

Socio-economic Stratum of Female Beedi Rolling Workers in Tiruchirappalli -Tamilnadu

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Abstract

During the beginning of the 20th century, Beedi rolling started in the formal sector but eventually migrated to the informal sector composed of small uninhabited units, including work sheds for households. After farming, handicrafts, and construction, the beedi sector is also one of India's significant employers of labor. The beedi industry contributed 0.9 percent of total jobs, which include full and part-time employees. The key idea of this current article is to analyze the relation between women's social and economic position in unorganized enterprises with a particular focus on beedi rolling. This paper discusses the socio-economic picture of beedi rolling women workers and also difficulties faced by beedi employees in the Tiruchirappalli region in India. Based on the outcomes of the study, the policy choices are emphasized to be explored.

Keywords: Beedi rolling women, Socio-Economic stratum, Beedi, Working status

Introduction

The Beedi making industry is one of India's traditional but also predominantly home-based industries. It is incredibly labor-intensive and hires nearly 4.4 million employees. Among them, almost two-thirds are females, while 1% are kids. The number of employees based on the beedi sector might be even higher if those involved in tendu leaves collecting would be included. During the beginning of the 20th century, Beedi rolling started in the formal sector but eventually migrated to the informal sector composed of small uninhabited units, including work sheds for households. Currently, only 10 percent of the production of Beedi generally occurs in the organized market. In addition, the majority of the manufacturing usually occurs through the use of the sub-contracting mechanism¹. Due to the conventional workings of beedi manufacturing in India, it is a highly labor-intensive and highly disorganized industry. After farming, handicrafts and construction, the beedi making sector is also one of the major employers of labor in India². Beedi production is generally performed by manual labor, and beedi rolling requires a large number of persons. According to government statistics on the beedi rolling industry, about 4.5 million employees are home-based workers. Trade unions estimate the region's beedi workforce at 7 million³. Singh, J. K., & Singh, P. (2015) the beedi sector employs more than 55 lakh employees in 16 states (Department of Labor and Employment Report 2011), most of whom are

¹ D.Rajeseckhar et al., 'Changing Face of Beedi Industry A study in Karnataka', Economic and political weekly, Vol.XXXVII, No:3, Sep 28-oct 4, 2005, p.13

² Government of India 1995. Unorganized Sector Services: Report on the Working and Living Conditions of Workers in Beedi Industry in India, Ministry of Labour, New Delhi.

³ Ministry of Labour, Annual Report 1999-2000, page 109.

female workers working in their houses⁴. According to the Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and employment 2005 at the 14th Meeting of the Standing Committee on Labour, About 4.5 million people in India are employed in the beedi sector. The most considerable proportion of those workers are in Madhya Pradesh (18.3 percent), accompanied by Andhra Pradesh (14.4 percent) and Tamil Nadu (13.8 percent)⁵. The beedi industry accounts for approximately 11% of unorganized jobs in manufacturing, and full-time employees constitute about 0.74%, including all employment in India, according to the 2009-2010 Planning Commission survey⁶. The beedi industry contributed 0.9 percent of total jobs, which include full and part-time employees⁷.

Review of literature

Srinivasan and Ilango (December 2013) observed that 98% of Beedi employees came from neglected parts of society and were financially and socially poor. The beedi workers remain under a vicious circle of poverty, and it was the primary reason that the informants took Beedi making as their profession. The majority of 72% of respondents worked for contractors who indicated that they had been abused. 64% of respondents receive just under Rs. 2000 a month that's not enough to sustain their families. A majority of 70 percent claimed that their profession caused their health issues.⁸ **Sudarshan and Kaur (1999)** Indicated that women comprise 76% of all employees employed in the beedi sector. Poverty, illiteracy, low mobility, and limited employment opportunities for inexperienced women; assure their involvement in the beedi industry.⁹ **Selvi (2006)**, in her study, stated that the Tamilnadu beedi sectors exist for more than 95 years, and women, as well as physically challenged, were got employment through this sector from their houses. She also opined that long working hours, poor income, work uncertainty, health issues, poor quality of raw materials and exploitation by contractors are the constraints faced by Beedi making women.¹⁰ **T.Nagalakshmi and A.Sudhakar (2013)** highlighted that female beedi workers have been found to work in terrible and hazardous environments. These workers are not paid on time, and their salaries are not paid in advance. The number of signatures received exceeds the total amount paid. In addition to the Beedi working women, their family and friends often suffer from tobacco-related illnesses like tuberculosis, coughing, cancer, etc.¹¹ **P. Tiwari and N. Parashar (2014)** conducted research to look into both the socio-economic status of beedi roller women. The author of the study explored the business model and the problems of employees in the beedi industry. After investigating women beedi rollers, the author concluded that women beedi employees are unable to access any basic facilities and the welfare policies are poor, and welfare programs have not been able to hit them. The authors have noted that women who are beedi rollers are stripped of their human rights, and employers and contractors abuse them. The majority of the beedi making women is homeless and pays less than what they owe. In the author's opinion, there is an immediate need for the safety of female beedi rollers. The government and NGOs should encourage and rehabilitate female beedi rollers.¹²

Objectives

- 1) To assess the working conditions and socio-economic status of women beedi rollers.

⁴ Labour Bureau, Report on Evaluation studies on implementation of The Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

⁵ Dr. Yogesh Dube & Dr. Godsen Mohandoss, — A Study on Child Labour in Indian Beedi Industry||, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, August 2013.

⁶ Planning Commission. Employment across various sectors (in millions), Employment Elasticity, CAGR & Share of Employment and GVA: 1999–2000, 2004–2005, 2009–2010. Databook for Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission Government of India. 2013:84. <http://planningcommission.nic.in/data/datatable/index.php?data=datatab> (accessed 14 Aug 2013).

⁷ National Survey Sample Organization. Employment and Unemployment Situation in India 2005–2006. New Delhi, India: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, 2008.

- 2) To ascertain the reasons for women's involvement in beedi rolling.
- 3) To examine the savings and indebtedness of beedi workers and their families.
- 4) To identify the constraints of beedi rolling women in the study area.

Methods

The current study is very brief and very exploratory. Interviews with women beedi rollers have been used to gather information relevant to both the socio-economic and workplace environment. 158 beedi rollers (women) were selected by the researcher for this study from selected Beedi manufacturing industries in Tiruchirappalli town of Tamilnadu. All chosen employees are aged from 20 years to 55 years. The study is carried out by proportionate certified random sampling.

Hypotheses

1. There is no association between Age and Income from beedi rolling work per month.
2. There is no relationship between Age and Working Hours per day.

Limitation

1. The bias of the respondents is a limitation of this research. The analysis carried out during the study is entirely based on the information provided by beedi rollers.

Results

Table-1
Percentage distribution regarding socio-economic stratum of Beedi making women

Categories	Variables	No of Beedi workers (N=158)	Percentage
Blocks/ Area	10% of the sample 1034 from Palakkarai (i.e., 103)	103	65.19
	10% of sample 550 from Nathersha Palli vasal (i.e., 55)	55	34.81
	Total	158	100
Age	Up to 20	08	5.06
	21 -30	14	8.86
	31-40	80	50.63
	41-50	36	22.78
	>50	20	12.66
	Total	158	100
Education	Illiterate	70	44.30
	Primary	60	37.97
	Secondary	20	12.66
	Higher secondary	06	3.79
	College	02	1.27
	Total	158	100
Working hours	Up to 10 hours	56	35.44
	More than 10 hours	102	64.56
	Total	158	100
Reasons for beedi making	Drunken Husband	43	27.21
	Family occupation	50	31.65
	Poverty	03	1.89

	Lack of alternate employment	62	39.24
	Total	158	100
Income from Beedi making per month	Up to 500 rupees	08	5.06
	501 – 1000 rupees	14	8.86
	1001 – 1500 rupees	70	44.30
	1501 – 2000 rupees	66	41.77
	Total	158	100
Years of beedi rolling	< 10 Years	15	9.49
	11-15 years	20	12.66
	15-20 years	33	20.89
	More than 20 years	90	56.96
	Total	158	100
Workplace Preference	Home	110	69.62
	Beedi Factory	48	30.38
	Total	158	100
Indebtedness	Yes	108	68.35
	No	50	31.65
	Total	158	100
Savings	Up to 200 rupees	50	31.64
	201 – 500 rupees	14	8.86
	501 – 800 rupees	12	7.59
	More than 800 rupees	06	3.79
	No Savings	76	48.10
	Total	158	100

Source: Primary data

From the above table 1, it is found that more than half (50.63) percentages of the respondents falling under the age group of 30 to 40. They are only capable of doing the beedi work efficiently. In terms of education, 44.30 percent of workers are illiterate, while 55.70 percent are educated. Among the educated, 37.97 percent of the respondents have studied up to the primary, 12.66 percent have studied up to secondary, 3.79 percent have studied up to higher secondary, and only 1.27 percent studied up to college. Generally, their educational standard is low. It is observed from the table that 56.96 percentages of the workers have more than 20 years of experience and 20.89 percentages of the workers have 15-20 years of experience in beedi production. 44.30 percentages of the workers are earning Rs. 1001-2000 per month from beedi making. 41.77 percentages of the workers are earning Rs. 2000-Rs.3000 per month. 68.35 percent of the respondents are in debt, and only 31.65 percent of the workers are free from debt. Only 31.64 percentages of the workers were able to save up to Rs 200 per month. 8.86 percentages of the workers able to save up to Rs.201-500 per month. The table also reveals that the majority, 48.10 percent of the workers, cannot save any amount.

Table-2
Analysis of Expenses per month

Expenses	Food	44.30
	Clothing	9.09
	Entertainment	3.16
	Electricity	2.53
	Medical Expenses	6.23

	Rent for Home	11.37
	Travel	6.33
	Education of son/daughter	16.99
	Total	100

Source: Primary data

Table 2 represents the expenses allocated per month. It shows that the majority (44.30 percentage) of the respondents spend a significant portion of their income on food. The percentage of expenditure on education (16.99), house rent (11.37 percent) and clothing are 9.09. Less expense is allocated on recreation as well as lighting. This suggests that their socio-economic position is extremely poor.

Table-3
Correlation 1

		Age	Income per month from beedis
AGE	Pearson Correlation	1	.898**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	158	158
Income per month from Beedi work	Pearson Correlation	.898**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	158	158

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H0: There is no association between Age and Income received from beedi work

H1: There is a significant association between Age and Income received from beedi work

The results were statistically significant, i.e., a strong positive correlation between age and monthly income received from beedi work (r = .898, n= 158, p<.000). We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis.

Table-4
Correlation 2

		Age	Income per month from beedis
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.632**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	158	158
Income per month from Beedi work	Pearson Correlation	.632**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	158	158

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H0: There is no association between Age and Working hours per day

H1: There is an association between Age and Working hours per day

The findings have been statistically relevant, i.e., moderate positive correlation between age and working hours of beedis per day (r = .632, n= 158, p<.000). We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis.

Major findings

1. A percentage analysis of the demographic profile of Beedi rollers reveals that the majority 50.63 percentages of the female beedi rolling employees are between the ages of 30 and 40 and there is a high degree of positive correlation (0.898) between age and Monthly income of beedi employees.
2. Regarding educational status, it is found that the majority of the respondents, 55.70 percent of them, are educated and the remaining 44.30 percent of them are uneducated.
3. In the study area, 68.35 percentages of the respondents are with debt.
4. Regarding the income from beedi work, 44.30 percentages of the respondents are earning Rs.1001 to 1500 per month.
5. In terms of expenses, nearly 45 percent of them spend all of their money on food.
6. 48.10% of respondents do not have any savings. Only 31.64 percent of respondents save an average of Rs. 200 per month.
7. It has been found that 64.6% of women spend more than 10 hours a day to make Beedis.
8. The age and number of working hours per day have a moderately positive correlation (.632).
9. The majority, 56.96 percentages of the respondents stated that, they have more than 20 years of experience in beedi making.
10. Regarding causes of beedi rolling, nearly 40 percentages of the respondents revealed that they are engaged in beedi work due to the absence of alternate employment in this study area.

Conclusion

Beedi workers in the Tiruchirappalli district suffer predominantly from poor social and economic conditions, savings habits and work satisfaction. A large number of beedi employees are uneducated and ignorant. Therefore, self-awareness sessions about occupational hazards and protective measures must be done on a regular basis to ensure a beneficial working environment. The work and living conditions must therefore be improved, and decent jobs and income possibilities for female beedi workers must be supported. The government must try to organize alternative jobs in that sense for its future prospects, and they can get out of the worse hazardous occupations completely.

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