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A STUDY ON THE SOCIO - ECONOMIC STATUS OF SALTPAN WORKERS IN TUTICORIN DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT:

Experimental just as the operational salt field in India is work driven regardless they utilize customary techniques for salt production. A pilot review was conducted at Thoothukudi district in March 2019 to assess the current social and wellbeing status of the workers relying upon salt generation to help their job. The salt workers employed for over 5 years as contract labour and on daily wages. The overview uncovered that an impressive extent of workers utilized in salt works is women when compared with men. Workers had different word related medical issues. They live with an insignificant wellspring of pay just as there is an

absence of social and wellbeing safety. Broad field look into with the qualitative and quantitative investigation is required in this area. Furthermore, there is a requirement for awareness program with respect to the wellbeing and safety of the workers in this area.

KEYWORDS: Salt Workers, Work-Environment, Health, Social Status.

INTRODUCTION

Salt is an important physiological necessity of life. With an enormous and growing population, the demand for salt is of vital importance. Actually there was a salt famine in certain parts of India during the Second World War.

Salt is used for several purposes. It is used for cooking as table salt and as a preservative in the preparation of condiments, pickles and food stuffs. It is also used to a limited extent in agriculture as an insecticide, wood killer and for stock feeding.

Out of the total production,

about 60 per cent comes from the private sector and the rest from the public sector

The Seasonal rains threaten the industry in the East coast as a result of which salt becomes dearer to the consuming centers nearby due to the problems in transportation.

HISTORY AND CULTURE OF SALT

The history of salt production can be traced back to the dawn of human civilization. In ancient times when seawater evaporated in pits, a white layer was formed and it was found tasty and people started consuming it. The white layer was nothing but 'Salt'. Like this it was the beginning of civilization as well it was the beginning of salt

production. This has a long and intriguing history.

His bards then must have directed his attention to "salt licks" from which they satisfied their silence wants and so enabled him to secure salt as a distinct condiment.

SALT PRODUCTION IN THOOTHUKUDI

Thoothukudi occupies a very important place in the history of salt industry in India because of its geographic location and other favorable factors. The coastal belt of the Gulf of Mannar is in the Rain Shadow region of the South West Monsoon and therefore, spread of summer rain that prevails over the rest of the country. The north east monsoon is comparatively weak and the

average rainfall in Thoothukudi gets an interrupted manufacturing of 8 to 9 months in a year.

Thoothukudi district is endowed with a coastal line of about 121 Kms and territorial waters covering thousands of Hectares. During the survey it is reported that 2208 Units are engaged in salt production. The total area found viable for salt cultivation is about 40,000 Acres.

The climate of Thoothukudi district is fairly dry. The temperature moderate near but uses slightly further in land strong dry waterlines characteristic of the tropics, low humidity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to know the socio - economic conditions of saltpan workers in Tuticorin District, Tamilnadu. The primary objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the general socio-economic conditions of the saltpan workers.
2. To analyse the Labour Welfare of the saltpan workers.
3. To bring out policy prescriptions to improve the conditions of workers in the salt industry.

METHODOLOGY

Salt pan labourers constitute the largest chunk of rural work force in Tuticorin District. Salt pan labourers form the most unorganized and neglected section of the rural society who are the victims of the low wages, seasonal unemployment, low incomes, poverty and indebtedness.

SAMPLING DESIGN

Tuticorin District was selected for the present study because, the salt industry are the major work in this district. The sample households for the study have been selected using random sampling method.

SAMBLE SIZE

The present study is based on the primary data, collected from the Tuticorin District. Totally 100 sample workers were collected information through a structured questionnaire method. In the 100 respondents, 50 were male and 50 were female workers.

STUDY DESIGN

The main focus of the study is to examine the wages, employment, income, expenditure and indebtedness of the salt pan workers in Tuticorin district so as to ascertain the Grassroots Economics.

PERIOD OF STUDY

This study focused on the data collected by sampling survey pertaining to the year December 2018 - March 2019.

COLLECTION OF DATA

The survey method was used to collect the required data for the study. The required information and data were collected on various aspects form the sample respondents through personal interview with the concerned with the aid of schedules conducting a pilot survey.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In this study the working conditions of salt workers in Tuticorin district, are analysed with a view to identify the various aspects of their income, expenditure, savings, borrowings, working days, wages, annual allowance, yearly bonus and welfare measures.

LIMITATIONS

The researcher has collected data of salt workers only in the Tuticorin district and not the entire state of Tamilnadu. The researcher went to a village for data collection then only found most of the people are migrated from their village to other villages for jobs.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA
INTRODUCTION

The researcher shows interpretation through the primary data from the respondents. The researcher analysis the table and figure based on primary data and find the main findings from this chapter.

TABLE 1
AGE OF THE RESPONDENT

Sl. No.	Age of the respondents	Percentage
1	Below 35	26
2	35 - 45	37
3	45-55	25
4	55-65	6
5	Above 65	6
	Total	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 indicates the age of the respondents. 26 per cent belong to the age - group of below 35 years. 37 per cent belonged to the age group of 35 - 45 years. 25 per cent of the respondent belongs to the age group of 45 - 55 years. Then, 6 percent of the respondent belongs to the age group of 55 - 65. Only 6 per cent of the respondents were above 65 years.

TABLE 2
CASTE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Gender	Caste of the Respondents				Total
		OC	BC	MBC	SC	
1	Male	1	18	3	28	50
2	Female	0	21	2	27	50
	Total	1	39	5	55	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 reveals that almost all 99 per cent salt workers working in the sampled salt industry were from the castes other than the higher castes. As large as 55 per cent salt workers were of scheduled castes, 5 per cent of most backward castes. 39 per cent of the salt workers were of backward castes and just one percent of the higher castes.

TABLE 3
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE WORKERS

Sl. No.	Educational Status	Respondent Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Illiterate	28	21	49
2	Primary	3	5	8
3	Secondary	19	24	43
	Total	50	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 analyse of the level of education of the respondents indicated that 49 per cent of the workers were illiterate. There were just a small proportion of 8 per cent workers who had acquired primary level education. Further 43 per cent workers studied secondary level education. In break - up

of the educated 21 female respondents are illiterate, 24 female respondents had passed secondary level. A negligibly small proportion of just 5 female respondents had passed primary level education. There was not even a single worker in this sample who had passed Higher Secondary, Technical Education or Graduation.

TABLE 4
OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS

Sl. No.	Types of Work	Respondent Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Loading only	9	23	32
2	Field worker only	22	5	27
3	Packing only	1	4	5
4	Both Loading and Field worker	17	18	35
5	Both Loading, Field worker and Crushing	1	0	1
	Total	50	50	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 showed that out of 100 respondents, 50 are male workers and 50 are female workers. Out of 50 male, 9 are engaged in only loading, 22 are engaged in field workers only, 17 are engaged in both loading and filed workers. Only 1 per cent is packing and both loading, field worker and crushing. Out of 50 female workers, most of them 23 per cent are engaged in only loading, very few 5 per cent are engaged in field workers only, 4 per cent of the women workers are engaged in packing. 18 per cent of female workers are engaged in both loading and field workers.

TABLE 5
DISTRIBUTIONS OF RESPONDENTS FAMILY INCOME PER MONTH

Sl. No.	Income Group	Percentage
1	Below ` 5000	18
2	` 5001 - ` 7000	38
3	` 7001 - ` 9000	29
4	Above ` 9000	15
	Total	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 5 regard to the income of saltpan workers for during season, (normally starting from March to September) it was found that 18 per cent families were able to earn less than ` 5000 per month. 38 per cent were likely to earn monthly income between ` 5001 to ` 7000 while 29 per cent families earn monthly income between ` 7001 to ` 9000. 15 per cent families earn more than above ` 9000.

TABLE 6
SOURCE OF THE DEBTS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Source of the debts	No. of the respondents	Percentage
1	Saltpan owner	2	2.4
2	Money Lenders	22	25.9
3	Banks	13	15.3
4	Self Help Groups	6	7.1
5	Friends and Relatives	2	2.4
6	More than one sources	40	47.1
	Total	85	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 indicated that 2.4 per cent of the respondent source of debts was Saltpan owner while 25.9 per cent of the respondent source of the debts was money lenders whereas 15.3 per cent of the respondents source of debts was Banks. There are 7.1 per cent of the respondents source of debts was Self Help Groups (SHGs). 2.4 per cent of the respondents source of debts was friends and relatives while 40 per cent of respondents source of debts was more than one sources like to borrow from Money Lenders, Banks, Saltpan owner and Self Help Groups.

TABLE 7
REASON FOR THE DEBTS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Reason for debts	No. of the respondents	Percentage
1	Education	2	2.4
2	Medicine	4	4.7
3	Festivals / Rituals	5	5.9
4	Daily needs	18	21.2
5	Both Festivals and Daily needs	24	28.2
6	Both Education and Daily needs	15	17.6
7	Both Education, Medicine and Daily needs	17	20.0
	Total	85	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 7 indicated that 2.4 per cent of the families reason for debts was Education for their Children while 4.7 per cent of the families reason for debts was unexpected family medical need whereas 5.9 per cent of the families reason for debts was village festivals and family functions and 21.2 per cent of the families reason for debts was daily needs. Whereas 28.2 per cent of the families borrowed money for both medicine and daily needs while 17.6 per cent of the families reason for debts was both educations for child and daily needs. 20 per cent of the families borrowed money reason for both educations for child, medicine and daily needs.

TABLE 8
MONTHLY SAVINGS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Monthly Savings	No. of the respondents	Percentage
1	Below ` 500	46	75.4
2	` 501 - ` 1000	9	14.8
3	` 1001 - ` 1500	2	3.3
4	Above ` 1500	4	6.6
	Total	61	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 8 indicate that 75.4 per cent of respondents were able to save less than ` 500 whereas 14.8 per cent could save between ` 501 and ` 1000 in one month. There were just 3.3 per cent respondents were likely to save more than ` 1001 but less than ` 1500. However, there was 6.6 per cent respondents could save more than ` 1500 in one month. The salt workers savings are very less and were not sufficient for improving their quality of life. Whatever little they were able to save was used in their day-to-day expanses during the off-season.

FINDINGS

1. The sampled data on age show that majority 37 per cent of salt workers belong to the age group falling between 35 years to 45years.
2. The workers from scheduled castes and backward castes are 55 per cent and 39 per cent respectively.
3. Illiteracy is one of the most distressing features among the marginalized workers of the salt industry of the study are.
4. The monthly family income of 38 per cent of the families in the salt workers was earn between ` 5001 to ` 7000 nearly 29 per cent of the families were able to earn between ` 7001 to ` 9000 in one month.
5. It was found that 40 per cent of the respondents borrowed money from various sources in Money Lenders, Banks, Saltpan owner and Self Help Groups.
6. It was found that 28 per cent of the workers reason for debts was met daily needs and education expenses for their children.
7. The study showed that 61 per cent of the respondents have a habit to savings.
8. It was found that 35 per cent of the respondents are engaged in both loading and field works whereas 32 per cent of the respondents are engaged in loadings.

SUGGESTIONS

To improve the condition and standard of living of the salt workers the researcher provides the following suggestions:

1. These are a number of labour legislations enacted in independent India to regularize and regulate the employment procedures, wage rates, payment of wages as well as to provide various facilities such as accommodation, drinking water, medical assistance, canteen, leaves, holidays, compensation, etc.
2. There should be a mutual, friendly and cordial relationship between the owners and the salt workers.
3. The salt workers must be provided with the necessary equipments to work inside the saltpan like footwear etc.
4. The wages provided to the salt workers must be raised.
5. The owner of the saltpan must provide several credit facilities to the workers to construct their own house and to minimize private borrowings.
6. Most of the workers are residing far away from the salt industry. Hence transport fare must be provided by the saltpan owner.
7. Government should constitute a tripartite committee every year at the state level to decide about the rates of wages, the bonus and the incentives for these workers.
8. The state government should also make provisions to compensate these workers against natural disasters like heavy rains, floods, cyclone and fires, etc.
9. Job security must be provided to the workers of the salt industry for efficient working, hence there is no job security for the workers in Tuticorin district.
10. The welfare measures such a good drinking water, latrines and urinals, first aid box, canteen, rest rooms must be provided to the workers.

CONCLUSIONS

Salt industry is labour intensive sector in Tuticorin district. It provides employment for the coastal rural area people. However, the working conditions of the salt worker in this are not by far. This is caused by the wage is not equal to the working hours. The job security is paramount important motivational measure but in this area there is no job security to the salt workers. It should be taken into account by the labour welfare department. Other welfare measures are also not sufficient to the workers expectation. Therefore the conditions of the salt worker in the Tuticorin district are poor. It is high time for the government to address the grievances o the salt workers in the Tuticorin district which will in turn help them to elevate themselves from the present dismal state of affairs.

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