

Socio-Economic Perspective of Beedi Industry and Women Empowerment

Abstract

This paper deals with the condition of women in beedi making industry. It is well known that the beedi industry is an unorganized and exploitative in nature. The silent feature of this industry is that the use of child labour in that disguised way. Beedi industry is male dominated and women are there beedi rollers only. This often makes women subject to economic exploitation and not enough decision power for family affairs. This study is related with primary cross section data and as a result it has been found that there is need to frame special policy for women beedi workers to built women empowerment.

Keywords : Small Scale Industries, Women Empowerment.

Introduction

Small Scale Industries are providing large-scale employment next to agriculture in this district. It have played a vital role in the district's economy by providing large scale employment opportunities at relatively low capital cost, a wide entrepreneurial base, easy dispersal of industries in rural areas and concentration of certain industrial groups at specific areas. In Tonk district of Rajasthan the beedi industry plays a vital role .A beedi is a hand-rolled cigarette and the nature of beedi industry is exploitative as well as unorganized. The beedi industry is not particularly organized because production is predominantly carries out at the household level. According to P.R. Panchmukhi (2004) it is difficult to estimate precisely the number of people engaged in beedi making as women are paid on a piece work basis and are often assisted by their children and other family members. Child labour which is about 76.6% remarkable highly engaged as unskilled beedi worker at very low wage rate. The silent feature of this industry is that the use of child labour is in the disguised way. According to Sudarshan and Kaur (1999) ten percent of all female beedi workers and five percent of male beedi workers are under 14 years of age. The male children work and go to school, while the girls just work. The prejudice against the girls is an intrinsic part of this industry. Both type of skilled as well as unskilled labour engaged in the beedi making occupation. The beedi cottage industry is pervasive, some women engage in beedi rolling as a full-time occupation and are able to roll 800-1200 beedi during an 8-12 hour day. In this way they are paid less than their marginal productivity and the exploitation exists. About 40% of the beedi making population has been found to be satisfied with their working conditions and payments. Rests of the workers are unsatisfied with the payment. They are bound to do this work because of the unavailability of working opportunities. 40.3% of the sampled population has been found as a healthy one. The health and education are ignored under the unhygienic surrounding and working conditions of beedi making. According to experts beedi contains three times the amount of nicotine and carbon monoxide than other cigarettes. Disease such as T.B., Asthmatics etc are due to the unhygienic working conditions of this occupation. The beedi industry is male dominated, where the manufacturer, the contractor and the consumers are male and only the beedi rollers are female. Females have no right to take any kind of socio-economic decisions. It is observed by Nichter (2004) that beedi rolling is often preferred to other manual labour, particularly in communities where going outside the home to work in the fields of others is considered lower status than working at home. 61.3% of working age group (35-55) female population is employed in this occupation. This often makes women subject to economic exploitation. Thus, it becomes one of the purposes of the study to diagnose the socio-economic conditions of the workers. The main objectives of the study are:

1. To study the women empowerment in this sector.
2. To know the socio-economic conditions of workers..



Sulochna Meena
Govt.P.G.College,
Tonk, Rajasthan, India

Data

For this purpose primary cross-section data have been used and collected with the help of schedule to be applied on the sample labour units working in the beedi making occupation. The main variables for which data have been collected are level of employment, prevailing wage rate, value of daily output per worker, etc.

Sampling Design

A simple random sample has been attempted for the labour units working in the beedi making occupation of Tonk district in Rajasthan. The size of sample used is 10% of the total units.

Characteristics of Sample Units

The sample units have following characteristics.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Households

Out of total 300 household it has been found that 23.3% belong to the below poverty line and 76.7 % have been found to be above the poverty line. Those who are involved in beedi making activity only 20% of the household have sufficient wages to maintain their livelihoods. The main processes that could lead to women's empowerment are changes in women's mobility, social interaction, labour patterns, control over resources and decision making power. It has been noticed that almost all the above mention aspects are ignored in this sector.

Education Qualification of the Population

1. The 2.3% of the sampled population has been recorded as literate workers and the female have never get any type of formal education and 36.36% male and 26.31% female have got only the primary education.
2. The female education is still placed as non-productive investment in rural area.
3. The lack of education in females leads to less decision power regarding education of the children.
4. In this sector education is ignored.
5. Unskilled labour is unable to handle the any kind of technical work. Thus the preference of beedi making has been increased.

Employment Profile of the Population

1. 61..3% of working age group (35-55) female population is employed in this occupation.
2. The amount earned in this occupation not enough to control the decision power by women in financial affairs.
3. The beedi making work is seasonal in nature and in off season the workers are unemployed because in Tonk there is not any industrial work to do.
4. Child labour which is about 76.6%, remarkable highly engaged as unskilled beedi worker at very low wage rate.
5. The use of child labour has been found to be more in beedi making units.
6. The silent feature of this industry is that the use of child labour is in the disguised way.
7. The small scale industries have not been so capable to provide jobs to the interested persons.

Efficiency and Productivity of Workers

The data reflects some important facts about the working population.

1. Approach of substantial and productive education is still a big challenge for poor and deprived section of urban society.
2. To provide employment according to education and skill is further complicated task for the economy.
3. The female labour is still uneducated and unskilled and bound only to either household activities or beedi making occupation. These are accused of gender discrimination at every level of getting education and work.
4. There is no technical institute to increase the efficiency and productivity of labour in this area.

Satisfaction Level of the Population

1. About 40% of the beedi making population has been found to be satisfied with their working conditions and payments.
2. The female workers are satisfied with the job as they are not supposed to go outside their house.
3. Rest of the workers is unsatisfied with the payment. They are bound to do this work because of the unavailability of working opportunities.
4. The exploitation level found to be very high as the workers are paid low amount It contributes to decrease the satisfaction level.

Health status in the Occupation

1. 40.3% of the sampled population has been found as a healthy one.
2. Disease such as T.B., Asthmatics etc are due to the unhygienic working conditions of this occupation.
3. No special medical facilities are provided to the workers.

From the health point, it has been observed that the labour is not conscious about their health factor and has no knowledge and awareness of the disease.

Conclusion and Policy Implication

The Government should immediately enforce the provisions of child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 to prevent employment of children in beedi rolling or other hazardous occupations. The study also said that there is a need to link beedi workers with vocational training facilities in accordance with local realities to improve and upgrade their skills and status. The most of the employment generation schemes provide only unskilled jobs with minimum wages under several terms and conditions. There is not any employment guarantee scheme for different education levels for females.

Govt. should make change in its education system according to needs of the economy. Each person obtain education as par his priorities and in a situation when his priority is to survive. The education must be skillful and flexible with certain objectives of the development.

This overall picture is very dismal asking for a rightful action by the policy makers and planners so

that this section of society can be put into the mainstream of the development process. So the Government should come forward with such policies which will provide not only health, education and employment to its urban people but also women empowerment and connect them with the mainstream of development.

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