

Socio-Economic Conditions and Livelihood Challenges of Brick Industry Workers in Karad Tahsil, Satara District (M.S)

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Abstract: The brick industry plays a vital role in rural and semi-urban economies, particularly in supporting construction activities. However, it largely operates within the informal sector, where workers face socio-economic deprivation and lack institutional protection. The present study examines the socio-economic conditions of brick industry workers in Karad Tahsil of Satara district. It focuses on income levels, housing conditions, health status, education, migration patterns, gender issues, and access to government welfare schemes. The study is based on primary data collected from 50 workers using structured interviews. The findings reveal that workers are economically vulnerable, socially marginalized, and deprived of basic amenities and social security. The paper suggests policy-level interventions to improve their living standards and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

Keywords: Informal Sector, Labour Conditions, Migration, Socio-Economic Status, Brick Industry Workers.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The brick industry is an essential component of the construction sector, contributing significantly to infrastructure development and economic growth. It provides employment opportunities to a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled labourers, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions. However, despite its economic importance, the brick industry largely operates within the informal sector, lacking proper regulation, legal protection, and organized labour systems (Das, 2017).

Workers in the brick industry often face multiple forms of exploitation, including low wages, long working hours, and hazardous working conditions. Their earnings are generally based on productivity, which compels them to engage in excessive physical labour under extreme environmental conditions such as heat, dust, and pollution. Additionally, the absence of social security benefits such as healthcare, insurance, and job stability further increases their vulnerability (Sain, 2019; Berumen-Rodríguez, 2023).

In India, brick kiln workers are predominantly migrant labourers who move seasonally in search of employment. Migration is often family-based, and workers come from economically backward and marginalized communities. Due

to limited education and lack of alternative livelihood opportunities, they are forced to accept poor working conditions and low wages (Roy, 2018; Khan, 2015).

Women constitute a significant portion of the workforce in the brick industry and are actively involved in labour-intensive tasks such as molding, carrying, and drying bricks. Despite their contribution, they often receive lower wages than men and face gender-based discrimination. Moreover, they bear a dual burden of wage labour and household responsibilities, which adversely affects their physical and mental well-being (Khan, 2015).

Previous studies have also highlighted that brick kiln activities have environmental and land-use impacts, along with socio-economic consequences for workers and surrounding communities (Singh, 2005). Similarly, research conducted in Karad Tahsil has emphasized the health problems, migration patterns, and socio-economic hardships faced by brick industry workers (Pund & Patil, 2020; Pund, 2023).

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the socio-economic conditions of brick industry workers in Karad Tahsil, focusing on income, living conditions, health, education, migration, and access to government welfare

schemes. Understanding these aspects is essential for suggesting effective policy interventions and improving the quality of life of workers in the informal sector.

II. STUDY AREA

Karad Tahsil is located in the southern part of Satara district in Maharashtra. It lies between 73°58'51" to

74°18'03" East longitude and 17°05'34" to 17°32'00" North latitude. (Fig. 1) The region is situated in the Krishna and Koyna river basin and forms part of the Sahyadri range.

The tahsil covers an area of 1039 km², with 1001 km² rural and 37.81 km² urban area. It has an average elevation of about 600 meters. The geographical setting supports brick industry activities due to the availability of clay and labour.

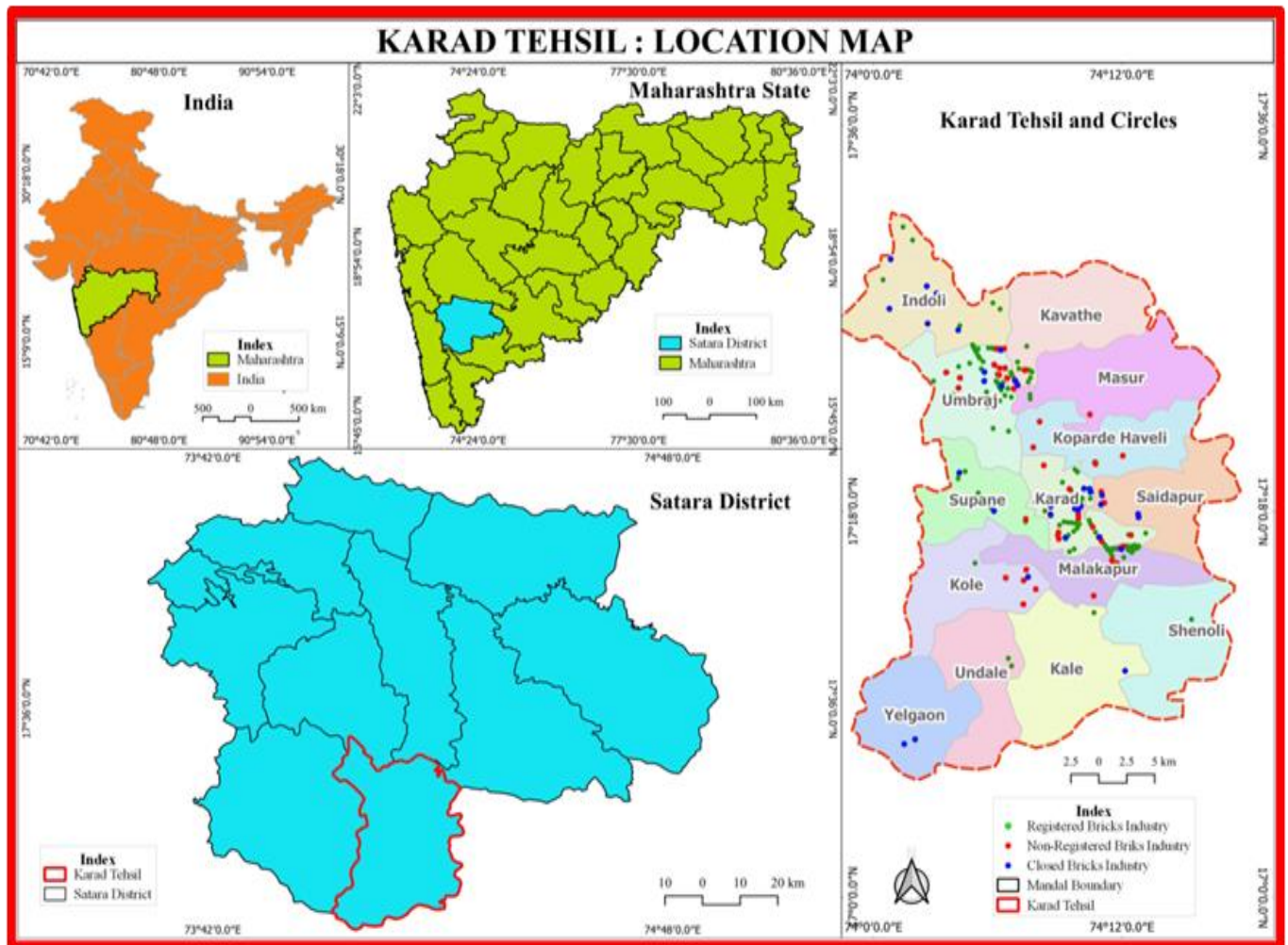


Fig. 1 Karad Tahsil

➤ Objectives

- To examine the socio-economic conditions of brick industry workers in Karad Tahsil
- To analyze awareness and access to government welfare schemes
- To identify major problems and suggest suitable policy measures

III. METHODOLOGY

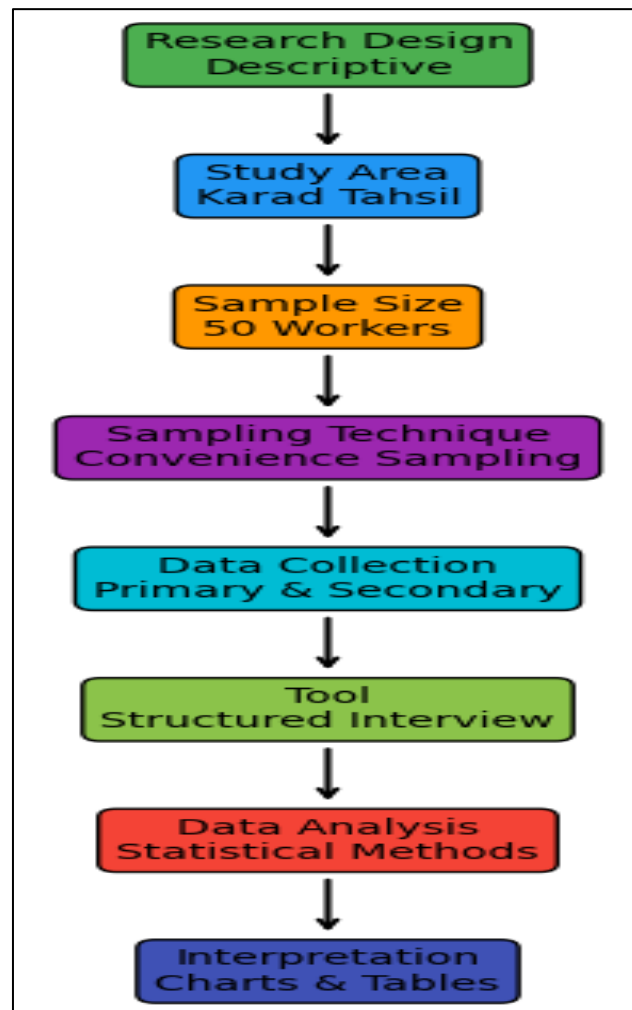


Fig. 2 Research design

IV. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF BRICK INDUSTRY WORKERS

The socio-economic conditions of brick industry workers in Karad Tahsil reflect a pattern of deprivation, vulnerability, and marginalization. These conditions are shaped by multiple factors such as age structure, income levels, housing facilities, and access to welfare schemes. The majority of workers belong to economically weaker sections and are engaged in physically demanding labour under informal employment arrangements.

➤ Age Structure

The age composition of workers indicates that the brick industry largely depends on young labour. **(Photo plate 1)** Around 62% of workers fall in the 18–35 age group, highlighting the labour-intensive nature of the work. The middle-aged group (36–50 years) constitutes 28%, while only 10% are above 50 years. The declining participation of older workers suggests the physically strenuous nature of brick kiln activities and the absence of long-term occupational sustainability.



Photo Plate 1

➤ Income Level

The income pattern clearly indicates economic instability and poverty among workers. Nearly 60% of workers earn less than ₹30,000 annually, which is insufficient to meet basic household needs. About 30% earn between ₹30,000 and ₹50,000, reflecting modest earnings with limited financial security. Only 10% earn above ₹50,000, indicating a very small proportion of relatively better-off workers. The wage system based on productivity, along with seasonal employment, contributes to irregular income and financial vulnerability.

➤ Living Conditions

The living conditions of brick industry workers are highly inadequate and reflect poor quality of life. **(Photo plate 2)** About 96% of workers reside in temporary (kachha) houses, lacking basic amenities such as sanitation, clean drinking water, electricity, and proper waste management. These conditions expose workers to multiple health risks and environmental hazards. Only 4% of workers live in pucca houses, indicating limited economic stability among a small section.



Photo Plate 2

➤ Access to Government Welfare Schemes

Access to government welfare schemes among workers remains significantly low. Only 40% of workers are aware of such schemes, while 60% lack awareness. Even among those who are aware, actual utilization is minimal due to procedural complexities, lack of documentation, and migration-related challenges. This reflects a gap between policy provisions and ground-level implementation.

➤ Key Findings of the Study

The study reveals several critical insights into the socio-economic status of brick industry workers in Karad Tahsil:

- The workforce is predominantly young, indicating high physical labour dependency
- Workers belong mainly to socially and economically marginalized communities

- Income levels are low, unstable, and insufficient for basic needs
- Living conditions are poor, with lack of basic amenities
- Health issues are common due to exposure to dust, heat, and strenuous work
- Women workers face gender inequality, wage discrimination, and dual responsibilities
- Seasonal migration disrupts children's education and social stability
- Awareness and accessibility of government welfare schemes are limited

➤ *Problems Identified*

The study identifies several structural and systemic problems faced by brick industry workers:

- **Economic Exploitation:** Low wages, absence of minimum wage enforcement, and dependency on productivity-based payment systems
- **Lack of Social Security:** Absence of insurance, pension schemes, and job security
- **Poor Health Conditions:** Continuous exposure to dust, heat, and physically demanding tasks without adequate medical facilities
- **Educational Disruption:** Irregular schooling and high dropout rates among children due to migration
- **Gender Inequality:** Women face wage disparity, lack of recognition, and additional domestic burden
- **Seasonal Migration:** Leads to instability in livelihood, education, and access to services

These problems highlight the vulnerability of workers within the informal sector and the need for structural reforms.

V. SUGGESTIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the socio-economic conditions of brick industry workers, the following measures are recommended:

- Effective implementation and monitoring of labour laws
- Provision of accessible healthcare services, mobile health camps, and insurance coverage
- Establishment of educational support systems for migrant children
- Awareness campaigns to improve access to government welfare schemes
- Simplification of documentation and procedures for scheme benefits
- Promotion of alternative livelihood opportunities to reduce dependency on seasonal work
- Ensuring gender equality through equal wages and support systems for women workers
- Development of basic infrastructure such as housing, sanitation, and drinking water facilities

VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that brick industry workers in Karad Tahsil are socio-economically marginalized and deprived of basic human necessities. Their condition reflects the broader realities of the informal sector, characterized by economic insecurity, poor living standards, lack of social protection, and limited access to welfare schemes. The persistence of these issues indicates structural inequalities and inadequate policy implementation.

There is an urgent need for comprehensive and inclusive policy interventions that focus on improving labour conditions, ensuring social security, and enhancing access to basic services. Sustainable development of the brick industry must prioritize the welfare and dignity of workers, ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and equitable.

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