

# The Social and Economic Conditions of Brick-Making Workers in Megalakoppalu Village: A Sociological Study

RAJASHEKHARA S

Assistant Professor of Sociology, Government First Grade College, Bannur, T. Narasipur Taluk, Mysore District, Karnataka

*Abstract— Megalakoppalu, a village in T. Narasipura Taluk of Mysore district, lies 35 km from Mysore. It has a population of 1,042 and was traditionally agriculture-based. However, due to shifts in local industries, it is gradually transforming into a semi-urban area. The major driver of this change is the brick manufacturing industry, with 92 brick kilns replacing much of the agricultural land. Farmers have shifted to owning and operating these kilns, using the income to improve their homes. Labourers, primarily from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), work in these kilns under challenging conditions. The focus of my study is to assess the social and economic status of these workers, considering various factors such as age, education, work experience, income, savings, job satisfaction, and the hardships they face.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Brick manufacturing is a long-established, labour-intensive industry. In Megalakoppalu, it employs local workers alongside migrants from other regions. The increasing demand for bricks, driven by construction activities, has boosted this industry, despite the availability of concrete bricks. The workforce in these kilns includes skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labourers. The process of brick-making involves several steps: digging and preparing clay, moulding, drying, firing, and transporting the finished bricks. All these tasks are performed manually. Many of the workers come from poor backgrounds and rely on these jobs for their livelihoods. Some take advances from kiln owners, which they repay by working in harsh conditions for extended hours. Families often work together, dividing tasks among members. The labourers face health issues due to exposure to dust and the sun and receive minimal pay and social security.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the socio-economic conditions of brick kiln workers, focusing on age, education, marital status, type of work, income, and savings.
2. To explore why these workers choose this field, considering factors such as illiteracy, benefits, and the challenges they face.

## III. DATA COLLECTION

In this study, data was gathered from 30 respondents through a structured questionnaire. These respondents were chosen from 10 different brick manufacturing units in the village. From each unit, 3 labourers were selected as representatives, making the total sample size 30. The questionnaire aimed to capture a wide range of information on the workers' demographic profiles, employment conditions, socio-economic factors, and their perceptions of job satisfaction.

## IV. GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Brick manufacturing in Megalakoppalu involves both men and women, often working together as husband-wife pairs. Out of the 30 respondents, 19 were male (63.33%) and 11 were female (36.66%). Although the workforce is dominated by men, women play a crucial role in supporting tasks, such as loading and handling bricks, which contributes to the overall functioning of the kilns.

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	19	63.33%
Female	11	36.66%
Total	30	100%

The participation of women, though less than that of men, highlights the family-based labour structure in

this industry. This suggests that brick-making is not only an individual livelihood but also a household enterprise.

V. AGE DISTRIBUTION

The age distribution shows a broad range of workers from various age groups, with a significant proportion of workers over the age of 45, accounting for 33.33%. This reflects both the physically demanding nature of brick-making and the lack of younger workers entering the trade. Older workers often continue in this occupation due to limited alternatives.

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
18-25	1	0	1	3.33%
26-30	1	2	3	10.00%
31-35	2	2	4	13.33%
36-40	4	1	5	16.66%
41-45	3	4	7	23.33%
45+	8	2	10	33.33%
Total	19	11	30	100%

This age distribution indicates that a considerable number of older individuals are still active in physically strenuous labour, which could point to both a lack of economic security and minimal retirement options for these workers.

VI. MARITAL STATUS

A large majority of the workers are married, reflecting the family-based nature of employment in the brick kilns. Among the respondents, 86.66% were married, which includes several couples working together. Widowed workers, mostly women, constituted 10% of the sample, showing that the labour market provides vital income for single-parent households or individuals without other family support.

Marital Status	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Married	18	8	26	86.66%
Unmarried	1	0	1	3.33%
Widow	0	3	3	10.00%
Total	19	11	30	100 %

This data highlights the dependence on brick-making as a family enterprise, where both partners contribute to household income, often working under challenging conditions.

VII. PARTICIPATION IN WORK TYPES

The workforce is divided among different tasks according to their skills. Moulding, the most labour-intensive stage, is handled primarily by men, while tasks such as loading, which require less technical skill, have a higher proportion of women involved.

Work Type	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Moulding	13	3	16	53.33%
Firing	3	0	3	10.00%
Loading	3	8	11	36.66%
Total	19	11	30	100%

The data indicates that men are more likely to take on the skilled labour roles, while women contribute in tasks that are essential but less technical. This gendered division of labour mirrors the traditional allocation of roles in many manual labour industries.

VIII. EXPERIENCE OF WORKERS

Most of the workers in the brick kilns have substantial experience, with many having worked in the industry for over 12 years. This long-term engagement suggests that brick manufacturing is often a lifetime occupation, possibly passed down through generations. The lack of other employment opportunities may also contribute to workers remaining in this field for long periods.

IX. EDUCATION LEVELS

Education levels among the workers are notably low, with a majority being illiterate (63.33%). This lack of education severely limits their employment options, trapping them in physically demanding and low-paying jobs.

Education Level	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Illiterate	11	8	19	63.33%
5th Grade	1	3	4	13.33%
8th Grade	1	0	1	3.33%
10th Grade	5	0	5	16.66%
12th Grade	1	0	1	3.33%
Total	19	11	30	100%

This low level of education reflects a major barrier to upward mobility for these workers. With limited literacy, they lack access to better-paying jobs and are unaware of opportunities for financial and social advancement.

#### X. CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Despite their own low educational attainment, many workers are making efforts to educate their children. Some families are even able to support their children's pursuit of higher education. This commitment to education highlights a desire to break the cycle of poverty and labour-intensive work, though financial constraints often limit the extent of education they can afford.

#### XI. REASONS FOR CHOOSING BRICK MANUFACTURING

One of the main reasons workers choose to work in brick kilns is the advance payments they receive from the owners. These advances often bind workers to the job, as they are required to repay the amount through their labour. Additionally, limited employment opportunities in the region push many workers into this line of work.

#### XII. SAVINGS

All workers reported saving money through local self-help groups (SHGs). These savings help provide a financial safety net, though the amounts saved are typically modest due to their low incomes.

#### XIII. JOB SATISFACTION

While some workers expressed satisfaction with their jobs, most had neutral or mixed feelings. Many were dissatisfied due to the harsh working conditions, long hours, exposure to extreme heat and dust, and low wages. This dissatisfaction, combined with limited alternatives, highlights the challenges faced by the workers in this sector.

In summary, the data reveals that brick kiln workers in Megalakkoppalu face significant socio-economic challenges, including poor working conditions, low pay, and limited educational opportunities. Despite these difficulties, the workers are dependent on this industry for their livelihood due to a lack of viable employment alternatives in the region.

#### XIV. FINDINGS

- Many workers are tied to their jobs due to debts owed to kiln owners.
- The occupation is often passed down through generations.
- Lack of viable employment alternatives, especially in agriculture, leads many to choose this line of work.
- Proximity to their homes makes this job convenient.
- Traditional potters have shifted to brick-making due to declining demand for pottery.

#### XV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government and NGOs should implement development schemes for brick kiln workers.
- Awareness programs about life insurance should be organized.
- A separate labour board for unorganized workers like those in brick kilns should be established.
- Nationalized banks should provide loans to workers, as many face difficulties securing credit.
- The government should conduct training programs to improve workers' skills.

## CONCLUSION

The brick kiln workers of Megalakoppalu face various socio-economic challenges, including long working hours, lack of social security, job insecurity, and financial instability. Most belong to SC and ST communities. Efforts must be made to integrate them into the broader socio-economic framework for better development and opportunities.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Bose H.N., "Modern Pottery Manufactures", Cermic Publication, Bihar, 1982
- [2] Bert Rosan Bloom, "Marketing Channels – A Management View", the Dryden Press, New York, 1983.
- [3] Kullkarni.G.J, "Text Book Engineering Materials", Ahmadabad Book Depot, Ahamathabad, 1965
- [4] Vasant Desai, "Management of Small Scale Industry", Himalaya Publication House, Mumbai, 1986.
- [5] Malini Varadharajan, "A Study of Non-mechanised country Brick industries" Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Madurai Kamaraj University, 1982
- [6] Sinha, Manju Lata, "Conditions of Women Workers in the Brick Kilns", Man in India, vol. 74(1), March 1987
- [7] Labour Bureau, Ministry of labour, Government of India, "Survey of SocioEconomic Conditions of Women Workers in Unorganized Industries" 1988
- [8] Deliege, Robert, "Job Mobility among the Brick Makers of South India", Man in India, 1989.
- [9] Aranga Ezhillarasan,"A, "A study on the Production and Marketing of Chamber Bricks at Virudhachalam South Arcot – Valalar District", Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, Madurai Kamaraj University, 1995.
- [10] Jayati Gupta, "Informal Labour in Brick Kilns need for Regulation", Economic Political Weekly, 2003.