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SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF GRANITE INDUSTRY WORKERS IN ILKAL TALUK, BAGALKOT DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT
The granite industry plays a vital role in the economic development of Karnataka by providing employment to thousands of workers, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. This study focuses on understanding the problems and prospects of labourers working in the granite industry of Bagalkot district, with special reference to Ilkal taluk. The research is descriptive in nature and is based on primary data collected from 251 labourers through a structured questionnaire using the KoBo Toolbox platform. The data were analyzed using simple statistical tools such as percentages and averages. The findings reveal that most of the labourers belong to socially and economically weaker sections, with limited education, insecure jobs, and poor housing conditions. Though a few have access to basic amenities and steady income, the overall working and living conditions remain challenging. The study highlights the need for better welfare measures, skill development, and social protection to improve the livelihood and job security of granite industry workers in the region.
KEYWORDS: *Granite industry, Labourers, Bagalkot district, Ilkal taluk, Socio-economic conditions, Employment, Job security, KoBo Toolbox*

1. INTRODUCTION

The granite industry is one of the significant sectors contributing to the economic development of Karnataka, providing large-scale employment to thousands of workers, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Bagalkot district, known for its rich deposits of high-quality granite, has emerged as an important hub for quarrying, cutting, and polishing activities. The industry not only supports local livelihoods but also contributes to the district's revenue through exports and allied services. However, despite its economic importance, the condition of labourers engaged in this sector remains a matter of concern. Most of the workers are employed in the unorganized segment, characterized by low wages, long working hours, unsafe working conditions, and lack of social security benefits. The present study titled "Problems and Prospects of Labourers in the Granite Industry in Karnataka: A Case Study of Bagalkot District" aims to examine the socio-economic background of the workers, their employment pattern, working conditions, access to welfare measures, and future prospects. The study is based on primary data collected from labourers across different social categories working in various granite units of Bagalkot. It seeks to highlight disparities in education, housing, land ownership, job security, and access to basic amenities, which together shape the overall quality of life of these workers. By analyzing their problems and identifying areas for policy intervention, the study attempts to provide insights that can help improve the living and working conditions of granite industry labourers and promote inclusive industrial development in the region.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The granite industry, as part of the broader mining sector, plays an important role in generating employment and supporting rural livelihoods. However, several studies have revealed that labourers engaged in this industry often face poor working conditions, low wages, and inadequate social security.

According to Rao (2015), the stone and granite sector in Karnataka provides significant employment opportunities, particularly to workers from marginalized communities, but most of them remain in the informal segment with minimal legal protection. The study highlights that occupational hazards, irregular income, and lack of access to welfare benefits continue to affect workers' economic stability and health. Similarly, Singh and Tiwari

(2017) examined the socio-economic conditions of stone quarry workers in Rajasthan and found that the majority were uneducated and employed on a daily wage basis, with limited safety measures at worksites.

Nagaraj and Manjunath (2018) observed that quarry workers in northern Karnataka live in poor housing conditions and lack access to basic amenities such as clean drinking water and sanitation. Their study further pointed out that child labour and gender disparities are common in the industry, with women workers receiving lower wages than their male counterparts. Sharma (2019) emphasized that the mining industry, though economically beneficial, contributes to environmental degradation and social insecurity among the working population due to lack of regulation and enforcement of labour laws.

In a related study, Deshpande (2020) analyzed the impact of informal labour relations in the stone industry of South India and concluded that labourers have little bargaining power, often working without written contracts or safety provisions. Patel and Joshi (2021) further highlighted that social groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities are overrepresented in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, indicating deep-rooted social inequalities within the sector.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to understand the problems and prospects of labourers working in the granite industry of Bagalkot district, with a special focus on Ilkal taluk, which is known for its granite production. The study is descriptive in nature and is based entirely on primary data collected from 251 labourers using a structured questionnaire designed in the KoBo Toolbox digital platform. The questionnaire included questions on education, housing, land ownership, nature of work, income, job security, and access to basic amenities.

The respondents were selected using simple random sampling from different social groups such as General, OBC, SC, ST, and Minorities to ensure fair representation. Data were collected through personal interviews in English and Kannada for better understanding and accuracy. The collected data were exported to Microsoft Excel and analyzed using simple statistical tools like percentages and averages. Although the study is limited to Ilkal taluk, it provides a clear understanding of the socio-economic conditions and employment situation of labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Educational Qualification of Labourers in the Granite Industry by Social Category

Social Cat	Illiterate	Primary Education (1 to 7th)	Upper Primary (8th to 10th)	PUC	Diploma	Degree	Grand Total
General	4.2	4.2	12.5	33.3	8.3	37.5	100
Minority	3.2	48.4	35.5	9.7	0.0	3.2	100
OBC	6.5	30.6	28.7	29.6	0.0	4.6	100
SC	29.6	33.3	24.1	11.1	1.9	0.0	100
ST	14.7	26.5	26.5	23.5	2.9	5.9	100
Total	12.0	30.3	26.7	22.7	1.6	6.8	100

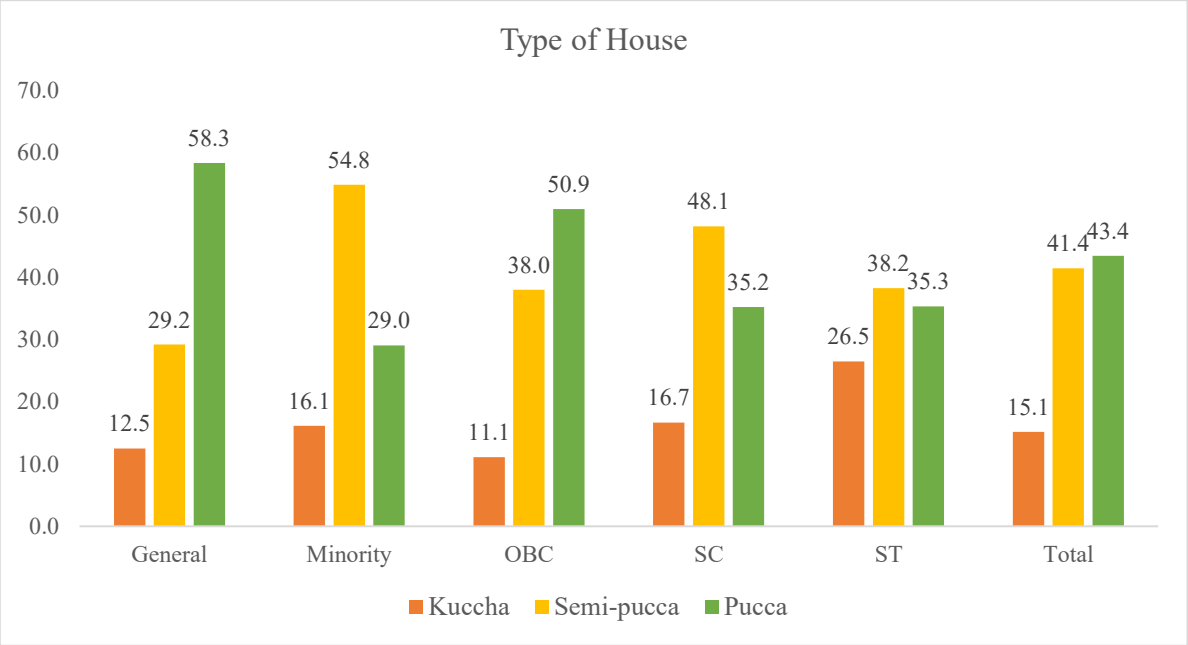
Source: field survey

Table 1: The educational profile of labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district reveals significant variation across social categories. Overall, about 12 percent of the respondents are illiterate, while the majority possess only basic schooling, with 30.3 percent having primary education and 26.7 percent completing upper primary levels. A smaller proportion, 22.7 percent, have attained pre-university education (PUC), whereas only 1.6 percent and 6.8 percent have completed diploma and degree education respectively, indicating limited access to higher education among the workforce. Caste-wise analysis shows that illiteracy is relatively high among Scheduled Castes (29.6%) and Scheduled Tribes (14.7%), reflecting their educational disadvantage. In contrast, labourers belonging to the General category exhibit a relatively better educational profile, with 37.5 percent being degree holders and 33.3 percent having completed PUC. Among the OBC and Minority groups, the majority have studied up to the primary and upper primary levels, but very few have pursued higher studies. Overall, the data suggests that a large section of the granite industry workforce is confined to lower levels of education, which may restrict their opportunities for skill enhancement and economic mobility.

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Figure 1: The data on the type of housing among labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district reflects the overall living standards and economic conditions of different social categories. It is observed that 15.1 percent of respondents live in kuccha houses, 41.4 percent in semi-pucca houses, and 43.4 percent in pucca houses, indicating that a considerable proportion of workers still reside in semi-permanent structures. Among the social categories, labourers from the General and OBC groups enjoy relatively better housing conditions, with 58.3 percent and 50.9 percent respectively living in pucca houses.

Figure 1: Type of House Occupied by Labourers in the Granite Industry by Social Category



Source: field survey

On the other hand, a significant share of Minority (54.8%), SC (48.1%), and ST (38.2%) respondents live in semi-pucca houses, reflecting moderate living standards. The ST group also shows the highest proportion (26.5%) of kuccha houses, suggesting poor housing conditions compared to others. Overall, the data highlights that while some labourers, particularly from higher social groups, have managed to secure permanent housing, a large section of workers—especially from marginalized communities—continue to live in less durable structures, revealing socio-economic disparities within the granite industry workforce.

Table 2: Access to Basic Amenities

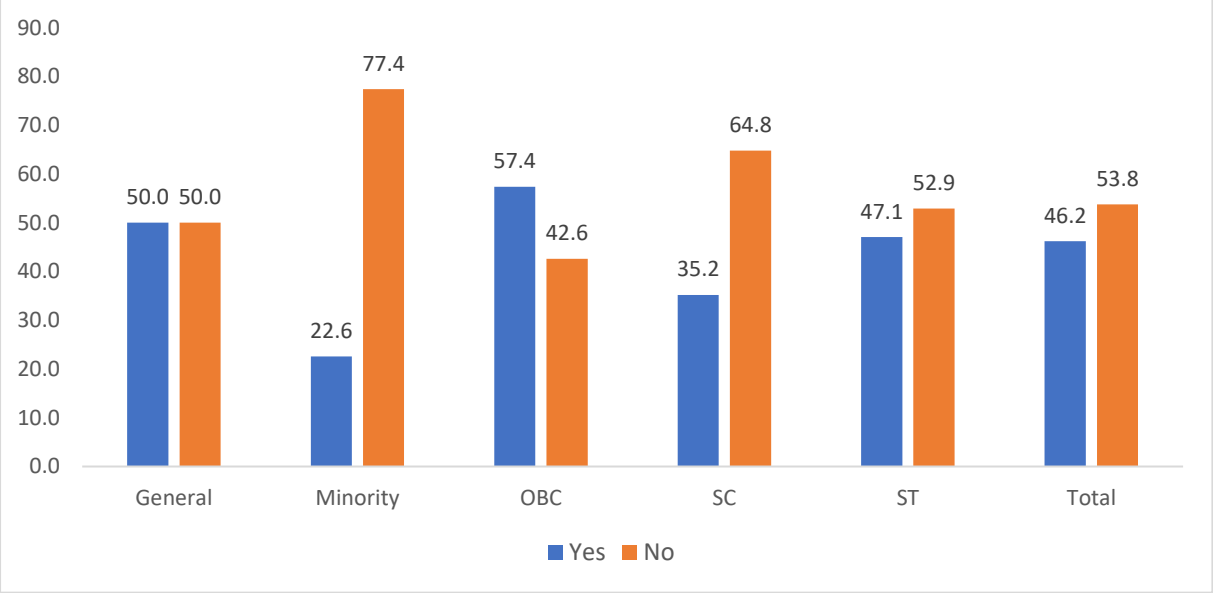
Category	Electricity	Drinking Water	Toilet Facility	LPG Gas
General	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Minority	100.0	90.3	96.8	93.5
OBC	99.1	95.4	77.8	88.9
SC	100.0	81.5	83.3	94.4
ST	100.0	97.1	85.3	94.1
Total	99.6	92.4	84.5	92.4

Source: field survey

Table 2, The data on access to basic amenities among labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district indicates a generally satisfactory level of household infrastructure, though disparities exist across social categories. Nearly all respondents (99.6%) have access to electricity, showing widespread electrification among the workforce. Access to drinking water is available to 92.4 percent of labourers, but the proportion is relatively lower among the Scheduled Caste (81.5%) households, indicating certain gaps in water availability. Regarding toilet facilities, only 84.5 percent of respondents reported having access, with the lowest coverage observed among OBC (77.8%) and SC (83.3%) groups, suggesting sanitation challenges for marginalized sections. Similarly, 92.4 percent of households use LPG gas for cooking, reflecting a substantial shift towards cleaner energy sources, though full coverage is achieved only among the General category. Overall, while the provision of electricity and LPG is nearly universal, the data highlights that access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities remains uneven, particularly among socially disadvantaged groups.

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Figure 2: Land Ownership Status of Labourers in the Granite Industry by Social Category



Source: field survey

Figure 2, The data on land ownership among labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district reveals that a slight majority (53.8%) of the respondents do not possess any land, while 46.2 percent own some form of landholding. This indicates that a considerable section of the workforce remains landless and economically dependent on wage labour. Among the social categories, OBC labourers show the highest level of land ownership (57.4%), followed by General (50%) and ST (47.1%) groups. In contrast, landlessness is more prevalent among Minority (77.4%) and Scheduled Caste (64.8%) labourers, reflecting their weaker asset base and socio-economic vulnerability. The overall pattern suggests that while nearly half of the labourers possess land, the size and utility of these holdings may be limited, and landlessness remains a major concern, particularly among marginalized social groups engaged in the granite industry.

Table 3: Nature of Work Performed by Labourers in the Granite Industry by Social Category

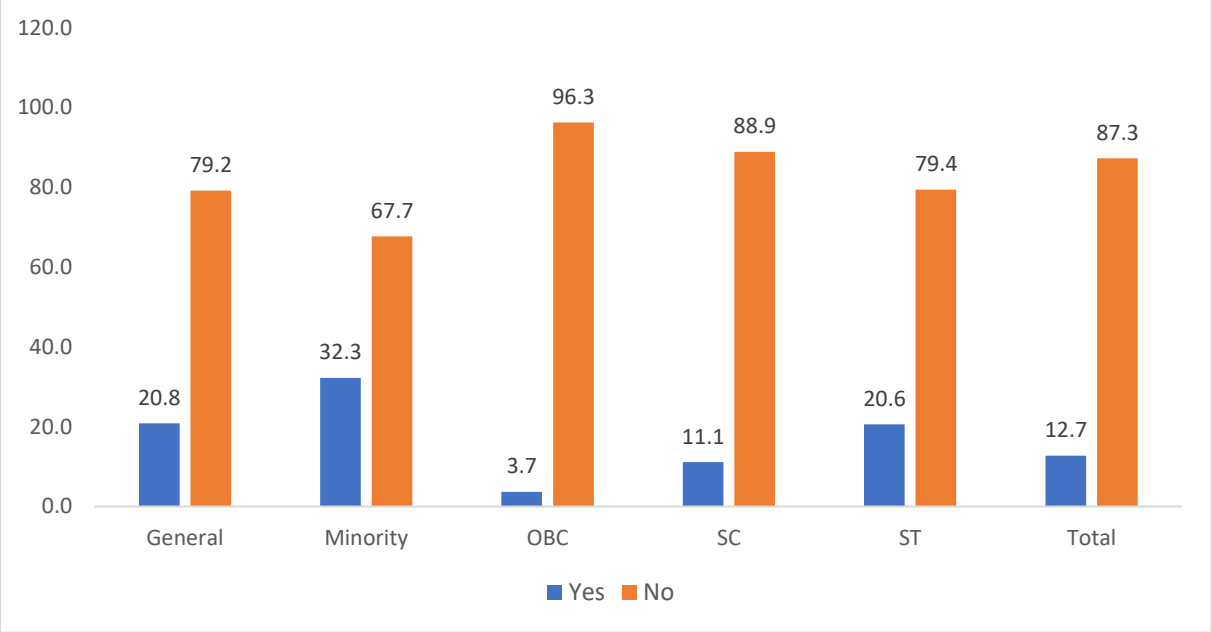
Row Labels	Labour supervisor	Machine operator	Quarrying work	Stone cutter and polisher	Stone marker	Vehicle driver	Other	Grand Total
General	33.3	12.5	12.5	8.3	4.2	25.0	4.2	100.0
Minority	6.5	3.2	54.8	9.7	0.0	25.8	0.0	100.0
OBC	6.5	18.5	51.9	13.9	0.9	7.4	0.9	100.0
SC	1.9	11.1	68.5	7.4	1.9	7.4	1.9	100.0
ST	5.9	8.8	55.9	23.5	0.0	5.9	0.0	100.0
Total	8.0	13.1	52.6	12.7	1.2	11.2	1.2	100.0

Source: field survey

Table 3, The data on the nature of work among labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district highlights the occupational distribution across different social categories. It is evident that quarrying work is the dominant form of employment, engaging about 52.6 percent of all respondents. This is followed by machine operation (13.1%), stone cutting and polishing (12.7%), and vehicle driving (11.2%), while only a small proportion work as labour supervisors (8%) or in other minor roles. Caste-wise analysis shows that Scheduled Castes (68.5%), Scheduled Tribes (55.9%), and Minority (54.8%) groups are heavily concentrated in quarrying activities, indicating their dependence on hard manual labour. In contrast, General category workers are more represented in supervisory (33.3%) and vehicle driving (25%) roles, which are relatively less physically demanding and better remunerated. OBC labourers also show some diversification, with 18.5 percent employed as machine operators and 13.9 percent as stone cutters. Overall, the occupational pattern suggests a clear social hierarchy within the granite industry, where marginalized groups are largely engaged in strenuous quarrying work, while workers from higher social categories hold more skilled or supervisory positions.

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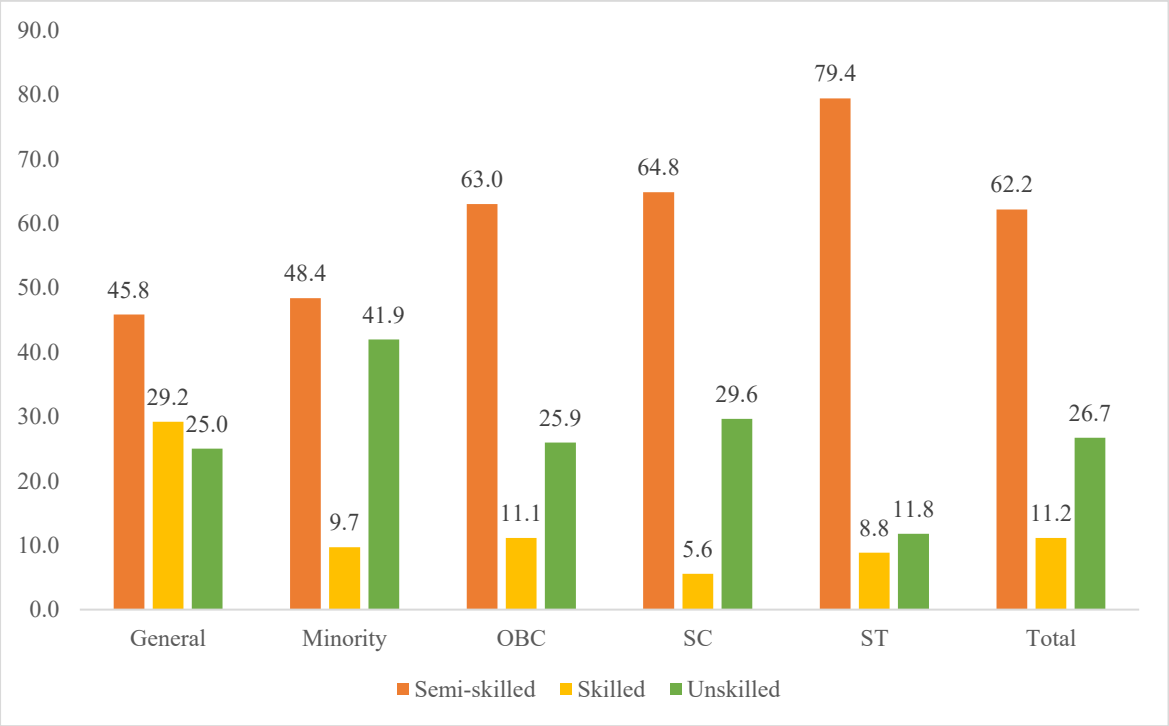
Figure 3: Migration Status of Labourers in the Granite Industry by Social Category



Source: field survey

Figure 3, The data on migration status among labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district indicates that a majority of the workers are non-migrants (87.3%), while only 12.7 percent have migrated from other places in search of employment. This suggests that the granite industry largely draws its workforce from the local population, with limited dependence on migrant labour. Among the different social categories, Minority (32.3%), General (20.8%), and ST (20.6%) workers show relatively higher levels of migration, reflecting their greater mobility and possibly limited livelihood options in their native areas. In contrast, OBC (3.7%) and SC (11.1%) groups are predominantly local residents, indicating that they rely on nearby quarry units for regular employment. Overall, the data reveals that while migration into the granite industry exists, it is not extensive, and the sector primarily provides livelihood opportunities to the local labour force of Bagalkot district.

Figure 4: Job Category of Labourers in the Granite Industry by Social Category



Source: field survey

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Figure 4, The data on job categories among labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district reveals that the majority of workers are engaged in semi-skilled occupations (62.2%), followed by unskilled (26.7%) and skilled (11.2%) categories. This indicates that most labourers possess some degree of technical ability or practical experience, though relatively few have achieved higher skill levels. Caste-wise analysis shows that Scheduled Tribe (79.4%) and Scheduled Caste (64.8%) workers are predominantly employed in semi-skilled jobs, reflecting their strong involvement in physically demanding and repetitive quarrying tasks that require practical, on-site experience rather than formal training. The OBC (63%) group also shows a similar pattern, while Minority workers have a significant share of unskilled labour (41.9%), suggesting lower access to skill development opportunities. In contrast, General category labourers are more evenly distributed across all levels, with 29.2 percent in skilled work—higher than other groups—indicating better access to technical or supervisory roles. Overall, the data suggests that while semi-skilled work dominates the sector, opportunities for skill upgrading and specialization remain limited, particularly among marginalized communities.

Table 4: Mode of Payment to Labourers in the Granite Industry by Social Category

Row Labels	Daily wages	Fixed salary	Incentives/Commission-based	Grand Total
General	16.7	83.3	0.0	100.0
Minority	25.8	74.2	0.0	100.0
OBC	40.7	59.3	0.0	100.0
SC	40.7	57.4	1.9	100.0
ST	26.5	73.5	0.0	100.0
Total	34.7	64.9	0.4	100.0

Source: field work

Table 4, The data on the mode of payment among labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district shows that the majority of workers receive a fixed salary (64.9%), while 34.7 percent are paid on a daily wage basis, and only 0.4 percent earn through incentives or commission-based systems. This indicates that most workers have relatively stable earning arrangements, though a significant section continues to depend on daily wages. Among different social categories, a higher proportion of General (83.3%), Minority (74.2%), and ST (73.5%) workers receive fixed salaries, suggesting better job stability and possibly regular employment. In contrast, OBC (40.7%) and SC (40.7%) workers have a larger share of daily wage earners, reflecting their greater economic insecurity and irregular employment patterns. The minimal presence of incentive-based payment highlights the limited scope for performance-linked rewards in the industry. Overall, while fixed salaries are the dominant payment method, the persistence of daily wage work among marginalized groups points to inequalities in employment security within the granite sector.

Table 5: Perception of Job Security among Labourers in the Granite Industry by Social Category

Row Labels	It is seasonal work	No, it is insecure	Yes, fully secure	Grand Total
General	20.8	45.8	33.3	100.0
Minority	12.9	83.9	3.2	100.0
OBC	13.0	82.4	4.6	100.0
SC	16.7	81.5	1.9	100.0
ST	20.6	70.6	8.8	100.0
Total	15.5	77.3	7.2	100.0

Source: field work

The data on job security perception among labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district reveals a high degree of employment instability. A vast majority of workers (**77.3%**) consider their jobs insecure, while only 7.2 percent feel their employment is fully secure. Another 15.5 percent of respondents describe their work as seasonal, reflecting the irregular nature of quarry-based activities. Among different social categories, the perception of insecurity is particularly high among Minority (83.9%), OBC (82.4%), and SC (81.5%) labourers, suggesting that workers from these groups experience greater employment uncertainty. In contrast, a relatively higher proportion of General category (33.3%) and ST (8.8%) respondents report their jobs as secure, indicating somewhat better or more stable work arrangements. Overall, the data highlights that the granite industry in Bagalkot district is largely characterized by informal and unstable employment, with limited job security, especially among marginalized communities who rely on quarrying and daily wage labour.

5. Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

To improve the socio-economic conditions of granite industry labourers in Bagalkot district, targeted skill development programs should be implemented to enhance workers' vocational and technical competencies,

particularly focusing on marginalized communities such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Minorities. This would enable greater access to skilled and supervisory roles, promoting social equity and economic mobility. Comprehensive welfare schemes addressing healthcare, housing, sanitation, and educational support must be expanded and actively monitored to ensure effective outreach and benefits for all labourers, with special emphasis on the disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, the industry should prioritize enforcing health and safety regulations by mandating regular workplace inspections, provision of protective equipment, and compulsory health check-ups to mitigate occupational hazards faced by labourers.

Strengthening job security through formal employment contracts and encouraging fixed salary payment modes over daily wage arrangements will reduce employment precarity and improve livelihood stability. Investments in infrastructure are necessary to ensure universal access to clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and permanent housing, especially among socially vulnerable workers.

Lastly, affirmative actions or inclusion policies aimed at increasing representation of marginalized communities in skilled and supervisory positions can foster a more inclusive and sustainable granite sector. These recommendations collectively aim to promote equitable development, social protection, and improved quality of life for granite industry labourers.

Overall, the study on the problems and prospects of labourers in the granite industry of Bagalkot district, with special focus on Ilkal taluk, highlights the difficult living and working conditions faced by the workers. Most of them belong to economically weaker and socially backward sections, with limited education and low job security. Although the granite industry provides regular employment and supports local livelihoods, many labourers still depend on daily wages and lack access to proper housing and welfare facilities. The findings show that the benefits of industrial growth have not equally reached all sections of the workforce. To improve their situation, there is a need for better implementation of labour welfare schemes, regular health and safety measures, and opportunities for skill development. Ensuring fair wages and job security can make the granite industry more inclusive and sustainable, contributing to both economic and social development in the region.

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