



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN UNORGANISED SECTOR IN TENKASI TALUK OF TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT The unorganised sector of the economy in India is the largest sector in term of employment of the workforce. It consists of agriculture and such related activities as forestry, livestock and non-agriculture. India is a dominant force in Asia's economic growth and home to the world's largest workforce some 500 million people. It is estimated that less than 12 percent of the workforce in India belongs to the formal sector, leaving more than 90 percent well over 447 million people in a labour force of almost 500 million in the informal sector. The scenario among women has been changing as the formal sector is shrinking and unable to provide employment opportunities to growing population, informal sector has an important role to play. The study mainly focused the socio-economic conditions of women in unorganised sector in Tenkasi Taluk of Tirunelveli District, Tamilnadu.

KEYWORDS : Unorganised, women, workers

INTRODUCTION

Women work mainly for economic independence, for economic necessity, as some women are qualified enough to work, for a sense of achievement and to provide service to the society. Most Indian women by and large undertake "productive work" only under economic compulsion. This is the reason for high female participation rates in economically under privileged communities.

Organised sector workers are distinguished by regular salaried jobs with well defined terms and conditions of employment, clear cut rights and obligations and fairly comprehensive social security protection. The unorganised sector, on the other hand, has no such clear cut employer-employee relationships and lacks most forms of social protection. Having no fixed employer, these workers are casual, contractual, migrant, home based, own-account workers who attempt to earn a living from whatever meager assets and skills they possess.

National Commission on Labour (1966-69) has defined unorganised labour as those who have not been able to organise themselves in pursuit of common objectives on account of constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy, small and scattered size of establishments and position of power enjoyed by employers because of nature of industry. The unorganised sector is characterised by the presence of factors viz. long hours of work, wage discrimination of men and women, lack of job security, no minimum wages, lack of minimum facilities at work place, ill-treatment, heavy physical work and sexual exploitation etc.

The labouring women generally work in unorganised sector. They are outside the reach of Protective Labour Laws and Trade Union Organisations. They are not offered fair wages and decent terms of work. There are hardly any opportunities to improve their income because in this sector, females work generally as laborers in unskilled occupations, do traditional work as domestic servants. The process of globalization, export oriented industrialization and relocation of industries from the developed to developing countries also lead to increase in women workers in unorganised sector.

The nature of women's work ranges from wage employment of self employment, family labour and piece rated work. The prevalence of women workers in urban unorganised sector is significant in number. They are engaged in activities like domestic work, construction work, small trades like brick making, coir and basket weaving, household industries etc. In rural unorganised sector women are engaged in agricultural activities, animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries etc.

The term unorganized sector when used in the Indian context is defined by National Commission for Enterprises in the unorganized sector, Government of India in their Report : 'The unorganised sector consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale or production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers'. The Arjun Sengupta Committee's report estimated that there are over 340 million (approximately 34 to 37 crore) workers in the unorganized sector in India, and they contribute around 60 percent

to the national economic output of the country. Around 28 crore work in the rural sector, of which an estimated 22 crore are in the agricultural sector. Around 6 crore are in urban areas. Women make up 11-12 crore, of which around 8 crore are engaged in agriculture.

Categories of Workers in the Informal Sector

The biggest problem with the informal sector in India is that there is no precise information about the total number of workers what to say of women engaged in this sector and also their respective ratios in various diversified occupations. The report of the National Commission on for Enterprises in the unorganised sector highlights the existence and qualification of unorganised or informal workers, defined as those who do not have employed security, work security and social security. This universe of informal workers now constitutes 92 percent of the total workforce. Whatever data is available, there is no precise and authentic information about the total number of women workers engaged in informal sector, still an estimate is drawn on the basis of available information.

Informal wage employment is comprised of employees of informal enterprises as well as various types of informal wage workers who work for formal enterprises, households, or who have no fixed employer. These include casual day labourers, domestic workers, industrial outworkers (notably home workers), undeclared workers, and part time or temporary workers without secure contracts, workers benefits, or social protection. Home based workers and street vendors are two of the largest sub groups of the informal workforce: with home based workers the more numerous but street vendors the more visible of the two. taken together they represent an estimated 10-25 percent of the non-agricultural workforce in developing countries and over 5 percent of the total workforce in developed countries.

on basis of previous researches and other reports, following categories of women workers in the informal sector have been identified:

1. **Construction Labour:** Women Labour have to work always as unskilled labour caring constructions material on their heads to the construction site, while the skilled / semi-skilled work is done by men.
2. **Domestic Workers :** this category of employment goes mainly to women especially young girls, in 1997-1998, there were some 1.68 million females domestic workers, while the number of male workers was only 0.62 million. the household workers include part-time and full-time workers.
3. **Garment Workers:** These women work with some big drapers, boutiques and stores; too same bias is evident that the women work as helpers to male tailors. These workers include those involved in knitting woollens.
4. **Vendors:** this is the most scattered category it includes women engaged in selling different types of commodities, like broomsticks, cane baskets, utensils, petty cosmetics, bangles, vegetables and those running road side tea stalls, etc., nearly 40 percent of total vendors are women and 30 percent of these women are the sole earning members in their families.
5. **Sales Girls :** These workers are further divided in two categories,

one, those moving from door to and place to place, other, those working in shops (mostly women related items like jewellery, Garment and cosmetics etc.)

Objectives

To study the socio economic background of the respondents.

Methodology

Profile of the study area

Tirunelveli about 2000 years old town of old tradition is the headquarters of Tirunelveli district. The total population of Tirunelveli District was 27, 23,988 as per 2001 census and 30, 72,880 as per census 2011. Out of the total population, males are 15, 18,595 and females 15, 54,285 as per census 2011 census. 4.36 percent of the state population lives in Tirunelveli District.

Tirunelveli district has 11 Taluks, 19 Blocks and 425 Village Panchayats. Among these 11 taluks, one taluk will be selected for the study. Tirunelveli, Tenkasi and Ambasamudram are the most densely populated Taluks in this District. Among these three taluks, Tenkasi Taluk is alone taken for the study. Tenkasi Taluk has 8 towns and 25 villages.

Collection of data

The data for this study was collected from primary sources. A simple interview schedule was used for collecting data from 250 respondents by using simple random sampling method.

Tools for Analysis

Percentage analysis and Chi-square test were used to study the socio-economic conditions of the respondents.

Analysis

Table 1 Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Respondents	Factors	Frequency	Percent
1	Age	20-30	77	30.8
		30-40	106	42.4
		40-50	40	16
		50-60	27	10.8
		Total	250	100
2	Education	Illiterate	46	18.4
		Literate	204	81.6
		Total	250	100
3	Occupation	Construction workers	36	14.4
		Tailors	29	11.6
		Garment workers	23	9.2
		Beedi Rollers	73	29.2
		Vendors	22	8.8
		Agricultural workers (including farming, oil mill and saw mill)	67	26.8
		Total	250	100
4	Family Type	Nuclear	183	73.2
		Joint	67	26.8
		Total	250	100
5	Family Size	1-4	82	32.8
		4-8	101	40.4
		8-12	52	20.8
		Above 12	15	6
		Total	250	100
6	Wage (per month)	Below Rs. 2000	119	47.6
		2001 - 4000	95	38
		4001 - 6000	36	14.4
		Above 6001	-	-
		Total	250	100

Source : Primary data

Table 1 shows the socio economic characteristics of the respondents in Tenkasi taluk. 42.4 percent respondents belong to the age group of 30 to 40 years. 81.6 percent of the respondents are literates. 52 percent of the respondents belong to nuclear family and their family size ranges between 1 to 8 members. 47.6 percent of the respondents are getting wage below Rs. 2000.

Table 2 Reason for doing the work by the Respondents

Reason	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Financial problem	184	73.6
To earn more	7	2.8
By force	13	5.2
Husband is idle	36	14.4
Others	10	4
Total	250	100

Source : Primary data

From the above table it is inferred that 184 (73.6 %) respondents are in the financial problem, 7 (2.8 %) are saying to earn more, 13 (5.2 %) are telling by force, 36 (14.4 %) respondents husbands are idle and 10 (4 %) are having some other reason such as Education, Marriage and Treatment for dependents.

Table 3 Age and Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Age				Total
	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	
Construction workers	1	18	8	9	36
Tailors	14	13	2	-	29
Garment workers	15	8	-	-	23
Beedi Rollers	14	38	14	7	73
Vendors	-	2	14	6	22
Agricultural workers	33	27	2	5	67
Total	77	106	40	27	250

Source : Primary data

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O-E)^2 / E$$

H₀ : There is no association between age and occupation

$$\chi^2 = 109.87$$

$$N = (r-1)(c-1) = (6-1)(4-1) = 15$$

$$\chi^2_{0.05} = 25$$

The calculated value of χ^2 is greater than the table value. Hence the hypothesis is rejected and we conclude that there is association between occupation and education level.

Table 4 Problems faced at the workplace by the Respondents

Problems	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Workload	170	68
Humiliation	37	14.8
Mental Harassment	32	12.8
Physical Harassment	11	4.4
Total	250	100

Source : Primary data

From the above table it is understood that 170 (68 %) respondents have heavy workload, 37 (14.8 %) are affected by humiliation from the employer, 32 (12.8 %) are suffered by mental harassment by the employees and owners and 11 (4.4 %) are affected by physical harassment by their male co-employees.

Conclusion

Women workers have to perform dual role of both outside employment with or without violent working conditions and also manage their homes. Lack of education and low income of the family is the compelling factor for the women folk to opt for seeking jobs in unorganised sectors to augment the family earning to sustain livelihood. Unemployment and temporary work are more common among women. Most women workers do not have any social security or access to health care benefits. It is strongly recommend that mere framing of policies and acts may not serve the purpose. Work has to be done the grass root level with proper feedback system in place to ensure that policies of equal treatment.

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