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A Study on Working Conditions of Women Beedi Workers at Aralvoimozhi Town Panchayat of Kanniyakumari District

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Abstract

In the unorganized sector, beedi manufacturing provides employment opportunities, particularly for the women in Aralvoimozhi of Tamil Nadu. Since beedi work is undertaken at home without basic facilities, all the household members, including children, are exposed to the hazards of inhaling tobacco smell. The most common problem experienced by them was backache, eyesore, rickets, thyroid and tuberculosis, and throat infection.

Keywords: Beedi workers, Facilities for Beedi making, Experience of Work, Registration, Social Security Scheme.

Introduction

The beedi industry is one of the most important unorganized agro-industries which occupies an important place in the national economy. Beedi rolling is manual in all its stages. No tools are used except ordinary scissors, winnows, and wire nets. The two types of raw materials are used for beedi making. There are beedi tobacco and tendu leaves. The instruments of production are only the female laborers that roll out the beedies and supplement their family income. Unorganized workers consist of persons working in households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits and the workers in the formal sector, social security benefits provided by the employers.

Objective

1. To know about the ownership of the house and facilities for beedi making
2. To know about the mode of work
3. To understand the nature of work of the beedi workers and Nature of registration

Scope of the Study

The study aims to know the working conditions of women beedi workers in Aralvoimozhi panchayat of Kanniyakumari district. The study covers the Nature of Housing, ownership of the house, mode of work, Facilities for beedi making, Experience of work, Nature of work, working hours for the beedi making, and Nature of Registration of the workers.

Period of the Study

The study period is six months because of the collection of data and the working conditions of beedi workers.

Limitations of the Study

1. The information and the data were purely based on the memory of the respondents.
2. The study is constrained to a particular region. Hence the conclusions cannot be generalized.
3. The answer of the respondents cannot always be free from bias and prejudice.
4. The study period is limited for one year.

Review of Literature

Mitu Gulati and et al. (2002), in their article “When a Worker’s Co-operative Work’s: The Case of Kerala Dinesh Beedi”, worker co-operative is dominated by explanations of why they do not work and why, accordingly, they are so rare. Large worker’s co-operative in South India that has worked well for a long time. This co-operative illustrates, among other things, that worker control and worker democracy are not necessarily inconsistent with the degree of hierarchy and delegation that may be essential to effective operation. The co-operative has been able to compete despite paying wages and benefits that are dramatically higher than those paid by its competitors, while at the same time providing far better working conditions.

Hemanalini R. and et al., (2010), in their article “Work-life balance and Indian women Beedi workers in Tirunelveli”, pointed that insight on the work-life balance of Indian women Beedi workers. Beedi manufacturing is more than a century old and an unorganized sector in India. Since the introduction of tobacco cultivation, in India, a sizeable segment of the women labor force is engaged in production for consumption of tobacco rolled in the form of Beedi. The Indian market of smoking tobacco is dominated by Beedies, which outsell cigarettes by a 10:1 ratio. Women being the threshold of a family, extend their support in earnings for the mobilization of income for their children’s education and better living—the majority of women working about 90-95 hours per week. The only comfort is that women Beedi workers enjoy freedom in the work place and working hours.

Jayalakshmi Priya S. and kumuda (2016), in their article “Women workers in the informal sector”, the study described that the main motive of bringing to light the plight of the floating population and many invisible women workers in various occupational groups in the informal sector. Poverty literacy, ignorance has put their future and their children’s future in a state of uncertainty. The informal sector employing more than 90per cent of women workers is an important contributor to national income. Encouraging the formation of self-help groups will go a long way in organizing these women workers. The necessary measures need to be taken with the joint effort of government and through Non-Government Organization activities.

Methodology

Aralvoimozhi Town Panchayat is purposively selected for conducting this study due to great potential and wider scope for beedi makers in this panchayat. For the selection of the sample respondents, the random sampling technique was adopted. Aralvoimozhi panchayat during 2018-2019 there were a total of 180 beedi makers in the study area. Out of 180 beedi workers, 60 beedi makers were selected. The intensive study based on a random sampling method. That is, 60 sample unit beedi workers have been selected by using a random sampling technique.

Data Analysis

Nature of Housing

The nature of housing refers to the type of house in which the respondent is living. The life style of the population in the study area makes it clear that people have a rural background, and the nature of dwelling is a yardstick to measure the quality of life and standard of living. Nature of housing of the beedi workers is analyzed with the help of Table 1

Table 1: Type of Houses

S. No	Types of House	No. of Respondents	%
1	Thatched	5	8.3
2	Tiled	21	35
3	Concrete	34	56.7
Total		60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 reveals the types of house of the sample respondent. Among the 60 respondents, 8.3 percent of them were living in thatched houses. On the other hand, 35 percent of them living in tiled houses, while 56.7 percent of them were living in Concrete houses.

Ownership of the House

The basic needs for human survival are food, cloth, and shelter. A family is a biological unit whose members have a common dwelling place. The nature of ownership of the house determines one's status and position in the society. The nature of ownership of the house of the respondents is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Ownership of House

S. No	Ownership of the house	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Owner	48	80
2	Tenant	12	20
Total		60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 shows the Ownership of houses of the 60 respondents, 80 percent respondents are having own land, and 20 percent respondents do not have the house that is they resided in rented houses. It could be inferred from the above analysis that the majority of the respondents belong to the Owner.

Mode of Work

Women beedi workers do beedi rolling either at their own home or in the industrial firm. The table 3 shows that the mode of work of the respondents.

Table 3: Mode of Work

S.No	Types of Worker's	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Industry	21	35
2	House	39	65
Total		60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 indicates that 35 percent of the respondents carry out beedi rolling in the firm, and 65 percent of the respondents do it in their house work. Most of the workers are work in their house.

Facilities for Beedi Making

The presence of a separate room would facilitate

the women worker to undertake their work in a more specialized manner. Hence a study on whether such a facility is provided or not.

Table 4: Facilities for Beedi Making

S. No	Facilities for beedi making	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Separate Room	16	26.7
2	Not Having Separate Room	44	73.3
Total		60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 shows that 26.7 percent respondents have a separate room and 73.3 percent not having separate room. It could be inferred from the above analysis that the majority of the workers belong to not having a separate room.

Experience of Work

Experience in work refers to the number of years the respondents are involved in beedi rolling. Experience of the beedi workers are shown in table 5

Table 5: Experience of Work

S. No	Experience of work	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	1-4	27	45
2	5-8	13	21.7
3	9-12	13	21.7
4	Above 13	7	11.7
Total		60	100

Source: Primary Data

The table 5 explained that 60 respondents, 45 percent of the respondents are 1-4 years experience, 21.7 percentage of the respondents are 5-8 years of experience, 21.7 percent of the respondents are 9-12 years of experience remaining 11.7 percent of the respondents are above 13 years experience. Thus it is obvious that among the sample respondents, most of them are found to be an experience of work 1-4years.

Nature of Work

The nature of work of beedi rolling undertaken by the women beedi workers differs from person to person. Some of them do beedi rolling as their main occupation, whereas some others do it as a secondary work in addition to some other main occupation.

Table 6 shows the nature of work of the beedi workers.

Table 6: Nature of Work

S. No	Nature of work	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Main	39	65
2	Secondary	15	25
3	Casual	6	10
Total		60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 indicates that 65 percent of the respondents carry out the job of beedi rolling as the main work while 25 percent of them have as a secondary work, and the remaining 10 percent of them perform this as a casual one. It reveals that the study of the majority of the workers belonged to main workers.

Working Hours

In the case of beedi making sector, the number of working hours is not fixed. Table 7 shows that the working hours of the sample respondents.

Table 7: Working Hours

S. No	Working Hours	No. of respondent	Percentage
1	Below 3 hours	9	15
2	4-6 hours	21	35
3	7-9 hours	24	40
4	Above 10 hours	6	10
Total		60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 7 shows that 15 percent of the respondents do the job for below 3 hours, 35 percent of the respondent do the job for the period 4 -6 hours, 40 percent of the respondent do the job for the period 7-9 hours. The rest of 10 per cent of them have the job for the period of above 10 hours every day. It could be inferred from the above analysis that the majority of the workers work 7-9 hours.

Nature of Registration

It is observed that they are registered by the contractors only after their works satisfy the company concerned. The nature of the family of the sample respondents is given in Table 8.

Table 8: Nature of Registration

S. No	Nature of registration	No. of respondent	Percentage
1	Registered	18	30
2	Unregistered	42	70
Total		60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 8 reveals the nature of registration. 30 percent of the respondents are registered in the beedi company. 70 per centages of them are unregistered in the beedi company. It reveals that in the study area majority of the workers belonged to unregistered.

Findings

1. The majority of the respondents live in concrete houses.
2. The analysis regarding the ownership of housing reveals that 80 percent have their own houses.
3. As regards to nature of work, 35 percent of workers do beedi rolling work in the industry, and 65 percent of the workers work in the house.
4. The majority of the workers (73.3 percent) do not have a separate room for beedi making, whereas 26.7 percent have a separate room.
5. The analysis regarding the experience of work reveals that 45 percent of the workers have experience of 1-4 years.
6. Most of the workers do beedi making as the main work,
7. Most of the respondents work for 7-9 hours.
8. Most of them are unregistered in the beedi company.

Suggestions

1. The contractors not only exploit the women beedi workers by providing low wages and low quantity raw materials but also by not providing the government social security initiatives.
2. All the workers who are associated with the different stages of beedi works should be brought into account.
3. This form of arrangement not only helps the workers but also for the government to make appropriate policies.
4. All the beedi agencies must be registered and issue an identity card to all the beedi workers.
5. Providing better working conditions and welfare

schemes facilities in the legislation are the major determinants of the standard of living of workers in the beedi industry.

Conclusion

Over the years, many efforts have been made to improve the working and living conditions of workers and their families involved in the beedi industry. Most of the female workers do not have direct contact with the agents. Even if they had, they are unable to ascertain their rights, not only due to the ignorance about the available social security schemes but also because of the non-availability of other employment opportunities.

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