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Status of unskilled women Labourers: Problems and challenges

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Abstract

The objective of this paper was to examine the working conditions of unskilled women labourers and also focusing on the problems and challenges faced by them in workforce. The research was based on primary data. Data was collected through field visit of Muzaffarpur district of Bihar state with the help of self-prepared interview schedule. In this study, the researcher adopted the random sampling method to choose the sample size of 30. Unskilled women Labourers constitute a significant portion of the global workforce and play a crucial role. This study provides an overview of the working conditions experienced by unskilled women Labourers in various workplaces. However, they encounter various challenges in workplace that hinder their progress and well-being. Through this research paper, we examined the multifaceted challenges that impede their situation. After having interaction with the unskilled women Labourers and complete understanding of the study area, we concluded that a concerted effort from policymakers, employers and society as a whole is necessary. Addressing the issues related to unskilled women Labourers requires collaborative efforts to create a more equitable and supportive environment for them to thrive in their professional lives.

Keywords: Problems and challenges, unskilled women labourers, working conditions

Introduction

The position of women in the workplace has changed dramatically over the years in terms of global economic growth. Despite the advancements achieved in the arena of gender equality, a substantial percentage of unskilled women labourers still faces significant challenges in their quest for economic empowerment. Unskilled women Laborers refer to female workers who engage in manual or physical labour that requires little or no specialized training, education or technical skills. These women typically perform basic tasks that do not demand specific expertise or qualifications. These women make up an important but underappreciated workforce that deserves assistance and attention. They are frequently marginalised by cultural standards and financial limitations. Unskilled women labourers often work in jobs that require physical effort but often don't have formal training or specialised skills. The findings of the NSSO data revealed that a very large proportion of the women workers belong to the category of unskilled workers who offer themselves for wage employment in low paying occupations (Dev 2004) [4]. Their work spans a diverse range of industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, domestic work, construction and other labour-intensive sectors. Unskilled women labour is often characterized by low wages and limited opportunities for career advancement. Although these women are vital to the economy, they encounter several obstacles that prevent them from growing personally and professionally.

One of the primary challenges faced by unskilled women labourers is a lack of access to education and vocational training. In many regions, girls are still denied educational opportunities, leaving them without essential skills required to access better-paying jobs. As a result, they remain trapped in low-paying, labour-intensive jobs, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and dependence. The oppression of women in the employment is sometimes exacerbated by cultural and social standards as well. In his research on "Job Satisfaction of Women in Construction Trades" researcher revealed that unskilled women workers can be motivated by increased wages, safety facilities, and supervisor encouragement (Dabke 2008) [2]. Discrimination, gender bias and limited mobility restrict their ability to seek employment or negotiate better working conditions.

Choudhury in 2013^[1] revealed in his study on “Experiences of women as workers: a study of construction workers in Bangladesh” that some women do not get to work regularly or sometimes dropped because they are not yielding to the demand of people attempting to make sexual advances. In his case study on “Nature of Work, Working Conditions and Problems of Women Construction Workers” Rajanna in 2015^[6] revealed that unskilled women workers have been paid ridiculously lesser than men construction workers and lesser than the government's minimum wage. The findings of research conducted by Vettriselvan, Anu and Rajan in 2016^[7] claimed that sexual harassment is a major problem of female workers because they are face with poor security in the construction sites whereby the supervisors and the male colleague abuse the unskilled women workers sexually in the name of payment of wages and giving them jobs. Devi and Golden Rahul conducted research in 2019 and revealed in their study that unskilled women workers are faced with problem of low wages and other financial benefits that can encourage them to be committed and also to work well. The lack of social protections and inadequate labour laws further compound the challenges faced by these women. Absence of maternity benefits, unsafe working environments and a lack of access to healthcare facilities place unskilled women labourers in precarious situations, impacting not only their well-being but also that of their families. In his study, Lekchiri *et al.* (2020)^[5] explained that women in the construction industry in the USA operate in environments that do not satisfy the basic needs for them to succeed on the job. Nonetheless, despite these adversities, unskilled women labourers have demonstrated remarkable resilience and determination. Many of them contribute significantly to their families' incomes, juggling both work and household responsibilities. Their dedication to their craft and the economy should not be underestimated. Unskilled women labourers must be empowered through a multifaceted approach. One of the most important initial steps in ending the cycle of dependency and poverty is to ensure that everyone has access to education and vocational training. Cultural barriers can be addressed by campaigns that educate people and employers about gender equality and women's rights. Additionally, enforcing and expanding labour laws to protect the rights of women in the workforce is paramount. Society must recognize the potential of unskilled women labourers and work towards creating inclusive, gender-equal work environments that value their contributions and ensure fair wages. Only through collective efforts, involving governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations and communities, we create a more equitable future where unskilled women labourers can thrive and contribute fully to

the economic and social development of their nations.

Objective of the study

In the light of the aforementioned observations, the article critically sets the following objectives: -

- To examine the working conditions of unskilled women labourers.
- To elucidate the problems and challenges faced by unskilled women labourers in workforce.

Materials and Methods

The researcher used the descriptive design for this study. The researcher was interested in studying about the unskilled women labourers. The purpose of this study was to examine the working conditions and to elucidate the problems and challenges faced by unskilled women labourers in workforce. The study was conducted in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar state. In this study the researcher adopted the random sampling method to choose the sample size of 30. All these unskilled women labourers were chosen as target respondents to get information about the aforementioned objectives of the study. A self-structured interview schedule was formulated to elicit information related to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire consists of questions focusing on the working conditions of unskilled women labourers and their problems and challenges. As for this study, primary data was collected from all the unskilled women labourers who were become the part of this study. Since a successful study would depend only upon getting the maximum amount of information from them, hence the questionnaire was formulated with the same intention so as to bring out maximum information from the target beneficiaries without sounding their sentiments and confidentiality. Their responses had been kept strictly confidential. The questionnaire consists of numerous questions to meet the objectives of the study and the answers had been carefully recorded for a successful and valid research work. The result thus obtained was then analysed and processed in the form of tables.

Results and Discussions

Working conditions of unskilled women labourers

Working conditions of unskilled women labourers refers to the circumstances in which women are employed. It aimed to gather information about the working conditions of unskilled women labourers. The working conditions can vary based on the job and location. This section covers various aspects related to their safety, compensation and support systems. The data collected helps in understanding their conditions in which they are employed. All responses were anonymous and confidential. The data collected is shown below in the table 1.

Table 1: Working conditions of unskilled women Labourers

Particulars	Number of unskilled women labourers	Percentage
Age group		
18-25	5	16.66%
26-35	8	26.66%
36-45	10	33.33%
46 or above	7	23.33%
Educational level		
Illiterate	-	-
Primary education	5	16.66%
Secondary education	17	56.66%
Higher education	8	26.66%
And above	-	-
How many hours do you work per day?		

Less than 6 hours	17	56.66%
6-8 hours	13	43.33%
9-10 hours	-	-
More than 10 hours	-	-
Do you have a fixed work schedule?		
Yes	12	40%
No	18	60%
Are you provided with breaks during your work hours?		
Yes	22	73.33%
No	8	26.66%
Do you receive overtime pay for working beyond regular hours?		
Yes	20	66.66%
No	10	33.33%
How many days do you work in a week?		
5 days	-	-
6 days	10	33.33%
7 days	13	43.33%
Irregular work schedule	7	23.33%
Are you provided with any safety equipment for your work?		
Yes	20	66.66%
No	10	33.33%
Have you received any training for the tasks you perform?		
Yes	-	-
No	30	100%
Do you feel that your wages are fair with your work?		
Yes	-	-
No	30	100%
Are you part of any health insurance provided by your workplace?		
Yes	-	-
No	30	100%
Do you face any discrimination or, harassment based on your gender at your workplace?		
Yes	18	60%
No	12	40%
Are you satisfied with your current work conditions?		
Yes	10	33.33%
No	20	66.66%

Source: Field survey

The findings of the table 1 showed that the majority of the beneficiaries (33.33%) belonged to the age group between 36-45 years. The educational level reveals that most of the beneficiaries (56.66%) received education up to secondary level. Further, most of the beneficiaries (56.66%) worked less than 6 hours in a day while few of them (43.33%) worked 6 to 8 hours. Most of the beneficiaries (60%) hadn't a fixed work schedule. Their working hours, start and end time were not predetermined. Most of the beneficiaries (73.33%) were provided with breaks during their work hours. Breaks during work hours is essential for maintaining productivity, overall well-being and mental clarity. Continuous work can lead to mental fatigue, reducing focus and efficiency. Majority of them (66.66%) received overtime pay for working beyond extra hours. Most of them (43.33%) worked 7 days in a week and some of them (33.33%) worked 6 days but few of them (23.33%) had irregular work schedule. In workplace, majority of them (66.66%) provided with safety equipment for their work. Furthermore, all of them (100%) didn't receive any training for the tasks they performed. All the beneficiaries (100%) felt that their wages were not fair enough as per their work they performed. Their workplace didn't provide (100%) any health insurance. Majority of the beneficiaries (60%) faced discrimination and harassment at their workplace. About (66.66%) beneficiaries were not satisfied with their current work conditions. It can lead to reduced productivity and increased absenteeism.

Problems and Challenges faced by unskilled women labourers in workforce

Unskilled women Laborers face various problems and challenges in the workforce that can significantly impact their work opportunities, economic well-being and overall quality of life. These challenges are often rooted in gender-based discrimination and societal norms and they can significantly hinder women's ability to access and thrive in the job market. Some of the key problems and challenges faced by unskilled women labourers in workforce include:

- 1. Limited access to employment opportunities:** Unskilled women often face difficulty finding stable and decent-paying jobs due to a lack of skills and education. Many industries and employers prefer skilled workers, which can lead to limited options for unskilled labourers.
- 2. Gender discrimination:** Women, in general, are more susceptible to gender-based discrimination in the workplace. This discrimination can manifest in lower wages, limited job roles and a lack of respect and recognition for their work.
- 3. Exploitation and low wages:** Unskilled women Laborers are vulnerable to exploitation, as some employers may take advantage of their lack of skills and awareness of labour laws to pay them lower wages or subject them to poor working conditions.
- 4. Lack of job security:** Unskilled women labourers often work in informal sectors where job security is precarious. They may not have formal contracts or benefits, leaving

them vulnerable to sudden job loss and financial instability

5. **Inadequate access to training and education:** Limited educational opportunities can hinder these women from acquiring new skills or upgrading their existing ones, perpetuating their cycle of unskilled labour.
6. **Unhealthy and unsafe working conditions:** Women laborers in unskilled positions often work in physically demanding jobs without proper safety measures. This exposes them to various health risks and occupational hazards.
7. **Balancing work and family responsibilities:** Many unskilled women laborers face the challenge of balancing work commitments with family responsibilities such as childcare and household chores which can impact their ability to work consistently.
8. **Lack of social support:** In some societies, unskilled women labourers may face societal stigmatization making it challenging for them to seek support or advocate for their rights.
9. **Lack of representation in decision-making roles:**

Unskilled women labourers often have little to no representation in labour unions or other decision-making bodies, making it harder for them to voice their concerns and fight for their rights.

10. **Limited career advancement opportunities:** Without access to training and education, unskilled women labourers may find it challenging to move up the career ladder and improve their socio-economic status.
11. **Harassment and exploitation:** Unskilled women labourers may be at higher risk of facing harassment and exploitation by employers or colleagues which can have severe emotional and psychological consequences.
12. **Stigma and social norms:** Cultural norms and prejudices against unskilled women labourers working in certain industries or occupations can discourage them from entering the workforce or pursuing certain career paths.

The purpose of this survey was to gather insights into the problems and challenges faced by unskilled women labourers in workforce. All the responses were anonymous and were used solely for research purposes.

Table 2: Problems and Challenges faced by unskilled women labourers in workforce

Challenges	Number of unskilled women labourers	Percentage
Limited access to employment opportunities	20	66.66%
Gender discrimination	18	60%
Exploitation and low wages	22	73.33%
Lack of job security	18	60%
Inadequate access to training and education	27	90%
Unhealthy and unsafe working conditions	20	66.66%
Balancing work and family responsibilities	28	93.33%
Lack of social support	23	76.66%
Lack of representation in decision-making roles	26	86.66%
Limited career advancement opportunities	21	70%
Harassment and exploitation	18	60%
Stigma and social norms	25	83.33%

Source: Field survey

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, the above table 2 elicits information on the challenges faced by unskilled women labourers in workforce. It was observed from the responses of beneficiaries that most of the beneficiaries (93.33%) faced the challenges of balancing work with family responsibilities whereas about (90%) had experienced the problem of inadequate access to training and education. Unskilled women labourers (86.66%) often faced the challenges of low representation in decision making bodies, making it harder for them to voice their concerns and fight for their rights. Stigma and social norms prejudices against unskilled women labourers (83.33%) and discourage them from entering the workforce or pursuing certain career paths. Unskilled women labourers (76.66%) might face the problem of getting social support from the society, making it challenging for them to seek support or advocate for their rights. Some of them (73.33%) might face exploitation and low wages at workplace due to lack of skills and awareness of labour laws that subject them to poor working conditions. About (70%) had limited career advancement opportunities, making it challenging for them to move up the career ladder and improve their socio-economic status. Some of them (66.66%) might face the problem of unsafe working condition and limited access to employment opportunities. Unhealthy and unsafe working condition exposes them to various health risks and occupational hazards that might dangerous for them. They were also facing

difficulty in getting decent paying jobs due to lack of skills, training and education. Few of them (60%) often faced gender discrimination, harassment, exploitation and lack of job security as well at workplace.

Conclusion

The present study focused on the working conditions of unskilled women labourers and also focussing on the problems and challenges faced by them in workforce. The findings of the study underscored the working conditions of unskilled women labourers. Unskilled women Labourers constitute a significant portion of the global workforce and play a crucial role. This study provides an overview of the working conditions experienced by unskilled women Labourers in various workplaces. However, they encounter various challenges in workforce that hinder their progress and well-being. The problems and challenges encountered by them in workforce impede their economic and social empowerment. To address these challenges, policymakers, stakeholders and society at large must implement comprehensive measures. These may include enforcing labour laws in workplace and offering training programs as per the needs and requirements of unskilled women Labourers. There is a need to implement collaborative efforts to create equitable and supportive environment for them to thrive in their professional lives. By creating inclusive and supportive working conditions, unskilled women Labourers can contribute significantly to sustainable development.

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