



## **A Study On The Socio – Economic Conditions Of Female Beedi Workers At Khajamalai, In Trichirapalli, Tamil Nadu**

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***Abstract:***

*Beedi workers are vulnerable segments of the country's labour force which has increased involvement of women and child labour in Beedi rolling activities. The condition of Beedi workers at present as well as in the past have not been conducive. The Beedi industry is present all over the country. The researcher in this study aimed at gaining insight into the "Socio – economic condition of female Beedi workers at Khajamalai near Trichy. The main objective of the study was to understand the Socio – economic condition of the female Beedi workers at Khajamalai Trichy. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Majority 98 percent of the Beedi workers were from the marginalized sections of the society and therefore they were socially and economically backward. Poverty was the main reason that induced the respondents to take up Beedi work as an occupation. Majority 72 percent of the respondents were working for contractors which showed that they were subjected to exploitation. Sixty four per cent of the respondents earned less than Rs. 2000 per month which is not adequate to maintain their family. Majority 70 percent of the respondents stated that their health problems were due to their occupation. Women's organization working for the unorganized sector like AIDWA, need to conduct awareness programs among the female Beedi workers at Khajamalai and enable them to fight against all forms of exploitation. The findings of the study will be helpful to NGOs and the Social Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu to launch necessary schemes for the welfare of female Beedi workers.*

***Key words:*** beedi, female, socio, economic, unorganized workers

## **1.Introduction**

Beedi rolling is one of the major informal sector activities in India. The government of India estimates that there are about 4.4 million workers in this industry. The majority are home based workers who live below the poverty line (BPL). Beedi is a kind of little cigarette, made of tendu leaves (instead of paper) and tobacco. According to conservative estimate more than 6 million persons are engaged in Beedi making processing and allied work. Beedi workers are vulnerable segments of the country's labour force which has increased involvement of women and child labour in Beedi rolling activities. The condition of Beedi workers at present as well as in the past have not been not very conducive. The making of the Beedi is an industry that is widely spread over the country. Hence there is a need to improve the living and working conditions, as well as to promote decent employment and income opportunities for women Beedi rollers.

Informal sector workers are generally not represented in the institutions and organizations of the labour movement. The main concentration of Beedi workers are engaged in tobacco industry. The Parliamentary standing committee on subordinate legislation (1990) says that 20 million labours and 6 million farmers are engaged in cultivation of tobacco. The size of the unorganized sector indicates its importance as a major force both economically and politically. Additionally the unorganized sector is a major contributor to the gross national product of the country contributing about 63 percent of the country's national income in 1994 – 95. These numbers point to the urgent need to deal with issues of social security of these workers and producers.

Historically, the system of social security in India, as elsewhere was started with the organized sector. The first social security legislation was the workmen's compensation Act, 1923. The size of the unorganized sector has been growing over the last few decades. In 1971 the unorganized sector comprised 89 percent of the workforce, whereas in 1995 it was 92.5 percent. This increase is the result both of (casualisation) of the existing organized sector workers and lack of growth of employment opportunities within the organized sector employment, with 96 percent of all female workers being in this sector.

## **2.Statement Of The Problem**

The unorganized sectors are facing many problems such as unemployment, low wages, and irregular payment of wages, non availability of social security and welfare facilities,

and exploitative working conditions. The Beedi workers in Khajamalai are facing several problems, such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, sickness, low wages and irregular payment of wages. Their socio-economic and health conditions are really bad. The Beedi leaves cause various forms of health hazards both to the workers and also to the people staying around.

### **3.Need For The Study**

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. The findings of the study will be useful to NGOs working for the development of the unorganized sector.

### **4.Objective Of The Study**

To study the socio-economic conditions of female Beedi workers at Khajamalai in Trichirapalli District Tamil Nadu.

- To find the demographic details of the respondents
- To study the economic life and problems of the respondents
- To study the housing conditions of the respondents
- To study the family problems of the respondents
- To study the community life of the respondents
- To study the interests and future plans of the respondents
- To suggest measures to improve the condition of the respondents

### **5.Methodology**

#### *5.1.Field Of Study*

The study was conducted in Khajamalai area which lies in the outskirts of Trichy city, situated in the midst of mountains. There are 70 families involved in Beedi work. These Beedi workers are from down south rural areas of Tirunelveli and other districts. These families have migrated some 25 years ago in search of jobs.

### *5.2. Research Design*

The researcher used a descriptive design. As the objective of the study was to assess the socio-economic and working conditions of the female Beedi workers at Khajamalai, the research decided to adopt the descriptive design.

### *5.3. Sampling*

Totally 70 families were involved in Beedi work in the field of study. The research selected 50 for the study using a purposive sampling method. Only those female heads of the families who were involved in Beedi work and who were willing to answer the schedule, were included for the study.

### *5.4. Source Of Data*

The primary data were collected from the respondents working in Beedi making. They were interviewed face to face by the researcher using an interview schedule.

The secondary data were collected from social workers working with the women in the unorganized sector. Relevant websites periodicals and news papers also reviewed.

### *5.5. Tools Of Data Collections*

The main tool of data collection used for the study was an interview schedule. For the preparation of the interview schedule the consultation of the research guide was taken. Interview schedule was prepared based on the objectives of the study.

### *5.6. Preparation Of Tool*

The interview schedule was prepared in English and later translated into Tamil. The researcher read some of the books, reports and article of Beedi to understand the topic of the study, better. The interview schedule include various aspects such as social status, economic conditions, health problems, housing or working conditions, political aspects, education facilities for their children and their future plan.

### *5.7. Pre – testing*

To test the tool, the researcher interviewed five respondents. Since the researcher did not find any major changes in the interview schedule, the researcher continued with the data collection.

### 5.8.Limitation Of The Study

The researcher has assumed that Beedi workers are facing several problems due to their socio-economic backwardness such as poverty, illiteracy, ill health, poor sanitations and improper housing. Due to certain limitations in the field the researcher had to adopt the purposive sampling method.

## 6.Results And Discussions

To test the results, first the frequency distribution regarding all the testing variables was applied, that generated individual results for each of the variable. Secondly, the correlation between the variable of Age and Qualification and their relation with the satisfaction level was applied, that generated several interesting results.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below – 25 years	13	26	26	26
	25 years – 35 years	12	24	24	24
	35 years – 45 years	14	28	28	28
	45 years – 55 years	7	14	14	14
	55 years – 65 years	4	8	8	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Age

Majority 78 percent of the respondent were below 45 years. This is the period during which a persons earning capacity is at its peak. After 45 years, a woman has several health problems and therefore she will not be able to work hard. This factor is important for a socio – economic study.

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Illiterate	8	16	16	16
Primary	20	40	40	40
Middle School	8	16	16	16
High School	8	16	16	16
Graduation	6	12	12	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2: Education

From the above table it is evident that the respondents' educational level was very low. Majority 70% of the respondents were married and 30% of the respondents were unmarried.

Monthly Income	Frequency	percent	ValidPercent	CumulativePercent
Less than Rs. 2000	32	64	64	64
Rs. 2000 – Rs. 3000	14	28	28	28
Rs. 3000- Rs. 4000	3	6	6	6
Rs. 4000 – Rs. 5000	1	2	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3: Monthly Income

### 7.Mode Of Saving

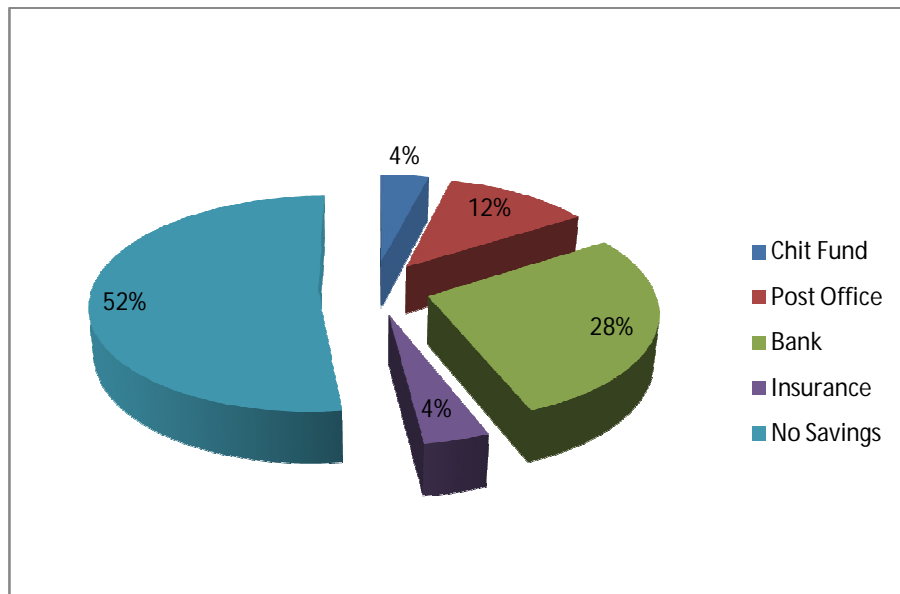


Figure 1

Majority 52% of the respondents had no savings while only 48% of the respondents had their saving in the chit fund, post office and bank and insurance schemes. Majority 58% of the respondents had taken loans for meeting their day to day expenses.

Type of House	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Thatched House	17	34	34	34
Tiled House	9	18	18	18
Asbestos Roofed	20	40	40	40
Mud House	4	8	8	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Table 4: Type of House*

A sizable group of 40% of the respondents have been living under asbestos roof. This type of roofing radiates a lot of heat and can cause a lot of health problems. Majority 68% did not have sanitation facilities in their houses.

Problems	Frequency	Frequency	Total	Percentage
	Yes	No		
Alcoholic Husband	12(24%)	38(76%)	50	100
Domestic Violence	18(36%)	32(64%)	50	100
Children dropped out from school	11(22%)	39(78%)	50	100
Not involved in decision making at home	28(56%)	22(44%)	50	100
Girl child in your family is given important	35(70%)	15(30%)	50	100

*Table 5: Family Problems*

From the above table it is evident that gender discrimination was found in the families of respondents.

Community life	Frequency	Frequency	Total	Percentage
	Yes	No		
SHG's in your village	31(62%)	19 (38%)	50	100
Member of SHG's	21(42%)	29 (58%)	50	100
Participate in community Programme	18(36%)	32 (64%)	50	100
Support political parties	6(12%)	44 (88%)	50	100

*Table 6: Community life*

The table describes the majority 62% of the respondents village is have SHG's. 42% of the respondents are member of SHG's out of the 42% who are in SHG's 36% of them participated in the community program 12% of the respondents are supporting political parties. 38% of the villages do not have SHGs but 64% of the respondents participated in community programme.

### *7.1. Main Findings*

In this chapter the researcher has presented the main findings of the study.

Fifty percent of the respondents belong to the age group of 35-45 years. Forty percent of the respondents were Muslims. Ninety eight percent of the respondents were from marginalized sections of the society. Forty percent of the respondents had reached primary education. Sixty percent of the respondents had studied up to the level of middle school. Majority seventy percent of the respondents were married and thirty percent of the respondents were unmarried. Majority fifty six percent of the respondents were from nuclear families. This shows the influence of urban life style in the rural community. All the forty percent of the Muslim respondents stated that their mother tongue was Urdu. Thirty six percent of the respondents had 10-20 years of experience in Beedi work. Thirty eight percent of the respondents were working for more than 10 hours which is crossing the ILO specification regarding hours of work per day. Majority sixty two percent had work for less than 20 days. Therefore their earning capacity was also less. A sizeable group of forty eight percent received weekly wages and thirty six percent got daily wages. It is important to note that majority eighty four percent of the respondents were paid on piece rate basis. Poverty was the main reason that induced the respondents to take up Beedi work as an occupation. Thirty eight percent of the respondents were stated that their family members were also involved in Beedi rolling work. Majority seventy two percent of the respondents were working for contractors which showed that they were subjected to exploitation.

Forty six percent of the respondents rolled 31-40 bundles daily. This shows that respondents were involved in very hard work. Sixty four percent of the respondents earned less than Rs.2000 per month. Therefore the income they got was not enough to help the family. A sizeable group of forty eight percent of the respondents stated that food was their priority expenditure. Majority fifty two percent of the respondents saving did not have any saving habit. Majority fifty eight percent of the respondents had taken to meet their day to day expenses. Fifty two percent of the respondents had no saving while only forty eight percent of the respondents had their saving in chit fund, post office, bank or insurance. Majority seventy six percent of the respondents stated that they had health problems.

A sizeable group of forty percent of the respondents preferred to go to the government hospital as the services were free. Majority seventy percent of the respondents sated that their health problems were due to their occupation. Majority fifty eight percent of the



respondents were living in rented houses. A sizeable group of forty percent of had been living under asbestos roof. This type of roofing radiates a lot of heat and can cause a lot of health problems. Majority sixty eight percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the sanitation facilities in their house. A sizeable group of forty eight percent of the respondents stated that they had housing problems. Majority seventy six percent of the respondents expressed that they had a spouse who was alcoholic and as a result thirty six percent of the respondents stated that domestic violence was a serious problem they faced in the family. Twenty two percent of the respondents' stated that their children were not going to school and were engaged in Beedi rolling. Majority fifty six percent of the respondents were involved in the decision making process in their family. Majority sixty two percent of the respondents were members of SHG's groups.

Only thirty six percent of the respondents were involved in community program in their village. Majority eighty eight percent of the respondents were not interested in any political party. While sixty eight percent of the respondents stated that the status of women in their community was good, thirty two percent felt it was bad. For fifty four percent of the respondents felt that the visual media was an important means for spending their leisure time. The respondents has some concrete plan or the other for their future.

### *7.2.Suggestions*

The Educational level of the workers are very low, so the NSS units of St Joseph's College, Trichy, can take up adult literacy and functional education programs for the female Beedi workers at Khajamalai. Through these is a legislation to protect the rights of the Beedi workers, the provisions of this Act are not followed by the Employers. Therefore the Government should take strict action against their employers who fail to implement this Act. Women's organizations working for the unorganized sector like AIDWA, need to conduct awareness programs among the female Beedi workers at Kahajamalai and motivate them to join the women's organizations that take up their cause. Due to the nature of their work, the Beedi workers fall ill often. Therefore the Employer contractor must he made to pay for their treatment. NGO's working for women can take up such issues.

The social work Department from Kaveri College and Bharathidasan University Department from Social work can extend their support for the women Beedi workers in Kahajamalai. They can conduct surveys to find out the human rights violation against

Beedi workers. They can help in the formation of SHG's the women earn be trainee various program of Self – Employment programs. Awareness regarding the rights of Beedi workers can also be promoted by the social work trainees. The NGO can take up issues concerning the female Beedi workers like their working condition, health problems and vocational training programmes.

### *7.3. Conclusion*

Women Beedi workers having been facing lot of problems. They do not have any basic facilities. The welfare scheme for women Beedi workers are not reaching them. They are deprived of their basic rights and they are exploited by the contractors. So there is an urgent need for the protection of Beedi workers to overcome in their lives.

The researcher has identified the socio-economic conditions of women Beedi workers which will help the government and Ngo's to take remedial measures to promote the welfare of Beedi workers and to protect their rights.

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