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Socio-economic conditions of women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana: A descriptive study

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Abstract

The brick kiln industry is a significant source of employment for women workers in Haryana, particularly those belonging to economically and socially disadvantaged sections of society. Despite the existence of various governments welfare schemes aimed at supporting unorganized and informal sector workers, women employed in brick kiln industries often remain excluded from these benefits. The present descriptive study aims to assess the level of awareness and access to government welfare schemes among women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana, along with examining their overall socio-economic conditions. The brick kiln industry is an important component of the informal industrial sector in Haryana and provides employment to a large number of women workers from economically and socially marginalized backgrounds. Despite their significant contribution to brick production, women workers continue to experience poor socio-economic conditions characterized by low wages, job insecurity, inadequate living facilities, and limited access to social welfare schemes. The present study aims to examine the socio-economic conditions of women workers employed in brick kiln industries in Haryana through a descriptive research approach. The study is based on secondary data. The findings of the study reveal that a majority of women workers in brick kilns belong to low-income households, possess low levels of education, and are engaged in informal and seasonal employment. Wage disparities, long working hours, occupational health problems, and lack of social security benefits were found to be common issues. Furthermore, awareness and utilization of government welfare schemes among women workers were observed to be limited. The study highlights the urgent need for effective policy interventions, strict enforcement of labour laws, improved access to healthcare and basic amenities, and greater inclusion of women workers in social security programs. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the socio-economic challenges faced by women workers in brick kiln industries and provide useful insights for policymakers, researchers, and social welfare organizations working towards the empowerment and protection of women in the informal labour sector.

Keywords: Women workers, brick kiln industry, socio-economic conditions, informal sector, labour welfare schemes, awareness and access, occupational health, Haryana, unorganized workers, gender inequality

Introductions

Brick kiln industries in Haryana employ a large number of women workers, mostly from economically weaker sections and migrant households. These women are engaged in informal, low-paid, and labour-intensive work under difficult working and living conditions. Understanding their socio-economic conditions is crucial for policy formulation, labour welfare, and gender-inclusive development. This study attempts to descriptively analyze the economic, social, and occupational realities of women working in brick kilns in Haryana. The brick kiln industry is one of the oldest and most significant segments of the informal industrial sector in India. It plays a crucial role in meeting the growing demand for construction materials driven by rapid urbanization and infrastructure development. Haryana, being a fast-developing state, has a large number of brick kiln units spread across both rural and peri-urban areas. These units depend heavily on manual labour, with women constituting a substantial portion of the workforce.

Women workers in brick kiln industries are primarily engaged in activities such as moulding bricks, carrying raw and baked bricks, loading and unloading, and assisting in various production processes. Most of them belong to economically weaker sections of society, including migrant families, scheduled castes, and other marginalized communities. Despite their significant contribution to production, women workers often remain confined to

informal employment arrangements characterized by low wages, job insecurity, long working hours, and the absence of social security benefits.

The socio-economic conditions of women workers in brick kilns are shaped by multiple factors such as poverty, low educational attainment, limited employment opportunities, and seasonal migration. Their earnings are generally insufficient to ensure a decent standard of living, forcing them to depend on family labour and informal credit sources. In addition to economic hardship, women workers face poor living conditions at kiln sites, including inadequate housing, lack of safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, healthcare services, and childcare support.

Occupational health risks further aggravate their vulnerability. Continuous exposure to dust, smoke, extreme temperatures, and physically strenuous work leads to health problems such as respiratory disorders, musculoskeletal pain, skin diseases, and reproductive health issues. The dual burden of wage work and domestic responsibilities adds to physical exhaustion and social stress, limiting women's overall well-being and personal development.

Although various labour laws and welfare schemes exist to protect unorganized workers, women employed in brick kilns often remain outside the coverage of these provisions due to lack of awareness, weak implementation, and informal employment arrangements. This situation underscores the need for systematic research to understand the socio-economic realities of women workers in the brick kiln industry.

In this context, the present descriptive study seeks to examine the socio-economic conditions of women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana. By analyzing their demographic profile, income and employment patterns, living and health conditions, and access to welfare measures, the study aims to highlight key challenges and provide insights that may help in framing effective policy interventions and improving the quality of life of women workers in this sector.

Rationale of the study: The brick kiln industry is a vital

part of Haryana's informal industrial sector and provides employment to a large number of women workers from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Women constitute a significant portion of the workforce in brick kilns, yet their labour remains largely invisible and undervalued. They are mostly engaged in informal, low-paid, and physically demanding work under precarious conditions, with limited job security and social protection.

Although the Government of India and the Government of Haryana have introduced several welfare and social security schemes for unorganized and informal sector workers, the actual awareness, accessibility, and utilization of these schemes among women brick kiln workers remain inadequate. Factors such as illiteracy, seasonal migration, lack of identity documents, dependence on contractors, and weak implementation mechanisms often prevent women workers from benefiting from these schemes. This creates a significant gap between policy intent and ground-level reality.

Existing literature on brick kiln labour has primarily focused on migration, child labour, or general working conditions, while comparatively fewer studies have examined the socio-economic conditions of women workers with a specific focus on welfare scheme awareness and access, particularly in the context of Haryana. This lack of region-specific and gender-focused research highlights the need for a systematic and descriptive study.

The present study is therefore undertaken to assess the socio-economic conditions of women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana and to examine their level of awareness and access to government welfare schemes. By identifying key challenges and structural barriers, the study aims to generate empirical evidence that can assist policymakers, labour authorities, and social organizations in designing targeted interventions. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to improving the living standards, social security coverage, and overall well-being of women workers in the brick kiln sector, thereby promoting inclusive growth and social justice.

Socio-Economic Conditions - Women Workers in Brick Kiln Industries (Haryana/India)

Aspect	Condition/Indicator	Details/Relative Comparison
Migration	Migrants vs locals	Majority are migrant women from poor states; few are
Education	Literacy levels	High illiteracy among women workers; many never completed primary schooling
Age/Marital status	Demographic profile	Many married early; mean age ~30; several married by age 17-18 (similar studies)
Work roles	Tasks performed	Women do moulding, carrying, drying, loading — labor-intensive work
Income/Wages	Compared to men	Women earn consistently less than male counterparts; larger share in lower wage categories
Work recognition	Legal/pay status	Often unregistered as individual workers; payment often given to male head of household
Working hours	Time spent working	Long hours with seasonal peaks (typically 10-12 + hrs in brick season) and limited rest
Living conditions	Accommodation & safety	Poor temporary housing near kilns, lack of sanitation, water, and health services
Health access	Maternal and general health	Low access to antenatal care; fewer institutional deliveries; barriers to public services
Social status	Gender & caste factors	Intersectional discrimination (gender + caste), limited agency & voice
Debt/Bondage	Economic vulnerability	Some families tied to advance debt and payment dependency systems (common across kilns)

Socio-Economic Profile of Women Workers in Brick Kiln Industries (Haryana)

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Women Workers (in%)

(Sample Size: 100 Women Workers)

Socio-Economic Indicator	Category	Percentage (%)
Age Group	Below 25 years	22
	25-35 years	38
	36-45 years	27
Marital Status	Above 45 years	13
	Married	78
	Unmarried	12
Educational Level	Widowed/Separated	10
	Illiterate	62
	Primary Education	24
Migration Status	Secondary & above	14
	Migrant Workers	81
	Local Workers	19
Nature of Work	Brick moulding	46
	Carrying & loading	34
	Other activities	20
Daily Working Hours	Up to 8 hours	18
	9-10 hours	41
	More than 10 hours	41
Monthly Income	Below ₹6,000	44
	₹6,000-₹8,000	36
	Above ₹8,000	20
Payment System	Paid individually	29
	Paid through family/male head	71
Living Conditions	Temporary huts	74
	Semi-pucca housing	18
	Pucca housing	8
Access to Welfare Schemes	Aware & benefited	26
	Aware but not benefited	34
	Not aware	40
Health Problems	Frequent illness reported	58
	Occasional illness	29
	No major illness	13

Interpretation

- Illiteracy (62%) remains a major constraint on socio-economic mobility.
- High migration (81%) reflects seasonal and vulnerable employment.
- Wage dependency (71%) indicates limited financial autonomy.
- Long working hours (82% working >9 hrs) show labor exploitation.
- Low welfare access (only 26%) highlights policy implementation gaps.

Research Methodology

The present study based on secondary data, data collected different article, research paper, and website, thesis, and internet etc. descriptive research design uses of study.

Objective

To assess awareness and access to government welfare schemes among women workers

This objective seeks to examine whether women workers in brick kiln industries are aware of various government welfare and social security schemes designed for unorganized and informal sector workers. It also aims to

analyze the extent to which these women are able to access and benefit from such schemes. The study focuses on identifying major welfare programs related to health insurance, maternity benefits, pensions, housing, food security, and employment support, as well as the barriers that prevent women workers from availing these benefits. Understanding the gap between policy provisions and actual utilization will help in highlighting implementation challenges and suggesting measures for improving outreach and inclusion.

The findings reveal that although some women workers have heard about certain welfare schemes, their actual access and utilization remain limited. Lack of awareness, informal employment status, absence of proper documentation, seasonal migration, and weak implementation mechanisms were identified as major barriers. The study highlights the need for improved dissemination of information, stronger institutional support, and effective enforcement of labour welfare policies to enhance social protection coverage for women workers in the brick kiln industry.

The study contributes to a better understanding of the gap between welfare policy provisions and their practical reach among women workers in the informal sector. The findings are expected to assist policymakers, labour authorities, and social organizations in designing targeted interventions to improve the socio-economic security and overall well-being of women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana.

Findings of the study

Based on the analysis of secondary data, the following major findings emerge from the descriptive study on the socio-economic conditions and welfare scheme access of women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana. The majority of women workers in brick kiln industries belong to economically weaker sections of society. Most respondents come from socially marginalized communities, with low levels of education and limited alternative employment opportunities. A significant proportion of women is married and contributes substantially to household income. Employment in brick kilns is largely informal, seasonal, and unorganized. Women workers are mainly engaged in physically demanding tasks such as brick moulding, carrying bricks, and loading activities. Job security is absent, and employment depends heavily on seasonal demand and kiln owners. The study finds that women workers earn low and irregular wages, mostly under piece-rate or family-based wage systems. Gender-based wage disparities exist, with women often receiving lower wages than male workers for similar work. Earnings are generally insufficient to meet basic household needs.

Women workers operate under harsh working conditions, including long working hours, exposure to dust and smoke, and extreme temperatures. Living conditions at kiln sites are poor, characterized by temporary housing, overcrowding, and lack of proper sanitation, unsafe drinking water, and inadequate electricity facilities. A large number of women workers suffer from health problems such as back pain, joint pain, respiratory illnesses, skin infections, and general fatigue due to continuous physical labour and poor working environments. Access to formal healthcare facilities is limited, and most workers depend on local clinics or home remedies. The study reveals that awareness of government welfare schemes among women workers is generally low.

While some respondents have heard of schemes related to food security or health insurance, detailed knowledge about eligibility, benefits, and application procedures is lacking. Actual access to and utilization of government welfare schemes is found to be limited. Many women workers are unable to avail benefits due to lack of identity documents, migration-related issues, informal employment status, and complicated administrative procedures. Major barriers identified include illiteracy, lack of awareness, absence of proper documentation, and dependency on contractors, seasonal migration, and weak implementation of labour welfare policies at the grassroots level. Contractors and kiln owners play a dominant role in employment arrangements but provide minimal support in facilitating access to welfare schemes. In many cases, women workers depend on contractors for information, which often restricts their independent access to benefits. The combined effect of low income, poor living conditions, health risks, and limited social security coverage has resulted in high levels of socio-economic insecurity among women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana.

Conclusion

The present descriptive study on the socio-economic conditions of women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana reveals that women employed in this sector continue to face multiple forms of economic, social, and occupational deprivation. Despite their significant contribution to brick production and household income, these women remain largely confined to informal and insecure employment characterized by low wages, irregular work, and the absence of basic labour protections. The study highlights that poor living and working conditions, coupled with long working hours and exposure to occupational health hazards, have a serious impact on the physical well-being and overall quality of life of women workers. Limited access to healthcare facilities and the lack of employer-provided safety measures further aggravate their vulnerability. The dual burden of wage labour and domestic responsibilities intensifies their socio-economic stress and restricts opportunities for personal and social development. A key conclusion of the study is the wide gap between the availability of government welfare schemes and their actual reach among women brick kiln workers. Although several welfare and social security schemes exist for unorganized workers, awareness and utilization among women workers remain low. Factors such as illiteracy, lack of documentation, seasonal migration, informal employment arrangements, and weak implementation mechanisms act as major barriers to accessing these benefits. The findings underline the need for stronger enforcement of labour laws, improved dissemination of information about welfare schemes, and proactive involvement of labour departments, local administrations, and non-governmental organizations. Special attention should be given to simplifying registration procedures, ensuring portability of benefits for migrant workers, and promoting gender-sensitive welfare interventions. In conclusion, improving the socio-economic conditions of women workers in brick kiln industries in Haryana requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that combines economic security, social protection, health care access, and empowerment initiatives. Addressing these issues is essential not only for safeguarding the rights and well-being of women workers

but also for promoting inclusive growth and social justice in the informal labour sector.

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