



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN STONE QUARRIES: A STUDY IN KALABURAGI DISTRICT

Dr. Chinna Ashappa

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Government First Grade College, Gurmitkal, Dist: Yadgir.

ABSTRACT

Women are playing significant role in mining and stone quarrying, but their socio-economic conditions are poor. There is wage discrimination, lower wages, health problems and consequently, there is lower status and respect, no participation in family decision making, gender inequality, etc. To study the socio-economic problems of women workers working in stone quarries located in Kalaburagi district. It is found that, women workers in quarries are facing many of the problems as disclosed by the study. It is suggested to extend leave facilities, maternity benefits, fair wages, etc to women workers.

Introduction:

People mine the earth for metals such as gold, silver and copper; for gems such as diamonds and rubies; and for minerals such as uranium, asbestos, coal, sand, granites and salt. In Kalaburagi district, stone quarries are popular to extract granites in different parts such as Sedam, Shahabad and few parts of Chittapur. All mining is dangerous, and it is difficult for miners to earn a livelihood while also protecting their health and the environment. But there are ways to make mining safer. Often the only way to get the mining industry to use less harmful methods is through community pressure.

Women are largely seen in the mining sector, particularly small scale mining. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), 3.5 - 4.0 million women are engaged in mining activities out of the 11.5 - 13 million small scale miners. Africa has the highest percentage of female miners at 40-50%. In Zimbabwe, 50% of the small scale miners are women, 40% in Tanzania, and 30% in India (Nyambe and Amunkete, 2009). Women are paid lower wages than men with regard to time-wage system in large number of private sector mines.

Workers in mines continue to work in a state of various occupational diseases and health hazards. Workers in manganese mines have become the worst sufferer of these. Workers in Manganese, Ferromanganese plants, limestone quarries and iron ore mines are affected by inhalation and absorption of manganese dust and fume that result in inflammation of lungs. After working a period of 10 years they are likely to suffer from Tuberculosis. In the study of Bhagyalakshmi (2007) among the women workers in Southwest India, towels were used by the women to cover their face as a protection from the red dusts generated by spraying off the manganese. The dust, when inhaled, can cause lung diseases and other respiratory ailments. Exposure to dust can also cause skin irritation and eye damage.

It is observed that many of the women workers are engaged in stone quarrying work in parts of Kalaburagi district. They are earning meager wage, but their life is under risk of ill health due to quarrying. Further, almost all of them are illiterates and as such they are not aware about their rights with regards to amount of work, wages, leave facilities, working conditions, etc. Hence, a sample survey of women working in stone quarries of Kalaburagi district was made to look into the socio-economic problems.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study is made:

- To look into the social profile of women workers in stone quarries such as age group, nature of families, etc.
- To study the social problems such as gender inequality, etc faced by women workers.
- To find out the problems such as exploitation and harassment faced by women workers in stone quarries.
- To study the economic conditions of women workers in stone quarries of Kalaburagi district.

Methodology and Limitations:

The nature of women workers in stone quarries is studied by analyzing secondary literature and by personal observation. A Sample survey of 500 women workers working in these stone quarries was made through interview schedules. The author visited stone quarries located in Shahabad, Sedam and few parts of Chittapur towns to conduct the survey. Hence, the present study is limited to 500 women workers working in stone quarries of Kalaburagi district. The collected primary data is analyzed, interpreted and discussed as under.

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion:

1. Age:

Age of the respondents helps to know about the level of awareness and knowledge of the respondents on different aspects such as work aspects, family, conventions, etc. Hence the information collected on the age of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 1. Age

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 18 Years	33	6.6
19-25 Years	144	28.8
26-40 Years	239	47.8
41-55 Years	76	15.2
More than 55 Years	08	1.6
Total	500	100

The following figure shows the age of the respondents:

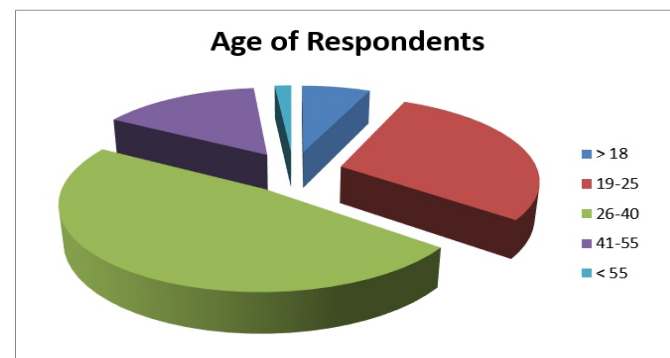


Fig No. 1. Age of the Respondents

The age group of the respondents shows that, 239 (47.8%) are from the age group 26 to 40 years, followed by 144 (28.8%) are between 19 to 25 years, 76 (15.2%) are of the age between 41 to 55 years, 33 (6.6%) of the respondents are below the age of 18 years and only about 8 (1.6%) are above 55 years. It is emphasized from the collected information that a great majority of the respondents are of middle age that is between 19 to 40 years.

2. Caste:

The castes of the respondents also play an important role in determining the culture, social practices and conventions in the society. Hence the information on the caste of the respondents is collected and presented in the following table.

Table No. 2. Caste

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Scheduled Caste	208	41.6
Scheduled Tribe	25	5.0
OBC	216	43.2
Others	51	10.2
Total	500	100

The caste of the respondents is shown as under.

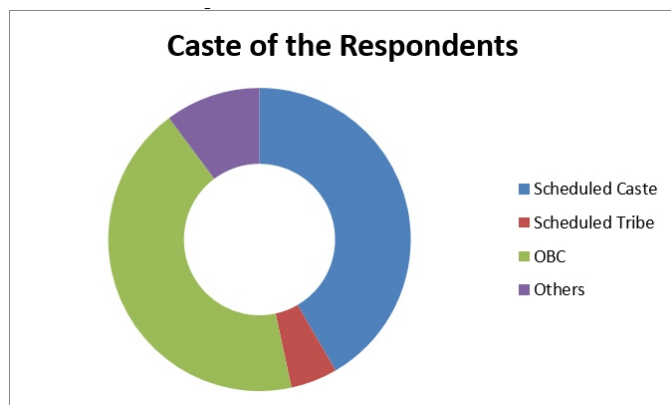


Fig. No. 2. Caste of the Respondents

The castes of the respondents revealed that, 208 (41.6%) are belonged to Scheduled Castes, 25 (5.0%) are scheduled tribes, 216 (43.2%) belongs to Other Backward Classes and the remaining 51 (10.2%) are from other castes or forward castes. It is highlighted from the table that the weaker sections such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes are dominated in mining work.

3. Years of Mining Work Experience:

To a greater extent, mining and quarrying work is unskilled. But it is noted that the mining work is risky, as women have to work in dust, dirt, scorching sun, poisonous gases, sharp weapons to carve stones, heights at the hill tops, deep grounds, etc. In this respect, to a greater extent, there is need for more experience is needed for the women to work in mining and quarrying.

Table No. 3. Years of Mining Work Experience

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Below 5 years	191	38.2
6-10 years	232	46.4
11-20 years	67	13.4
Above 20 years	10	2.0
Total	500	100

The work experiences of women workers working in mining quarrying revealed that, 232 (46.4%) are having the experience between 6 to 10 years, followed by 191 (38.2%) have the experience below 5 years, about 67 (13.4%) have the work experience between 11 to 20 years and the remaining 10 (2.0%) of the respondents have mining and quarrying work experience of more than 20 years. An overwhelming majority of the respondents are having experience below 10 years, it shows that after considerable number of experience, many of the women mines workers may be choosing other kinds of occupations by leaving their work in mining.

4. Decision Making in Family:

Decision making in the family shows that the authority and status of persons who are making the decisions. In families, where women also participate in decision making with their husbands, then it can be said that the women have higher status compared to those families, where husband or other elders only makes the decisions. As such information on the decision making in the family was collected and presented in the following table.

Table No. 4. Decision Making in Family

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Parents in Law & Parents	79	15.8
Husband	258	51.6
Yourself	25	5.0
Husband and Yourself	123	24.6
Any Others	15	3.0
Total	500	100

Among the total respondents covered under the study, 258 (51.6%) have stated that their husbands are making the decisions followed by, 123 (24.6%) have expressed that they are making decisions along with their husbands, about 79 (15.8%) have stated that their parents and their parents in laws are making the decisions, about 25 (5.0%) have stated that they are making the decisions on their own and the remaining only 15 (3.0%) have expressed that others are making the decisions pertaining to families of the respondents. It is surprising to note from the collected data that even though the respondents are working outside equal to

men, they do not have independent power to make the decision making in their families and even major portion of the respondents do not have decisions making authority with their husbands in their families.

5. Dual Role of Working Women Leads to Conflicts and Quarrels:

Due to different aspects such as illiteracy, orthodox ideas and conventional practices, still women are restricted from going outside and working outside freely. There are restrictions for working women to a greater extent in unorganized sector from their family members. Such restrictions and work life of women leads to role conflict in the family and outside work. As a result, there are conflicts and quarrels in their families. Hence, it was asked to the respondents that whether they agree that the dual role of working women leads to conflicts and quarrels and collected responses are tabulated as under.

Table No. 5. Dual Role of Working Women Leads to Conflicts and Quarrels

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	296	59.2
Disagree	156	31.2
Don't Know/ Can't Say	48	9.6
Total	500	100

Among all the respondents, 296 (59.2%) have agreed that the dual role of working women leads to conflicts or quarrels in the family, whereas 156 (31.2%) have not agreed that the dual role of a working women leads conflicts and quarrels in the family and the remaining 48 (9.6%) have not expressed their opinions.

6. Level of Satisfaction, Status and Respect in Outside Work:

The nature of mining work is unskilled and as a result, there is competition and due to all these factors, there is lower wages and wage discrimination. Hence, generally the level of status, respect and satisfaction is also lower. Hence, it was asked to respondents about the level of satisfaction, status and respect in their outside work and the collected information is presented in the following table.

Table No. 6. Level of Satisfaction, Respect and Status in Outside Work

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
To Full extent	56	11.2
To a Greater extent	176	35.2
Not At all	268	53.6
Total	500	100

Of the total respondents, 268 (53.6%) are not satisfied with their status, respect and the satisfied on the outside job they are doing, followed by 176 (35.2%) have expressed that they are getting the status, respect and satisfied to a greater extent in outside work and the remaining only 56 (11.2%) of the respondents stated that they are fully satisfied with their work, status and respect.

7. Reasons to Choose Work in Mining:

There are different reasons to choose mining work. The nature of mining work is unskilled and due to illiteracy and poverty, the respondents may have taken up work in mining. Further, the economic background of the respondents also may be lower to choose mining work. Hence, information was collected from the respondents on the reasons to choose work in mining and quarrying and presented in the following table.

Table No. 7. Reasons to Choose Work in Mining

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Family Income is lower	318	63.6
Unemployment/ Seasonal Employment of Husband	103	20.6
Family Occupation	73	14.6
Any Other	06	1.2
Total	500	100

On the reasons for choice of their work in mining as stated by all the respondents, 318 (63.6%) have chosen this work because of the low income of the family, 103 (20.6%) have chosen this occupation due to unemployment or the seasonal employment of the husband, 73 (14.6%) have chosen this profession as it is their family occupation and the remaining 06 (1.2%) gave the other reasons to come to this occupation. A great majority of the respondents have chosen the mining and quarrying work, as their family income is lower and the work of their husbands is also seasonal labour. It shows that the quarrying or mining work is indispensable for the respondents to support their family members economically.

8. Average Monthly Income:

Monthly income of the respondents reveals their standard of living and economic status. Of course, many of the respondents have expressed that they do not have work throughout the year. For this purpose, information on average monthly income was collected and shown in the following table.

Table No. 8. Average Monthly Income

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Less than Rs. 2500	78	15.6
Rs. 2501 to Rs. 3500	146	29.2
Rs. 3501 to Rs. 5000	193	38.6
More than Rs. 5000	83	16.6
Total	500	100

It is observed from the above table that, only 78 (15.6%) of the respondents are getting monthly income of less than Rs. 2500, 146 (29.2%) are getting monthly income between Rs. 2501 to Rs. 3500, 193 (38.6%) are getting monthly income between Rs. 3501 to Rs. 5000 and only 83 (16.6%) are getting monthly income of more than Rs. 5000. It is surprising to emphasize that only few of the respondents are earning more than Rs. 5000 per month. Comparatively the wages earned by the respondents is very low in mining and quarrying work.

9. Getting Regular Work:

The main drawback of the unorganized sector is irregular work, that is work is not regularly available throughout the year for the workers. It is seasonal and depending on the investment, the mining should be done at the option of the employers and also dependent on natural factors like summer and rainy seasons. Hence, it was asked to the respondents that whether they are getting the regular work throughout the year and the collected information is tabulated as under.

Table No. 9. Getting Regular Work

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	25	5.0
No	475	95.0
Total	500	100

It is very surprising to note that almost all, that is 475 (95.0%) of the respondents are not getting regular work throughout the year and only a few, that is 25 (5.0%) of the respondents are getting regular work.

10. Status in Society:

Of course, the family members may give more or less satisfactory level of respect to the women working in mining and quarrying. But the status of women mines and quarry workers as working women is significant as it counts for assessing the social status of the respondents. Hence the information on the status of the women mining and quarry workers in the society was collected and presented in the following table.

Table No. 10. Status in Society

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Higher	29	5.8
Lower	207	41.4
No Change	158	31.6
Satisfactory	106	21.2
Total	500	100

Among the total respondents covered under the study, 207 (41.4%) have expressed that their status is lower in the society as they are engaged in mining and quarrying works, followed by 158 (31.6%) have not experienced any change in their status, 106 (21.2%) have the satisfactory level of status in the society as a mines worker and the remaining 29 (5.8%) have responded that their status has gone high in the society. Comparatively major portion of the women mines workers have lower status in the society, even though working outside. Further, there is no change in status due to their outside work as expressed by few respondents.

11. Discrimination, Exploitation and Harassment from Male Workers:

Discrimination, exploitation and harassment are common problems, which women are facing in the work places from the male co-workers. Even though legislations are already passed against such discrimination, exploitation and harassment at the workplace, still there is exploitation, discrimination and harassment of the women workers in the unorganized sector exists. As such the information was collected from the women workers working in mining and quarrying that whether they are being discriminated, exploited or harassed from the male workers in the workplace and the collected responses are tabulated as under.

Table No. 11. Discrimination, Exploitation and Harassment from Male Workers

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	190	38.0
No	310	62.0
Total	500	100

As stated by all the respondents, 190 (38.0%) have agreed that they are being discriminated, exploited and harassed by the male workers at the work place, whereas the remaining 310 (62.0%) have not agreed to the same. More than one-third of the respondents felt that they are facing discrimination, exploitation and harassment from the male workers in the work place. It shows that even though the legislations have been passed against the discrimination, exploitation and harassment of the women workers at the work place, still there is exploitation and harassment of women workers in the mining and quarrying work.

12. Wage Discrimination:

The main drawback of unorganized sector workers is wage discrimination. That is wage is not fixed for a particular work to a greater extent, the wage rates vary from employer to employer and worker to worker. Hence, the information was collected from the respondents whether they are being discriminated in payment of wages and the collected responses are tabulated as under.

Table No. 12. Wage Discrimination

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	424	84.8
No	76	15.2
Total	500	100

As stated by the women working in mining and quarrying, 424 (84.8%) are discriminated in receiving wages, whereas the remaining only 76 (15.2%) are not being discriminated in receipt of wages from their employers. An overwhelming majority of the respondents have agreed that there is wage discrimination in the mining and quarrying work, whereas the remaining only few have not agreed to the same. Wage discrimination is a greatest problem for the unorganized sector workers.

13. Life is Secured against Accidents at Mines/ Quarries:

Mining and quarrying work is a risky, that the workers must have to work in the dust, stone blasts and dirt. The mining and quarrying workers are always facing accidents and life threats in their mines and quarries. Hence, as per the Factories Act, certain safety measures should be taken by the employers so as to avoid accidents and threats such as providing Safety Helmets, First Aid Box, etc. These provide security to the life of the women working in mining and quarrying. The information was collected from the respondents that whether their life is secured against accidents at their workplaces and presented in the following table.

Table No. 13. Life is Secured against Accidents at Mines/ Quarries

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	61	12.2
No	439	87.8
Total	500	100

Of all the respondents covered under the present study, only 61 (12.2%) are secured against the accidents at their mines and quarries, whereas the remaining 439 (87.8%) are not secured against the accidents at their mines and quarries. Only few of the respondents are got security in the workplace from the accidents and relatively a great major portion of the respondents are not secured against the accidents in their mines and quarries.

Concluding Remarks:

To conclude, women working in mining and quarrying are facing many of the problems. They are poor as wages earned by them are lower and discriminatory. Further, they are forced to work for long hours in scorching sun, dust and heat and even their lives are under threat due to blasts that were done at mining areas and stone quarries. Above all, the mining women workers are facing exploitation, discrimination and sexual harassment from their employers and supervisors. Hence, it is essential to curb such problems and challenges faced by women working in mines and quarries. For this purpose, it is essential to increase awareness of women in mining on social security schemes and legislations such as the Minimum Wages Act, Maternity Benefits, Insurance Benefits, facilities to be provided under the Factories Act, Medical Care, Sickness Benefits, Employment Injury Benefit, Old Age Benefit, Disability Benefits, unemployment benefits, etc. The NGOs should take initiation to spread awareness of the rights of women workers, so that their problems are solved. It is observed that due to illiteracy and negligence, the employers and supervisors are exploiting and discriminating

women working in mines and quarries. Hence, it is essential that education of women is emphasized. It is also suggested to form Self-Help Groups and start self-employment and income generating activities by women working in unorganized sector in general and mining in particular, which may provide alternative employment to these workers. It is essentially suggested to the Government to look into the facilities and services provided to workers at mines and stone quarries regularly and also ensure the social security for these workers. It is suggested to the employers to insure all their workers, so as to avoid the risks and accidents at their work places.

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