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Work-Based Health Problems of Unorganized Women Workers in Coimbatore

A. Sangamithra

Professor, Department of Economics, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4761-8150>

T. Athira

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Economics

Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Female workers have to perform a double role in their workplace with harsh and unsafe working conditions, and also they have to manage their home. However, this female sector of our society is deprived when compared to the male sector. In the unorganized sector alone, 96 percent of women are working, and they are working in a very risky and harsh working conditions. There is no proper wage, sanitation, ventilation, and medical facilities, and facing exploitation too. Conversely, such livelihood is lower among those who are part of nuclear families, belonged to backward castes, have higher education, and earning higher monthly incomes. There should be adequate legislation and effective enforcement of the law to protect the unorganized women workers from hazardous and unhealthy working conditions. Occupational safety must be ensured by the employer, trade unions, and the government as well.

Keywords: Health problems, Unorganized, Harsh, Unsafe, Sector, Exploitation, Livelihood, Income, Hazardous, Unhealthy

Introduction

Female workers have to perform a double role in their workplace with harsh and unsafe working conditions and also have to manage their home. However, this female sector of our society is deprived when compared to the male sector. In the unorganized sector alone, 96 percent of women are working, and they are working in a very risky and harsh working conditions. There is no proper wage, sanitation, ventilation, and medical facilities, and facing exploitation too. In this background, the following study focuses on.

Table 1: Results of Binary Logistic Regression Analysis on Higher Extent of Work-related Health Problems (6 & above) by Respondents

Explanatory Variables	β Coefficient	Odds Ratio	p-value
Age			
34 Years & below	--	1.000	--
35-44 Years	0.408	1.504	0.233
45 Years & above	1.116	3.122	0.01
Social Status Background			
SC/ ST	--	1.000	--
MBC	0.532	0.587	0.397
BC	-1.284	0.277	0.05

Educational Status			
Illiterates	--	1.000	--
Primary School	0.298	0.742	0.590
Middle School	-1.069	0.334	0.05
Higher School +	-1.482	0.227	0.05
Type of Labour			
Unskilled	--	1.000	--
Semi-skilled	0.097	1.102	0.819
Skilled	0.079	1.082	0.886
Average Monthly Income of Respondents			
16000 & less	--	1.000	--
11001-22000	0.285	0.752	0.444
22001 & above	-0.877	0.416	0.05
Asset Owned			
No	--	1.000	--
Yes	0.898	2.561	0.01
Type of Family			
Joint Family	--	1.000	--
Nuclear Family	-1.142	0.241	0.01
Work-related Stress			
Lower Extent	--	1.000	--
Moderate Extent	0.815	2.260	0.05
Higher Extent	1.224	3.402	0.01
- 2 Log likelihood	269.150		
Chi-square (d.f.)	78.762 (15)		
Significance Level	0.001		
N	258		
Cox & Snell R Square	26.3		
Nagelkerke R Square	35.5		

Determinants of Work-related Health Problems Suffered by the Respondents

In this section, an attempt is made to determine the prime determinants of the work-related health problems suffered by the respondents to a greater extent (as against lower extent). To this end, the work-related health problems suffered by the respondents is considered as the dependent variable, based which the respondents have been categorized into two groups viz., those suffered from 6 or more work-related health problems, who have been assigned a score of '1', and those who suffered from 5 or less

work-related problems, who have been assigned a score of '0'. A set of independent variables are selected based on their theoretical importance and levels of significance with respondents suffered from work-related health problems, which have been considered as categories (2-4 in number). For these dependent and independent variables, the binary logistic regression technique is the most suitable one and hence, adopted here. The results based on such an analysis are presented in Table 1.

Data provided in Table 1 suggest that, of all the eight explanatory variables (or their categories) included in the model, seven variables have exhibited statistically significant (at different levels) net effects on respondents' suffering from a higher number of work-related health problems. Controlling for all the variables used in the model, it is striking to note that the odds of suffering from higher no. of work-related health problems are significantly higher among those who reported being suffering from work-related stress at a greater extent as well as at a moderate extent (OR=3.402 and 2.260; $p<0.01$ and $p<0.05$, respectively) than their counterparts who felt to be suffering from such stress to a lower extent. Likewise, such odds are also found to be much higher among those respondents who are in fairly higher age group (45 years & above) and also who is in 35-44 years of age (OR=3.122 and 1.504) as against to those who are relatively at younger age group (34 years and below). However, the Wald-test results have turned out highly significant ($p<0.01$) only in the case of 45 years & above group. Next to these, it is conspicuous to note that the likelihood of suffering from a higher number of work-related health problems is significantly higher among those who own assets than not (OR=2.561; $p<0.01$). Why such a finding? Give one or two reasons. It is also conspicuous to note that the odds of suffering from a higher number of work-related health problems are comparatively higher among those extending their labor in terms of semi-skilled and skilled as against unskilled. Still, the Wald-test results in this regard didn't turn out as statistically significant.

On the other hand, the odds of suffering from higher no of work-related health problems are significantly lower among those respondents who belonged to nuclear families (OR=0.241; $p<0.01$),

Backward Castes (OR=0.277; $p<0.05$), studied up to high school & middle school levels (OR=0.227 & 0.334; $p<0.05$ & $p<0.05$, respectively) and also earning reasonably higher monthly earnings (Rs. 22001 & above; OR=0.416; $p<0.05$) than their respective reference category counterparts. All these results are in the expected direction.

Conclusion

The magnitude of respondents suffering from work-related problems to a greater extent is significantly (at different levels) higher among those who are reported to be experiencing work-related stress to a greater and moderate extent, who are in higher age group and owned assets as against their counterparts. Conversely, such likelihood is lower among those who are part of nuclear families, belonged to backward castes, have higher education, and earning higher monthly incomes. There should be adequate legislation and effective enforcement of the law to safeguard the unorganized women workers from hazardous and unhealthy working conditions. Occupational safety must be ensured by the employer, trade unions, and the government as well.

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Author Details

Dr. A. Sangamithra, Professor, Department of Economics, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India
Email ID: sangamithra@buc.edu.in

T. Athira, Ph.D. Researcher Scholar, Department of Economics, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India, Email ID: raviathira414@gmail.com