

ABSTRACT

The economic position of India is largely dependent on the contributions of the workforce of the unorganized sector. The unorganized sector of the economy is mainly characterized by the small size of employment, high proportion of unskilled and illiterate workers, labour intensive and adapted low scale technology, absence of proper implementation of the laws, low income, and high competition. As our Indian economy is characterized by the existence of the vast majority of unorganized labourers, it is the women labourers who mainly dominated this sector of the labour force. Women and their labour are often viewed as secondary and unskilled that remains unrecognized and undervalued. Women's labours are generally remained invisible because of their mostly informal nature of work due to household chores. Therefore, the women engaged in the labour market have to invest more hours of labour than the men due to their domestic activities at home.

The majority of women labourers come under the unorganized sector due to their unskilled and poor economic opportunities. Though women constitute a significant part of the workforce and bear a heavier burden of work than men as they have to contribute more time in domestic work, yet they are lagged behind men and a neglected section of society. Moreover, women from some particular social/ethnic group have to face hindrances in the way of pursuing their education and hence, always lag behind the men and the women of other groups.

Therefore, this present study entitled "Problems of Women Labourers in Unorganized Sector: A Sociological Study in Goalpara District of Assam" is attempted to describe and explore the various problems of women labourers in the unorganized sector by focusing on their socio-economic and cultural aspects. The study is conducted among the women labourers engaged as domestic and construction labourers belonging to a particular Muslim ethnic group known as 'Bhatiya' in the district. The study is undertaken with the objectives of studying the historical

background of Muslim ethnic groups in the district, identifying the living and working conditions of women labourers by the extent of security at the workplace, examining the socio-cultural differentiation, and analyzing the attitude of employers towards the women labourers.

The study is conducted in Goalpara district which is known as one of the Muslim majority districts of Assam. The methodology used for the present study is descriptive and explorative based on a qualitative approach. The data are collected from both primary and secondary sources, where the primary data was gathered through fieldwork by using Interview Schedule, and by observation method, secondary data was gathered from various books, journals, census reports, etc. The study was done by taking 60 respondents, i.e. the women labourers belonging to 'Bhatiya', from municipal areas of the district because they are mostly found in such areas. As the study is mainly based on a qualitative approach, the emphasis is given on transcribing the responses of women labourers into different related themes for the study.

Thus, the whole study has been organized under five chapters that start with 'Introduction' as being the first chapter. This chapter presents the background and significance of the study along with the review of literature which is divided into studies related to women, studies related to women and work, studies related to ethnicity, Muslims and Muslim women and studies related to unorganized women labourers. The chapter spells out the objectives and research questions, defines various relevant concepts and theories related to the study, and explains the research methodology of the study.

The second chapter of the study titled as 'The Study Area and Historical Background' attempts to provide the socio-economic and demographic profile of the study area, i.e. Goalpara district, along with the historical background of the people from various groups in general and particularly, about the different Muslim ethnic groups of the district.

The third chapter of the study titled as ‘Socio-Economic Problems of Unorganized Women Labourers’ analyzes the socio-economic background of the women labourers, working condition of women domestic and construction labourers separately followed by the extent of social security measures for the women labourers in the unorganized sector, and ends with the results and discussions of the findings. The chapter mainly attempts to depict the extent of security at the workplace for the women labourers by analyzing their working condition related problems.

The fourth chapter of the study titled as ‘Aspects of Ethnic Differentiation’ examines the socio-cultural stigmas faced by the women labourers throughout their life for being a member of the particular ethnic group and the employers’ attitude towards the women labourers at the workplace. This chapter mainly reveals the various aspects of ethnic differentiation faced by the women labourers engaged in the unorganized sector in public places and the attitude of employers at their workplace.

The fifth chapter is ‘Summary and Conclusion’ which provides a summary of the study with findings and recommendations. This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and attempts to draw a conclusion by providing recommendations for the concerned authorities and the larger society.