



A STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN BEEDI WORKERS IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT—

The central idea of this paper is to explore link between socio-economic positions of workers working in unorganized sector with special reference to beedi rolling. In India, Beedi making is an age old industry and one of the largest job providers for women in the unorganized sector. Women are having inherent advantage in this job of beedi rolling due to deft recent year the trade is shrinking thus there is situation of underemployment.



fingers; yet significant gender bias exists. The job is mainly done by weaker economic class in the country who don't have adequate education and skill to look for alternate job. The work of beedi rolling is preferred by the women because it can be carried from home along with domestic chores. Thus, they supplement family income along with managing the household jobs. However, in the

KEYWORDS: Beedi, Exploitation, Health Hazards.

INTRODUCTION

A beedi is a thin South Asian cigarette made of 0.2-0.3 gram of tobacco flake wrapped in a Tendu leaf and secured with coloured thread at both ends. Beedi rolling is done in almost all major states of India and it takes mainly in a home-based un-organised sector, with sub-contractors playing the main role for the principal beedi manufactures. There are about 300 major manufactures of branded beedis but there are thousands of small scale manufacturers cum contractors who account for the bulk of the beedi production in India. As it is a cheap form of tobacco consumption, it is extremely popular among the non-affluent but it carries greater risks as it delivers more nicotine, carbon monoxide and tar than conventional cigarettes. Beedi rolling is a popular small-scale industry in Tamil Nadu, India. A special feature of the beedi industry is that the work is done through contractors and by distributing work in private dwelling houses where the workers take the raw material given by the contractors and handover the finished products to him. It is an arduous, labour intensive work because each beedi is rolled individually.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

As an agro-based industry beedi manufacturing activity expand the backward and forward linkages like agriculture and marketing activities respectively. Beedi industry is one of the female oriented industries in India which employs more than 90 percent female workers. The structure of beedi workers constitutes the male, female and children workers. All the workers are poor and uneducated. All of them roll beedis at their

respective homes only and supply them to the nearby factories. Since they are working as regular and casual labours, they are facing a number of problems in relation to work, security, wage, health and other problems

OBJECTIVES:

Following are the objectives of the present study about the socio-economic conditions of beedi rolling workers in Tirunelveli district.

- To understand the socio-economic background of beedi workers.
- To examine the working condition of beedi workers.
- To find out the problems of the beedi workers.

METHODOLOGY:

The area of the study chosen is Tirunelveli district and the study is a descriptive one. 100 samples are chosen by simple random method. Data for study have been collected from primary data using the questionnaire in the study area and the secondary data is collected from government publications and research articles in various journals and website.

BEEDI INDUSTRY IN TAMIL NADU:

The beedi industry in Tamil Nadu remains largely concentrated in the district of Chennai, North Arcot, Tiruchirapalli, and Tirunelveli and relatively in small numbers in Dharmapuri and Kanyakumari district. In Tirunelveli district, Melapalayam and Mukkudal in the rural Ambusamudhram Taluk is the oldest areas of beedi industry in the district. Today, making beedi in factory or workshops is totally non-existent. Instead it is done through contractors and sub-contractors employing home based workers. In Tirunelveli, Tirunelveli is being as considered conducive for entrepreneurs to start industries. The beedi manufacturing companies passes the trademark to manufacture and sell beedis. At present they produce through contractors and sub-contractors. At present there are more than 40 such trademark holding companies and owned 1100 contractors and sub-contractors in the Tirunelveli District.

By employing a system of production using contractors, the beedi companies are able to gain tremendous profit with very little inputs in term of infrastructure and comprehensive benefits to labour. It is at this level the manipulation by the employers becomes visible. In the system of contracting out the production, two things are visible. One, where the trademark holding company provides raw material to contractors and they issue the tobacco and the leaves to the workers at the village level and collect the finished products and deliver it to company shops managed by the contractors at the village. The sub-contractors are referred to as commission agents.

BEEDI INDUSTRY IN TIRUNELVELI:

The beedi industry was established 75 years ago in the Tirunelveli district. It has a major beedi manufacturing company such as Kajah, Seyathu beedi and King beedi. The Kajah beedi trademark holding company is called Parley & Company. It has 47 contractors at the village who are known as company shop. The company provide raw material to the sub-contractors who maintain link with the workers. All the trademark holding company has their headquarters for the district at Tirunelveli, Melapalayam and Mukkudal. Raw materials are obtained from the states such as Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Gujarat and Karnataka.

In Melapalayam area, there are ten beedi companies providing more than thousand employment opportunities to the nearby village women. The well-established ones are Arasanbeedi company, Ganesanbeedi company, Kajahbeedi company, Jothimaanbeedi company, Chandrikabeedi company, Ten number beedi company, Guruvanibeedi company, Five Mark beedi company, Seyathubeedi company

WORKINGCONDITIONS:

About 90% of beedi workers are women working in factories or homes and their unacceptability for exploitation. In spite of the several legal implications are in practice , conditions continue to be far from satisfactory. Labour laws are evaded by the middlemen, contractors, manufacturers by resorting to various tactics. In a nutshell:

- In view of the operation of middle men, no employer-employee relation is established.
- The conditions under which the women beedi rollers work is very poor and unhygienic.
- Most of them live in one small room where they do the beedi work as also cook, and sleep.
- Children are exposed to all the hazards of tobacco.
- The wages are not only not paid on time but not fully paid. The signatures are obtained on an amount higher than the amount paid. Should any worker dare to challenge this, they are threatened and may lose work and hence whatever little they earn.
- Even very small girls- as young as 4, are engaged in the trade. They begin with unwinding of the thread which needs no expertise.
- Most of the workers are not given identity cards or other documents which are required for obtaining benefits under the law.
- There is an utter lack of awareness of the laws as well. However, even if some awareness is there, the industry being home based, the workers are scattered and collective action is difficult.

The worst part however is that helplessness and poverty- with no alternative work prospects- impels them to suffer in silence.

DATAINTERPRETATION:

TABLE: 1 Age wise classification of respondents

S.NO	Age group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	25-30	10	10
2	31-35	23	23
3	36-40	23	23
4	41-45	16	16
5	46-50	18	18
6	Above 50	10	10
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

It is inferred from the above table that majority of the respondents belong to the age group of 31-40.

TABLE: 2 Gender Wise Classification of the respondents

S.NO	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Male	0	0
2	Female	100	100
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

It is very interesting to find that no male members are engaged in the beedi rolling and only female are doing this work.

TABLE: 3 Classification on the basis of Educational Level of the Respondents

S.NO	Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Illiterate	7	7
2	Primary School	42	42
3	Middle School	49	49
4	Hr. Sec. School	2	2
5	Graduation	0	0
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

According to table 3, 49% of the respondents have completed education of middle school level followed by primary school of 42%. It is noteworthy that graduated are not doing this job.

TABLE: 4 DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON HOURS OF WORK IN A DAY

S.NO	Hours of work	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 2 hours	4	4
2	2-4 hours	5	5
3	4-6 hours	46	46
4	6-8 hours	28	28
5	More than 8 hours	17	17
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

It is noted from the above table that 46% of the respondents are doing this job for 4-6 hours. So, it may be concluded that, this has been taken as a part-time job.

TABLE:5 CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON NUMER OF WORKING DAYS IN A WEEK

S.NO	Days of work	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 2 days	10	10
2	2-4 days	30	30
3	4-6 days	50	50
4	All days in a week	10	10
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

Table. 5 shows that 50% of the respondents are performing this work for a maximum of six days in a week.

TABLE:6 CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES

S.N O	Social Security Schemes	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Employment Provident Fund	25	25
2	Maternity benefit	20	20
3	Payment of bonus	20	20
4	Payment of Gratuity	13	13
5	Payment of DA as separate component	10	10
6	Group insurance	12	12
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

From the above table, we can infer that 25% of the respondents are aware of the employment provident fund and have enrolled in it. And, equally 20% are known about the fruits of maternity benefit scheme and bonus.

TABLE: 7 CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON HEALTH AFFECTED

S.NO	Affected by Health problems	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	89	89
2	No	11	11
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

It is surprising to see that 89% of the respondents are affected by beedi rolling though they know the health hazards associated with this job.

TABLE: 8 CLASSIFICATION ON THE RESPONDENTS BASED FAMILY INCOME

S.NO	Family income (Rs)	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 3000	08	8
2	3001-5000	16	16
3	5001-7000	44	44
4	Above 7000	32	32
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

44% of the respondents are earning income in the band of Rs.5001- Rs.7000 and 32% are earning above Rs.7000

TABLE: 9 CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON HEALTH PROBLEMS

S.NO	Health problems	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	No problem	11	11
2	Back pain	35	35
3	Breathing issue	37	37
4	Eye problems	10	10
5	General problems	07	07
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

It is noticed from the above table that 37% of the respondents are ailing from breathing problems and 35% suffers from back pain as they are doing the work bending forward.

TABLE: 10 CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON PURPOSE OF JOB

S.No	Purpose for doing the job	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Earn livelihood for family	43	43
2	Financial Security	33	33
3	Education of Children	20	20
4	Marriage of Daughter	3	3
5	To Improve the Standard of Living	1	1
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

Majority of the population is doing this job for their livelihood as they are not able to get other jobs.

TABLE: 11 CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON CHOOSING THIS JOB

S.No	Reasons for choosing beedi rolling job	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Easy to learn	28	28
2	Manageable with household work	50	50
3	No alternate source	11	11
4	Easy Source of livelihood	11	11
Total		100	100

SOURCE: Primary data

Table :10 shows that 50% of the respondents have chosen this job as it is manageable with other household work (as an side income).

CONCLUSION:

People who are engaged in Beedi work are facing serious problems including poverty, health hazard, family problems, poor housing facilities, insufficient nutritious food, unhygienic the environment, illiteracy, physical stress and debts etc. the researcher is keen to learn about the conditions of beedi workers. Women Beedi workers are not aware of the welfare schemes as they are not well educated. They are deprived of their basic rights and they are exploited by the contractors. So there is an urgent need to protect the Beedi workers to overcome their life because this job involves high degree of health hazardness .This study has proved that 89percent of the respondents are affected by one problem or the other. So The findings of the study will be useful to the Government and the NGOs who are working for the development of the unorganised sector and promote the welfare of beedi workers and protect their rights.

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