

## BARRIERS FOR WOMEN WORKERS IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The aim of this study is to identify the main barriers that act as a hindrance for women to enter into the construction industry.

**Design methodology /Approach:** The scope of the study is mainly focused on women workers starting from lower postings to superior postings in construction industry. This study focused its attention in Tamilnadu. The researcher used questionnaire method for collecting data from construction workers.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that male dominated organizational cultures, family commitments and inflexible working practices are the main barriers to women in construction industry, irrespective of job role or profession. This paper concludes the main barriers for women and provide a support system to facilitate the retention and advancement of women in construction sector.

**Research implication:** The identified barriers may help all the women construction workers in particular.

**Keywords:** Women Workers, Organizational Cultures, Barriers, Gender

### I INTRODUCTION

Construction sector is the world's largest industrial employer with 7% of total world employment and 28% of industrial employment (improving working and living conditions in construction, 2004, p.3). Construction activity is an integral part of a country's infrastructure and industrial development. In India, the construction sector is the largest employer of unorganized labour next to agricultural sector (Laskar and Murthy, 2004). The construction industry has contributed an estimated 6,70,77,800 lakhs to the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2011-12 (a share around 8%). Around 16% of India's working population depends on building construction for its livelihood and the Indian construction industry today employs about 31 million people & creates assets worth over rupees 200,000 million (India infra guru, 2008) annually. Construction, a non-traditional career for women, continues to be dominated by males despite of the government efforts. It is estimated that only half of the 31 million construction workers in India are women (Govt. of India, 2008, p189). Thus the construction industry is typically a male dominated industry and presents a major challenge for equal opportunities for women. Whilst women may be entering the workforce in increasing numbers, female workers remain concentrated in certain occupational sectors such as education, health and service sectors, notably banking, insurance and the retail trade (Dept. of employment, 1989). In contrast, women have continued to be under represented in construction

industry sector which have been regarded traditionally as stereotypically “Male” occupations. According to the CITB (2003) women only account for 9% of the construction workforce. This means construction continue to be a most male dominated industry. It is found that women confronted by a significant barriers beginning with difficulties in joining the field of construction and as far as to capturing the most senior position in the organizational’s hierarchy. This paper presents a review of the literature on the current status of the women particularly it discusses the barriers faced by women in terms of entry, development & retention in construction industry.

## II AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

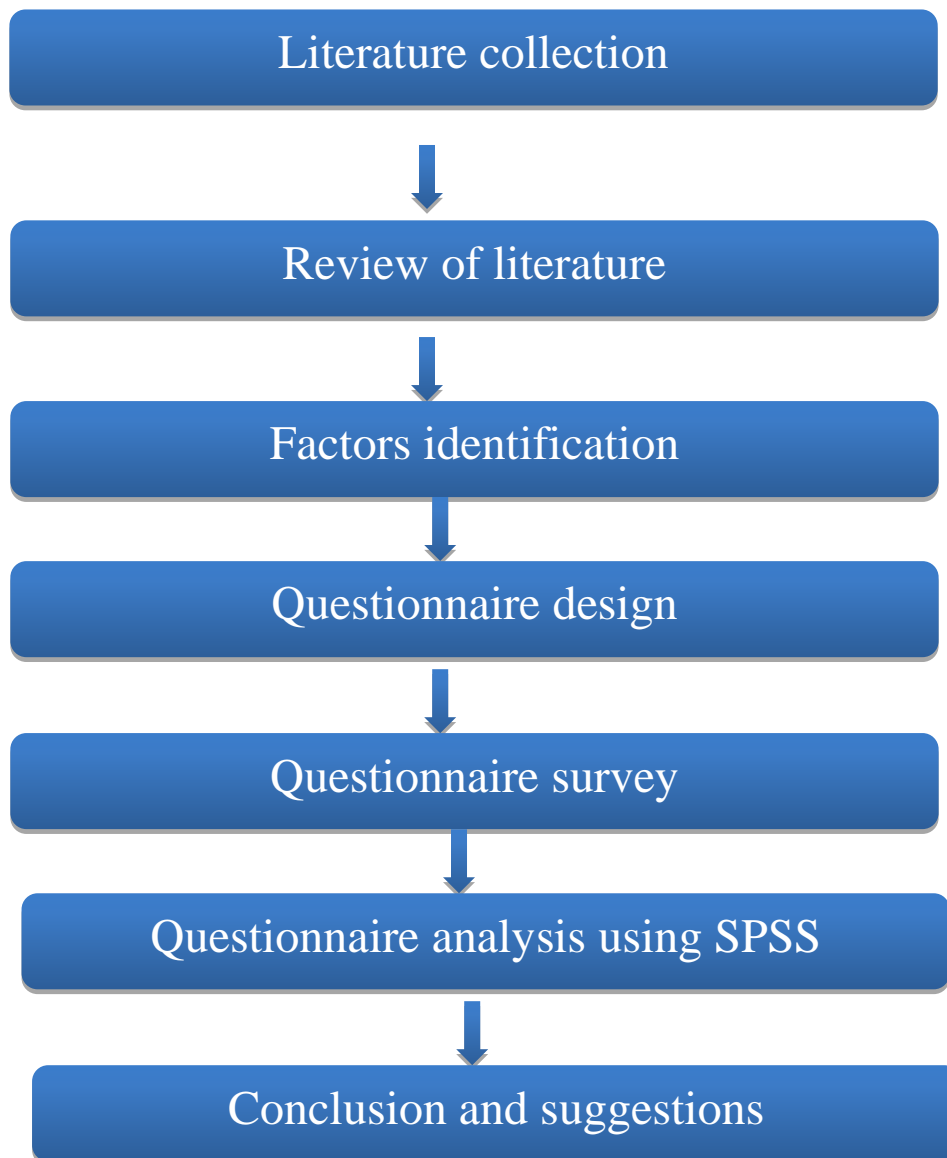
- 1) To identify major barriers to women in construction industry.
- 2) Discuss about the case study on barriers.
- 3) Make recommendations in order to empower women in construction field.

## III LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review process was conducted by studying the various books, journals, papers published, various websites and conference proceedings published in this matter.

- 1) **D.Amaratunga , R.Haigh , A.Lee ,M.Shanmugam, G.Elritigala (2005)** identified the barriers faced by women in construction. They found that image of the industry, career knowledge, culture & working environment, family commitments, male dominated training course & recruitment practices are the major barriers to women in construction.
- 2) **Salman Azhar, Miranda k.Amos Griffin(2014)** identified work/life balance, male dominance, unfair perception of women’s capabilities, slow career progression, socio-cultural issues are the top five barriers that women face at USACE-SAD.
- 3) **Kanchana Ginige, Dilanthi Amaratunga & Richard Haigh(2007)** identified gender stereotypes : A barrier for career development of women in construction.
- 4) **Radhlinah Aulin, Monika Jingmond AET(2011)(079)** identified lack of training and hiring programs, working environment, lack of flexible work hours & schedule are the issues confronting women participation in the construction industry.
- 5) **Judy Lowe and Lan woodcraft(2011)** identified attitudes, behaviours & perceptions, inflexible working practices, lack of training opportunities, lack of support, networking and mentoring opportunities are the top barriers for individual women in construction.
- 6) **Steve Craig and Andrea Oates(2011)** identified lack of apprenticeship is the main barrier which affect the empowerment of women in construction.
- 7) The variable relating to the project studies are drawn from **Lisa Worrall and Andrew Thomas(2010), Annette Barnabas, D.Joseph Anbarasu, Pauls. Clifford (2009), Davidson M.J(1996), Agapiou.A(2002).**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



The scope of the study is limited only to women workers in construction field. This is a descriptive study conducted in the Indian state of Tamilnadu. Tamilnadu is located in the southernmost tip of the Indian peninsula bordered by Kerala to the west, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh to the north and Bay of Bengal to the east. The total area covered by the state is 130,058 sq. kms. It has a total population of 62,405,679.

The researchers explained the purpose of the study to the respondents and encouraged them to participate in the study. The researchers adopted the questionnaire method for collecting data from respondents. The questionnaire has been translated into regional language. The respondents have been asked to express their opinions with regard to the questionnaire on a 5-point level. This study was conducted during the periods of 3 months from December-2015 to Feb-2016.

## IV DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT

No of questionnaires send	220
No of responses	85
Response percentage	38.63%

S.No	Demographic profile variable	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	32	37.64%
		Female	53	62.35%
2	Age	21-30 years	8	12.90%
		31-40 years	27	43.55%
		40-50 years	23	37.09%
		Above 50 years	4	6.45%
3	Experience in construction field	Less than 2 years	5	8.06%
		2 years to 5 years	16	25.80%
		6 years to 10 years	26	41.94%
		11 years to 15 years	12	19.35%
		Above 15 years	3	4.84%
4	Work type	Quality engineer	17	27.42%
		Project engineer	13	20.97%
		Proclamation engineer	14	22.58%
		Site engineer	18	29.03%
5	Education qualification	Diploma	21	33.87%
		B.E	23	37.09%
		M.E	15	24.19%
		Dual degree	3	4.83%

## V CONCLUSION

This paper reviewed the literature relating to the barriers faced by women in construction. It is found through the literature review that image of the industry, career knowledge, culture and working environment, family commitments, male dominated training course and recruitment practices are the major barriers to women in construction. Each of these barriers

have been elaborated, and the possible difficulties that the women face due to such barriers in entering and retaining in construction have been discussed. Considering these barriers, it is felt that the reduction or elimination of most of such barriers is an important step which leads to recruit and to retain more women into construction industry. The construction industry itself has not, until recently, formally acknowledged that the

under-representation of women is an important issue or promoted any initiatives or research into this area (Fielden et al, 2000). In 1996, a report was produced by CIB Working Group 8 (CIB, 1996b) that provided constructive guidelines on equal opportunities for construction companies. A study by Wilkinson (1996) revealed that on the occasion when the industry is short of labour, it becomes particularly important not to waste the labour of construction graduates. It also suggested that while, on the whole, altering the pattern of benefits would have little differential effect on recruitment by sex, there is the exception of child-care. In attempting to recruit more women, employers should perhaps think more seriously about providing some form of childcare benefit. Thus it is vital to identify appropriate recommendations and good practice guidelines to aid the recruitment and retention of women in construction.

## VI LIMITATION AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Even though the study achieved its objectives, the researchers encountered certain problems. First, this study considered only the limited variables. In further, similar study can be conducted by incorporating more number of variables. This study has been conducted in Tamilnadu alone. Similarly this study can be extended to other states. In addition to this, comparative study can also be conducted with regard to different barriers to women. The findings of the study can be used for other organized and unorganized sector.

## VII MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study may contribute many things to the existing literature. The identified dimensions help women construction workers in particular. Based on the findings of the study, policy makers can formulate suitable policies regarding barriers to women construction workers and training programme can be organized to reduce the main barriers of women construction workers.

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