

## An Economic Analysis of Female Beedi Workers in Tirunelveli District of Tamilnadu

M. Chelliah\*, D. Amutha\*\*

### Abstract

The main objective of the study was to understand the socio - economic condition and health problems of the female Beedi workers at Tirunelveli district. The research selected 160 female beedi workers for the study using a purposive sampling method. Statistical tools like percentage, average, chi square tests, Cramer's V, standard deviation, t tests, and probability analysis were used. In order to find out whether there is any correlation between the family size and income of respondents, chi-square test has been applied. As the calculated value of Chi-square is greater than the table value at 5 percent level of significance, there is a relationship between the income of the respondents and their family size. It reveals that out of 160 beedi rollers 83.64 percent of beedi rollers reported they are facing frequent headache problem, 79.64 percent of beedi rollers said they have pain in the limbs and shoulder; 74.58 percent of beedi rollers said they have back pain, 68.67 percent of beedi rollers complained of eye problems and irritation, 36.48 percent of Beedi rollers said the long hours of sitting create pain in joints. 19.73 percent of beedi rollers complained about the gastric problem and 17.98 percent of beedi rollers complained other problems like fever, cough, cold etc. 14.69 percent of beedi rollers complained skin related problems, 12.63 percent of beedi rollers reported frequent body-ache, 11.98 percent of beedi rollers said they were facing respiratory problem due to smell of tobacco. 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 and their health problems which will help the government and NGO's to take remedial measures to promote the welfare of Beedi workers and to protect their rights.

**Keywords:** Beedi Workers; Women Headed Families; Unorganized Sector; Working Conditions; Child Labour; Health Hazards.

### 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. India's 1.5 million private sector

beedi workers are among the most exploited workers in India. Beedi rolling is one of the relatively most well researched industry in terms of the conditions of work and health condition of its direct and indirect work force [1]. The women's earnings from beedi-making constitute roughly 40 percent of the total income of most of the household. Indeed, for windows and women headed families, beedi-making provides a convenient means of survival [2]. At present, hardly 10 percent of beedi manufacturing takes place in the organized sector. Moreover, the bulk of the production takes place through sub contracting system [3].

A majority of the beedi workers belong to a lower socio-economic group. The occupational stresses

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**Author's Affiliation:** \*Ph.D. Research Scholar, Kamaraj College, Thoothukudi. \*\*Associate Professor of Economics, St.Mary's College (Autonomous), Tuticorin Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu - 628001.

**Reprint's Request:** D. Amutha, Associate Professor of Economics, St.Mary's College (Autonomous), Tuticorin Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu - 628001.

**Email:** amuthajoe@gmail.com

associated with long hours of work, continuous sitting work posture, exposure to tobacco and poor physical working conditions, are superimposed on the handicaps of poor socio-economic and nutritional status [4].

In Tirunelveli district, Melappalayam area of Tirunelveli town and Mukkudal in the rural Ambasamudram Taluk are the oldest centers of the beedi industry. In the district today, the system of making beedi in the factories or workshops are totally non-existent instead, the system of manufacturing beedi is through contractors and subcontractors employing home-based workers are the one prevalent.

At present there are more than 40 such trade mark holding companies and around 1,100 contractors and subcontractors operating in Tirunelveli. The main objective of the study was to understand the socio-economic condition and health problems of the female Beedi workers at Tirunelveli district.

### Review of Literature

Jeya singh [5] in his article "Women Beedi Workers of Vellore in North Arcot District" observed that beedi work was a major source of employment to the rural poor and the urban poor of this district. Metha [6] in his paper "Home Workers in Beedi Industry" expressed the view that passing of more laws was not a guarantee for effective protection to the beedi workers. He suggested that voluntary agencies, social institutions and also trade unions should play a vital role in effective implementation of the legislation.

Hussian [7] conducted a study on the exploitation of women and child labour in beedi industry in Sameerganj. According to this study, women and child labour were most widespread in the beedi industry where the Children were seen at work both at home and workshop. Though the income of the Child workers supplement the family income, the working conditions were deplorably bad. Giriappa [8] highlighted the role played by a specific rural sector with beedi-rolling with particular reference to its rural diversification.

A study was undertaken by him to evaluate the labour conditions of beedi workers in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka, with respect to their working conditions, production capacity, consumption pattern and standard of living. Pitchaimuthu. S [7] conducted a study on child labour in beedi industry in some villages of Tenkasi

Taluk in Tirunelveli District. His study revealed that majority of the women was engaged in beedi-making after attending their household duties. School-going male and female children assisted them in this work.

Koil [10] has made an analytical study of the socio economic conditions of female beedi workers in the Barsi Town of Solapur District in Madhya Pradesh. This study highlighted that the monthly income of the families of many beedi workers was not more than Rs.7001- whereas 50 percent of the families was living within the monthly income Rs.3001- Due to the excessively long hours (12 hours of work) they were victims of physical and mental fatigue.

Dharmalingam [11] conducted a study to collect social, economic and demographic features of women. This study showed that beedi making provided full time employment and some degree of economic and sexual exploitation and exposure to several health hazards, Further; exploitation in beedi making had given rise to conflicts at both at the family and at the society level.

Velayutham Saravanan [12] has made a study on Women Beedi Workers in rural especially Vellore and other towns in North Arcot. He observed that empowerment of women is an essential pre-condition for socio-economic development and for the eradication of social scourges like child labour. He analyzed the socio-economic conditions are-housing land detail, sources of income, indebtedness, education and fertility, behaviour of the beedi household.

#### *Objectives of the Present Study*

1. To analyze the socio economic conditions of female beedi workers.
2. To know the reasons for selecting job.
3. To ascertain the relationship between family size and monthly income.
4. To provide perception of satisfaction of income among the sample respondents based on marital status.
5. To evaluate the health problems of the female Beedi workers at Tirunelveli district.

### Methodology

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. Totally 482 families were involved in Beedi work in the field of study. The research selected 160 female beedi workers 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.

The interview schedule include various aspects such as social status, economic conditions, health problems, housing or working conditions, education facilities for their children and their future plan. The secondary data were collected from social workers working with the women in the unorganized sector.

Relevant websites periodicals and news papers also reviewed. The period of study covers three months of the year 2016. Statistical tools like percentage, average, chi square tests, Cramer's V, standard deviation, t tests, and probability analysis were used.

### *Findings*

#### *Age Wise Classification of the Respondents*

It is revealed that the percentage of middle age respondents is more i.e., 63.41%. As per the survey middle age women involvements is higher than that of old and young aged women beedi workers in the study area.

#### *Community Wise Classification of the Respondents*

The data reveals that the majority of the respondents belong to Backward Caste and their percentage is 59.32.

#### *Educational Qualification of the Respondents*

It is clear that the majority of the respondents i.e., 43.57 percentage completed the primary education and 18.23 percent of respondents are illiterate. Through NGOs even the illiterate persons are enrolled. The NGOs create awareness among the illiterates.

#### *The Number of Respondents and Their Family Size*

The majority of the respondents i.e., 53.06 percentage of families are having low size ranging between 1-3 members. The mean size of the family worked out to be 3.06 and standard deviation was 1.83 in the study area.

#### *Marital Status of the Women Beedi Workers*

Out of 160 women, about 72% were married, 4% were widows and 17.6% were unmarried women. Thus, women – headed households constituted 10% of the married sample women beedi workers.

#### *Nature of Work*

It indicates that 56.13 percent of the respondents carry out the job of beedi rolling as a main work, while 25.3 percent of them have the job as a secondary work and the remaining 18.7 percent of them perform this as a casual one.

#### *Age at Work*

It reveals that 25.4 percent of the respondents have entered the job of the beedi making between the age group of 10-15 years; 42.6 percent of the respondents have stepped into the job of beedi rolling at age group of 15-20 years; 18.6 percent of them have engaged in the occupation at the age group of 20-25 years. The rest of 13.4 percent of them have involved in the job of beedi rolling at group of 25-30 years.

#### *Nature of Involvement of Beedi Activity*

The study implies that 36.10 percent of the respondents do the job of beedi rolling as a full-time job. The remaining 64.02 percent of them out the occupation as a part time one.

#### *Reasons for Selecting Job*

The study indicates that 36.22 percent of the respondents have the occupation of beedi rolling because of poverty. 21.4 percent of them are doing the job due to unemployment, 28.6 percent of them accept the same as family profession. 8.6 percent of them perform this job for self-freedom. The remaining 5.4 percent of them have this job for other purposes like meeting their personal expenses, hoarding something and for their future.

#### *Working Hours*

According to the data, 45.3 percent of the sample respondents do the job for the period of 1 to 5 hours daily. The rest of 54.7 percent of them have the job for the period of 5 to 10 hours every day.

#### *Regular Availability of Work of the Respondents*

It has been revealed that, out of 160 respondents

75.11 percent of the respondents are having regular availability of work. The remaining 25.03 percent of the respondents are not having regular availability of work.

#### *Years of Experience*

It shows that a maximum of 37.27 percent of the total respondents has less than 5 years of experience followed by 25.45 percent with 5-7 years. 22.28 percent of the respondents have 7-9 years of experience, and 15.00 percent with 9 years and above of experience.

#### *Monthly Income of the Respondents*

The study revealed that 66% of the respondents are earning an income up to Rs.2000, 20% of the respondents are earning Rs.2000-3000 monthly, 4% of the respondents are earning Rs.3000-4000 monthly, and the others 10% of the respondents are earning Rs.4000-5000 monthly. The average monthly income of the women beedi workers is Rs.2184.53.

#### *Beedi Rolling (per day)*

It shows that 22.7 percent of the sample respondents have rolled 100 to 250 beedies every day, 14.6 percent of them have rolled 250 500 beedies. 26.7 percent of them have rolled 500 to 750 beedies daily. The remaining 36 percent of them have rolled 750-1000 beedies.

#### *Access to Primary Health Care Facilities*

The study reveals that out of 160 respondents, majority of 85.16 per cent of them used Primary Health Care facility and 14.84 per cent of them don't use Primary Health Care facility.

#### *Access to Government Hospital Facilities*

It reveals that out of 160 respondents, majority of 79.54 per cent of them utilised Government Hospital facility and 20.46 per cent of them don't utilised Government Hospital facility.

#### *Opinion on Services Rendered in Government Hospital*

Majority of the respondents (86%) were satisfied with the services in the government hospitals and 14% of them were not satisfied.

#### *Opinion on the Availability of Drugs and Medicines in Government Hospital*

The study shows that 56% of the respondents opined that sufficient drugs and medicines are available in the hospitals and 25% of them opined that there is insufficient availability of medicines. The remaining 19% of them have no opinion.

#### *Distance Travelled between Hospital and Residence*

The study revealed that majority of the respondents (45%) has to travel up to 3 km from their residence to get treatment in the government hospital. Nearly 53% of them have to travel between 3-9 km and 2% of them have to travel up to 10 – 15 km.

#### *Utilisation of Mode of Transport to Access Health Care Centre by Respondents*

A greater percentage of the respondents (76%) travelled by bus, 53% of them travelled by two wheeler, 19% travelled by auto and others (28%) by walk.

#### *Details about the Disease Affected*

It is inferred that majority of them are affected by minor diseases (56.03%) and the remains by major diseases (44.22%).

#### *Indebtedness of the Respondents*

It reveals that majority (74.33 percent) of respondents have debt and remaining 25.67 percent of respondents have no debt.

#### *Amount of Debt of the Selected Respondents*

It has been inferred that out of 160 respondents, 39.67 percent, 36.33 percent and 24.00 percent of the respondents have debts ranging in Rs.50,000 to Rs.1,00,000 and above Rs.1,00,000 and less than Rs.50,000 respectively.

#### *Sources of Debt of the Selected Respondents*

It reveals that the majority of (41.33 percent) respondents depended on banks for credit. Nearly 21.67 percent and 19.0 percent of the respondents borrowed from money lenders and friends and relatives. Only 18.00 percent borrowed from employer.

#### *Relationship between Family Size and Monthly Income*

A two-way table is prepared to test the

relationship between the income of the respondents and their family size. In order to find out whether there is any correlation between the family size and income of respondents, chi-square test has been applied. The results of the Chi-square test are furnished below.

Calculated value of Chi-square	= 41.63
Table value at 5 percent level	= 9.488
Degrees of freedom	= 4

As the calculated value of Chi-square is greater than the table value at 5 percent level of significance, there is a relationship between the income of the respondents and their family size.

#### *Significant Differences in Satisfaction of Income among the Sample Respondents Based on Marital Status*

In order to find out the significant difference in satisfaction of income among the sample respondents based on marital status, the 't' value was calculated and the calculated 't' value was found to be 0.4739 which is lower than the table value 1.97 which is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and concluded that there is no significant difference in satisfaction of income among the respondents between marital statuses.

#### *Step Wise Multiple Regression Dependent Variable Quality of Work Life*

It is revealed that three of the variables were entered into the equation and the order of inclusion was as follows: job satisfaction, quality of health and income. As each of the additional was entered, the multiple R and R<sup>2</sup> increased. This indicates that job satisfaction, quality of health and income were the best set of predictors of quality of work life having a combined contribution of about 98 per cent. Allowing one of the independent variables to operate, while controlling the other variables in the equation, revealed that it was job satisfaction which had the highest contribution to the quality of work followed by the quality of health and income respectively.

#### *Sources of Problems*

It indicates that 68.11 percent of the sample respondents face problem in terms of children; 23.4 percent of them face problem from husband side. The remaining 8.6 percent face problem from others like irrelevant climate for beedi rolling and ill-health.

#### *Health Problems*

Out of 160 beedi rollers 83.64 percent of beedi rollers reported they are facing frequent headache problem, 79.64 percent of beedi rollers said they have pain in the limbs and shoulder; 74.58 percent of beedi rollers said they have back pain, 68.67 percent of beedi rollers complained of eye problems and irritation, 36.48 percent of Beedi rollers said the long hours of sitting create pain in joints. 19.73 percent of beedi rollers complained about the gastric problem and 17.98 percent of beedi rollers complained other problems like fever, cough, cold etc. 14.69 percent of beedi rollers complained skin related problems, 12.63 percent of beedi rollers reported frequent body-ache, 11.98 percent of beedi rollers said they were are facing respiratory problem due to smell of tobacco.

#### **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 then 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 and their health problems 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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