under the study, V21 means- Preventive measures experienced by respondents as a method to tackle gender based discrimination, V22 means- Opinion on Govt. based measures by the respondents, V23 means- Adequacy of medical care faced by the respondents under the study, V 24 means- Ease of Working in the Construction sites as women by the respondents. The ‘descriptive statistical analysis’ estimates the mean and “standard deviation values” of the variables, which therefore suggests that the mean value for “gender”, “age”, “educational level”, “marital status” and “compelling factors” has been calculated as mean value and as “standard deviation value” wherein the estimates show the values as 1.26 and 2.30, 1.89 ,1.85 and 2.14, respectively. Following this, are the values of “duration of working hours”, “specific health issues by the construction labourers”, “ability of savings from wage”, “daily wages”, “experience of gender-based violence in the construction sites” and “kinds of gender-based

discrimination” and “experiences of difference in wages received”, suggests the mean and standard deviation values as 1.95, 2.35, 3.93, 1.74, 2.17 and 1.12 respectively. The values for “disparities in wages”, “kind of wage gap”, “socio-economic issues”, “kind of socio-economic issues”, “increase in status”, “incidents of violence”, “preventive measures”, “opinion on governmental policies concerning preventive measures”, “adequacy in terms of medical facilities” and “ease to work in construction sites” have been estimated as 2.37, 1.61, 2.12, 1.61, 2.12, 2.35, 2.06, 1.76, 2.14, 2.32, 3.30 and 3.18, respectively. All the values of mean are greater in comparison with “standard deviation”, suggesting a cluster formed around mean and little variance in the values and therefore a greater degree of reliability in the overall research outcome. Based on the sample size (n), which is 385 observations for all variables, it has been seen that in all cases, the mean value is greater than the standard deviation value, therefore suggesting that the values are “clustered around mean” with little variance and hence, a greater degree of reliability in the research outcome suggesting gender is the elementary cause behind gender-based discrimination which therefore leads to the experience of violence and abuse of women at workplace and at home, in terms of wage and promotional disparity, a challenge to equitable opportunities and inadequate empowerment and status in the society as a whole.

Based on the investigation carried out through primary research, it has been critically understood that in comparison to the status of male unorganised labourers in the construction industry of Sonitpur District of Assam, the women are positioned in a disadvantaged place, with lower family support as well as occupational hazards in terms of wide disparity of wages received as well as violence inflicted on them. Such wage disparities have also been reflected in the literature and therefore is no different a picture in Sonitpur district.

From the study above, it is found that women are the vulnerable gendered population imposed with peculiar gendered roles and responsibilities by the society, just by considering their biological differences between male and female. In the economic setting too, the impact of societal differences are reflected in wage differentiation, working hours, flexibility in results and maltreatment of women compared to men. Through the data analysis, it can be inferred that in the constructive settings, women also face the brunt of ‘double-jeopardy’, both in their familial and economic spheres of lives. Boggled down by the responsibilities of life as a wife and mother, similarly in the workplace as a weak and fragile labour force, women face exploitation and discrimination, from their men counterparts. Although with the demanding financial conditions of household like poverty and low level of education has led the women, especially of rural areas, to seek for income within a setting like construction site, like in 385 surveyed construction site of Sonitpur districts, it is found that there is a very minimal attention paid towards maternity leaves, on-site medical facilities,

promotions etc. However, the recent efforts from the government in skill enhancement and schemes like MNREGA, are expected to reduce the work-related discrimination between men and women.

Apart from all these, it is found that the labour force in the construction sites of Sonitpur districts has higher percentage of men than women. The most basic point of reference is ignorance and non-recognition of their labour and contribution towards the work equally. The women of Sonitpur gets paid less than 300 rupees per day as their daily wage, and for this wage, they have to work for about 12 hours per day.

Therefore, in accordance with the analysis of the responses of the construction workers, it can be concluded that, as the majority of the participants in this survey analysis were female, their responses regarding questions related to gender-based discrimination have the capability to portray the actual discrimination in construction sites as well as their family life. It has been gathered from the survey responses that, due to gender-based discrimination, female labours have faced severe issues such as promotional discrimination, wage discrimination as well as discrimination regarding recruitment.

5. CONCLUSION AND MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Gender-based discrimination in the construction sector in the Sonitpur district of Assam

Through the assessment of the prevailing literature, it has been seen that the sector that has been related to the construction industry in Assam has been dominated by male individuals as well as discrimination has been noticed in the recruitment phase. In addition to that, there are various onsite barriers as well as problems that female workers that have been employed in such construction works have to experience as of the absence of managerial components in the construction site's work. Moreover, females have been exposed to various workplace risks in construction areas, mainly as the development in the rural region has not been found as prominent as in urban regions. It has been found that there is a wage gap between male and female staff even after such females have performed a similar task. Apart from that, female workers have experienced harassment at the working site along with wage disparity. The analysis of survey responses has shown that 337 participants out of 385 construction workers are of the opinion that male employees generally receive a higher wage even when they perform a similar job as female workers.

Economic and social issues experienced by female workers in the construction sector of Sonitpur district of Assam and the remedial measures implemented

Through the analysis of the existing literature and survey conducted through first hand field investigation it has been seen that there are significant differences in

the wage that has been paid to the male individuals and the female individuals on the construction sites. In addition to that, male individuals have been paid one and half times of female workers and sometimes such female workers have been paid below the minimum wage set by the government. Apart from that, even though women have been observed to be doing physical labour at construction sites as well as carrying materials to the upper stories of the construction sites as well, but it has been found dominated by males. So, in this matter it can be observed that women have not been capable of physical labour. The assessment of the survey responses among the 385 construction workers in the Sonitpur district of Assam has shown that 190 of the respondents have agreed that there have been found severe socio-economic conditions that are witnessed, mainly by the women workers that have experienced severe discrimination that they have faced at the workplace other than their personal lives regarding their personal and social relationships.

The relationship among personal, occupational and family among the female construction workers in the Sonitpur district of Assam

Through the evaluation of the existing literature, it has been seen that the participation of the labours has not been recognised same in the case of genders, while there is also dissimilarity in the sectional shift of the workers. In addition to that, women in the rural area, as well as mainly the ones who belonged to tribal communities have been majorly pushed towards labouring in agricultural as well as farm-related works instead of in sectors like construction work. The analysis of the responses of 385 construction workers in the Sonitpur district of Assam has shown that, at the time women who have been contributed to their family economy as well as economic status, the living condition of the family has been increased and therefore, most of the participants have agreed with the fact. Moreover, the majority of the reactions have also been inclined towards the fact that a significant number of females have experienced abuse and harassment in their workplace and their homes as well as in their family lives. Therefore, the objective is fulfilled.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Enhancement of the facilities in the Self-help groups

It is being recommended to the self-help groups organised by the women of the Sonitpur district of Assam that they have to initiate elevation in their functionality as well as facilitation while at the same time also introduce new and fruitful measures which in turn will benefit the women who are working in the construction sites. These strategies, along with the uplifted application of the assistance provided to the working women, will provide not only safety but also facets of security among the women. Moreover, there has to be a proper allocation of the funds in these groups

so that it can further be used in the case of any emergency that the women of the area face while working on the construction sites, such as in case of any health-related issues, this collected fund can come out as a beneficiary. The self-help groups can also further conduct the act of supervision when there is any complaint from the working sites as well in case a woman is undergoing any situations of harassment or misconduct. These groups also have to implement strategies that demand equal pay in terms of wages so that there is no discrimination on the basis of gender.

Access to education

As it has been seen that one of the basic as well as an underlying challenge is that of the challenges in the status of equality of women construction laborers, is that discriminatory behaviour rises from a very basic stage of conditioning. The only way to mitigate this from its core is by giving not only women but also men very right and ease to the accessing of education. It is the lack of education that is responsible for the causation of discrimination on the basis of gender. Therefore, it is being recommended to both the government as well as the non-governmental associations in the concerned rural region of the state of Assam to supervise the regulation of mandatory education. It is the facet of education that has the power to mitigate the attitudes that cater to the discriminatory behaviours that impact both the socio-economic issues in general as well as the occupational issues of the women in the concerned areas of the study area (Asnani et al., 2004). Moreover, it is only education provided to all and every member of the family that is responsible for the creation of equilibrium in the society that is refrained from the issues of discrimination on the basis of gender.

Provision of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment, or "PPE," is clothing worn to reduce exposure to risks that might result in significant workplace diseases and injuries as any contact with chemical, radioactive, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other job hazards may cause these wounds and illnesses. Therefore, items like gloves, safety goggles, shoes, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests, and full body suits are examples of personal protection equipment. As most of the Construction Sites of Sonitpur lacks these safety equipment for the protection and safety measures of Women, therefore, it is strongly recommended to the Contractor or the Builders or Management of the Construction sites to take up the initiative for the better protection of the women in the construction sites.

Training Facilities for Women Construction Workers

Men employees begin working as assistants to masons and obtain the informal practical training for about a year while being paid by contractors and masons, who do not provide any formal training for men in masonry work. In India, women who work in the construction

industry do not receive this kind of informal training. In the same way, it is suggested that women in this industry be encouraged to receive practical training by serving as the masons' assistants. This will ensure their Work Skills and experiences to a greater level in order to compete at par with the male workers and receive wages based on skills and competency in congruence with the male counterparts.

Future Research Scope

A moderate amount of research has been conducted that appropriately showcases the living as well as the working conditions of women who are employed in the

construction firms in the rural districts of Assam. There is no substantial data that certify the implementation of the government as well as non-governmental strategies and the functionality of the entire process. Therefore, in the future, there is a scope in /the research which will highlight the living standards of the women as well as the appropriate working conditions of the women in the construction sectors of the entire state of Assam. Moreover, in the future, there is also scope for further research related to the women construction workers of other areas/districts within the state of Assam, for more detailed as well as intricate understanding in future for policy formulation by the Government.

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Anurag Hazarika

Guest Faculty of Economics, School of
Engineering, Tezpur University, India
anuraghazarika2@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-0005-4813

Samikshya Madhukullya

Dept.of Sociology, USTM and Guest
Faculty, Dept.of Cultural Studies,
Tezpur University, India
madhusami1000@gmail.com

ORCID: 0009-0002-1206-1284
