

SOCIAL SECURITY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

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Abstract:

The main goal of the social security system is to support individuals in need, especially construction workers of India. This research paper analyses the current social security measures for construction workers in India and its impact on sustainable development. It evaluates existing schemes and legislation for the Construction Workers Act of 1996 and the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act of 2008, using qualitative techniques. The paper also discusses the challenges faced by construction workers and the government's efforts to address them. The paper concludes with recommendations for improving social security measures in the construction industry to promote sustainable development.

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Introduction:

Social security for all specifically for marginalized groups like construction workers is essential for promoting sustainable development in India. However, challenges such as informal employment, poor living conditions, and lack of awareness delay the effective implementation of social security programs. The construction industry is heavily reliant on labour (Alam & Kumar Singh; 2021). Globally it has experienced significant growth, it has become one of the fastest-growing sectors. Review of related studies shows that the construction industry is the second-largest employer after agriculture (Akram ; 2014). A range of studies have explored the need for social security in the construction industry, particularly for the operational workforce (Zikriyoev A & Crane R; 2019) emphasize the importance of a lifelong social security system for construction workers. Most of them work for more than eight hours a day, they are exposed to hazardous activities that can result in occupational disorders and psychosocial stresses (Tiwarly et al.; 2012). These studies collectively underscore the need for sustainable social security measures to support the diverse needs of construction workers. This research paper identifies inadequacies and emphasizes the need for supporting construction workers and proposes solutions to enhance social security and promote sustainable development in the construction industry.

Objective of the research were to:

To examine the current social security measures and programs for construction workers in India for their sustainable development.

Methodology:

Qualitative methods were used by including content and thematic analysis and based on Systematic review to study social security measures for construction workers in India.

Social Security in India:

The social security framework in India is based on the principles articulated in the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Indian constitution. These principles are designed to protect the interests of marginalized groups in society and advance social welfare of construction workers in the informal sector. Despite the presence of various laws and initiatives, a significant portion of the construction labour force remains outside the purview of formal social security provisions, leaving them susceptible to exploitation and impoverishment.

The Existing Framework of Social Security Schemes for Organized and Unorganized Sector:

The current framework of social security schemes in India primarily focuses on the organized sector workforce. According to the National Sample Survey Organization (1999-2000), out of the total workforce of 397 million, only 28 million workers receive social security protection. This indicates that the coverage of social security schemes is limited and needs to be expanded to include a larger portion of the workforce. In India, social security laws are categorized into two main types: contributory and non-contributory laws. Contributory laws involve the financing of social assistance schemes through contributions made by both employers and workers. On the other hand, non-contributory laws provide benefits to workers to mitigate risks. It is crucial to address the existing gaps in the social security framework and ensure that a wider range of workers can benefit from these schemes. This can be achieved by increasing the coverage of social security protection and implementing comprehensive policies that address the diverse needs of the workforce, so the social security system can effectively provide support and protection to a larger segment of the population.

According to empirical research and published reports from government agencies and research departments, a workforce is involved in the unorganized sector. This sector includes industries such as construction, agriculture, and home-based work (Panneer; 2019). The tenth-five-year plan report outlines four main categories of social security schemes practiced in the unorganized sector. These categories include social assistance programs funded by the Government of India, social assistance provided through welfare funds from Union and Governments, social insurance schemes, and public initiatives.

The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service Act, 1996) The Act enacted by the Central Government is applicable to all establishments that employ 10 or more building workers engaged in any building or related activities. This legislation includes various aspects such as social security, welfare measures, and the health and safety of construction workers (Tiwary et al.; 2012). The welfare fund places significant emphasis on addressing the social assistance requirements of construction workers involved in building projects.

The Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008:

This act was implemented by the Indian Government to offer safeguard to individuals working in the unorganized sector. The central government is mandated to develop appropriate welfare programs concerning health and maternity benefits for female workers, life and disability insurance, as well as support for senior citizens.

The State Government is responsible for developing programs concerning enhancing the skills, facilities for the elderly, educational initiatives for children, providing benefits for employment-related injuries, and setting up a provident fund for unorganized labourers also recommends monitoring the advancement of the registration procedure and the issuance of labour identification cards and funeral aid to unorganized workers. The data shows that there is a need to provide special services to female workers and those involved in scaffolding work

Critical Analysis of Social Security Scheme:

The social security system for construction workers in India is crucial for sustainable development. Assistance programs and schemes play an important role in the unorganized sector, with the construction industry offering immediate employment opportunities following the agriculture sector. To achieve sustainable development, comprehensive measures are needed to improve access to formal employment, social security, and address exploitation and inequality. Empowering workers through education and skill development is also important. By integrating social security initiatives with broader development goals, India can create a more equitable environment for construction workers and contribute to socio-economic progress. Despite rapid urbanization, construction workers still reside in slums, highlighting the difficulties they face. Migration exposes them to exploitation, and the implementation of labour laws remains ineffective. Existing security schemes are inadequate due to workers' lack of literacy and education.

Discussion:

Construction workers especially female workers and those involved in scaffolding work in India face various challenges, including poor living conditions, low wages, and lack of access to healthcare and education. To address these challenges and promote sustainable development for the workers of the construction industry, it is essential to enhance social security measures to the needs of construction workers. This can be achieved through measures such as expanding the coverage of social security programs, improving awareness about available schemes, and strengthening enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with existing legislations. Efforts should be made to address underlying socio-economic issues such as poverty, inequality, and lack of access to basic amenities.

Conclusion:

The study emphasizes the importance of enhancing social security measures for construction workers in India to promote sustainable development in the industry. By addressing the challenges faced by construction workers and improving access to social security programs, India can ensure the well-being and dignity of its construction workforce while fostering socio-economic progress. To achieve this goal requires concerted efforts from governmental bodies, employers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to address the systemic issues underlying social security provision for the construction workers.

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Cite This Article:

Ms. Lohkare C. & Dr. Sudhakar R. (2024). *Social Security for the Sustainable Development of Construction Workers*. In **Educreator Research Journal: Vol. XI (Issue V)**, pp. 27–30. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14245331>