



A STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN BEEDI ROLLERS IN AKOLE AND SANGAMNER TAHSILS OF AHMEDNAGAR DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA

Prakash Palande¹ & Prof. S. I. Kumbhar², Ph. D.

¹Research Scholar, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeet, Pune- 411014. nisd pune@nisd.org.in

²Associate Professor Bharati Vidhyapeeth, Deemed University, Social Work Department,

E-mail- drsi_kumbhar@rediffmail.com

Abstract

In Indian economy about 90% of the work force is in the unorganized sector despite of low wages, uncertainty of employment, lack of facilities, poor working conditions etc., Beedi manufacturing is also one of the industry of unorganized sector in India. The government has enacted many legislations to protect the unorganized labours of beedi manufacturing industry. However, these legislations and the state sponsored social security programmes have not produced the expected results, particularly in the case of women beedi rollers. Through the present study, efforts have been made to focused on the socio-economic and working conditions of women beedi rollers, residing in Akole and Sangamner blocks of Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Through the study author has examined the working and socio-economic conditions and study the reasons why women enter in the beedi rolling work. Author has observed that, majority of the women beedi rollers are facing several socio-economic and health problems. They are not getting any facilities from their employer and they are working in a poor working conditions.

Keywords: Women beedi rollers, Socio-economic conditions, Working conditions.



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I) Introduction :

In Indian economy about 90% of the workforce is in the informal or unorganized sector, despite of low wages, uncertainty of employment, lack of facilities, poor working conditions etc. The informal or unorganized sector is defined irrespective of the kind of workplace where as the activities are carried out, the extent of capital assets used, the duration of the operations of enterprise and in its operating at the main or secondary activity of owner. The unorganized sector in India has been a major part of economy, It has been providing employment to a substantial number of people and is also contributing significantly to the national output. Beedi manufacturing industry is one of the unorganized sector industries in India, which constituted 63.9% share of unorganized sector industries. In the world, India is the largest beedi producer accounting for about 85% of the total world

production. The location of this industry is still by largely the presence of cheap labour and availability of “Tendu” leaves used for the beedi rolling.

According to the reports of ministry of labour and employment, government of India, published in 2011, the number of beedi workers so far identified in India was 49.93 lakhs. Around 70% beedi workers are majorly concentrated in the various states in India. It is about a century old business. Beedi manufacturing sector is an agro based industry and second largest industry in India. It provides employment to millions of women who are mostly belonging to the poor economic family class. Beedi rolling work causes serious occupational hazards to the beedi rollers and their families. In India, the beedi rolling work is a traditional activity with highly labour intensive and predominantly unorganized. In the unorganized sector beedi manufacturing industry is among the major one. This industry has been classified as unorganized. Falling under the small scale and cottage industries sector. Beedi rolling is largely carried out at home, which employs a large number of women. The government has enacted many legislations to protect the unorganized labours of beedi manufacturing industry. However, these legislations and state sponsored social security programmes have not produced the expected results, particularly in the case of women beedi rollers. Until now, the tobacco control programmes have been mostly involved with reducing the burden due to cigarette consumption. However the beedi rollers, who bear the brunt of all the problems, have been largely ignored. The present study aims to focus on these ignored women beedi rollers and bring to light the multitude of problems they have to go through every day of their lives. Author has carried out this study with the broad objectives of getting a clear scenario of socio-economic and working conditions of women beedi rollers in Akole and Sangamner blocks of Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra.

II) **Significance of the study:**

The women who are engaged in beedi rolling work are facing serious problems like poverty, health hazard, family problems, indebtedness, poor accommodation facilities, insufficient nutritious food, illiteracy occupational stress etc. The author is keen to understand about the socio-economic and working conditions of women for the development and improvement of socio-economic conditions of women beedi rollers working in unorganized sector. The information and then analysis presented in the present study, too are likely to be useful, especially related to women workers in the beedi industry of Ahmednagar district, and the attitude of employers towards wellbeing of women beedi rollers can be put

light by the present study, is also likely to be useful value added knowledge to the mass community. Apart from this, the present study would be useful addition to the literature on the selected topic of study which is scarce in the context of women workers working in unorganized sector like beedi manufacturing industry in India.

III) Objectives of the study : On the basis of above discussion and significance of the study, some objectives have formulated, which are listed below.

- 1) To know how the occupational situation is created adverse effects on the livelihood of women beedi rollers.
- 2) To focus on the reasons to enter in beedi rolling work.
- 3) To know about the working conditions of women beedi rollers.
- 4) To know about the extent of monthly income and monthly savings of women beedi rollers.
- 5) To know about the indebtedness of women beedi rollers.

IV) Literature Review :

1) A. K. Mishra (2015), has stated that, beedi workers are weak segment of the labour force which has increased involvement of women in beedi rolling activity. In the opinion of the author, the socio-economic and working condition of beedi workers at present and in the past have not been hopeful. Author aimed at gaining near into the socio-economic state of women beedi rollers at KARCHHANA near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. The main object of the study was to focus on the socio-economic conditions of the women beedi rollers. In this context author have observed that, majority of women beedi rollers were from the marginalized society and therefore, they were socially, and economically backward. Poverty was the main reason that induced the women to involve in the beedi rolling work. Author has also observed that majority of the women beedi rollers were earn below Rs.1500/- per month, which is not sufficient to maintain their family.

2) P. Tiwari and N. Parashar (2014), have aims at gaining insight into the socio-economic condition of women beedi rollers. Through the study author have discussed on the trading model and workers problems in beedi industry. Through the study author have found that, women beedi rollers do not have any basic facilities, and the welfare schemes for them are not boring a expected results. In the opinion of author, welfare schemes failed to reach them. Author have observed that, women beedi rollers, are deprived of their basic rights and

they are exploited by the employers and the contractors. Authors have also observed that, majority of women beedi rollers are houseless, and they are paid less than what is their due. In the opinion of author there is an urgent need for the protection of their right, and initiatives should be required by the government, NGO's to support and rehabilitate women beedi rollers so that they can be equally treated in the society.

3) G. Anuradha and K. V. Eswar Prasad (1985), have focused on the wages and working conditions, living condition and overall socio-economic conditions of beedi rolling workers. Through the study author have observed the following facts which are related to socio-economic conditions of beedi workers specially with women workers---

i) The weak bargaining power of the workers and women workers in particular involved in the various stages of production of beedi.

ii) Non-recognition of women as an important segment of the labour force contributing substantially to production by the employer and the trade unions.

iii) There is a total lack of organization of any kind among the women beedi rollers to fight for or protect their interests.

iv) High incidence of alcohol abuse by their men thereby adding greater misery to the women workers.

4) S. Giriappa (1987), has highlighted the socio-economic conditions of women workers in beedi industry. Through the study author has observed that, about 20% of the women heads were in different to their husband or other males and in turn they reported that their husbands were indifferent towards them. Through this study author has found that, the indifference towards children and other females was greater. Author has also found that in some cases, the diseases were chronic and disabled workers so that they could not undertake any other work other than beedi rolling. It was also observed that, in certain cases, male family members smoked off the sizeable quantity of beedies that they rolled. This aspect put them in ever deficit with the contractors who would debit their account the difference in actual and should be production.

5) V. S. Deshmane (2008), has observed that, compared to male headed beedi rollers households, female beedi rollers do participate substantially or equally in some of the household and work conditions. Through the study author has attempted to impute the total labour time of women beedi rollers, spent on various household chores, like cooking, serving, washing, shopping etc. In this context author has observed that the contribution of women

beedi rollers is substantial. In this study paper, some socio-economic variables such as, housing, health problems, etc. are considered where in the situation demands substantial improvements. Author has also observed that, women are taking active decision regarding family matters, such as maintenance, expenditure, children's education, festivals, etc.

V) Scope of the study :

A study of socio-economic conditions of workers working in unorganized sector, is very vast and to study its various aspects are also very comprehensive and can be studied from different angles. To give justice to the study and to get reliable information, it was decided to focus the attention only on to study the socio-economic and working conditions of women beedi rollers.

VI) Limitation of the study :

- i) The present study is restricted to the selected women beedi rollers of Akole and Sangamner tahsils of Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other beedi industry situated in the other district in different states of India.
- ii) Some biased responses existed while filling up the questionnaire, however due care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of information provided by the respondents.

VII) Geographical Scope of the Study :

The study has been conducted in the Akole and Sangamner blocks of Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Therefore, the geographical limit of the study sets for the Akole and Sangamner blocks of the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra.

VIII) Selection of the Sample :

For the study purpose 303 women beedi rollers working in Sangamner and Akole blocks has been selected by using convenient sampling method. Around 3031 women beedi rollers are engaged in these two blocks. 10% of the total numbers of beedi rollers have been selected as a sample for the present study (ie:303 respondents) The following table indicates the number of women beedi rollers selected from Sangamner and Akole block.

Blocks/Segments	No. of Respondents (Women)
Sangamner (Total 2454)	10% of total number 245
Akole (Total 577)	10% of total numbers 58
Total	303

IX) Research methodology :

The present study is descriptive in nature. The present study is based on primary data/information collected from 303 women beedi rollers through the well-structured interview schedule. Required information was also collected through focus group discussion and personal discussion with women beedi rollers, local leaders, factory owners, union leaders etc. Apart from this, observation method is also been used. To fulfill the objectives of the study, primary information have been collected directly from the women beedi rollers (respondents) through interview schedule. Secondary information have been collected through the research papers, articles, published in the various journals, periodicals, magazines and published books and government reports etc. The proportionate certified random sampling method has been followed for selection of sample. Questionnaire designed had open ended questions. All the information is presented in a table from by using percentage method.

X) Result and discussion :

Table No.1 Age wise distribution of the respondents (Beedi Rollers)

Blocks	Age Groups			Total
	Upto 30 yrs.	31 to 50 years	Above 50 Yrs	
Akole	19 (18.8%)	19 (18.8%)	19 (18.8%)	57(18.8%)
Sangamner	82 (81.2%)	82 (81.2%)	82 (81.2%)	246(81.2%)
Total	101 (100%)	101 (100%)	101 (100%)	303(100%)

According to the collected information, there were equal samples from all the age groups selected, that comes 19 (18.8%) each from Akole block and 82 (81.2%) from Sangamner block. In total 101 respondents, were selected from three age groups and further divided into 19 and 82 each for the selected blocks of Ahmednagar district.

It is relevant to know about the place of work preferred by the respondents. The following table shows the fact about the preferred places for work.

Table No.2 Preferred Place for the Beedi Rolling work

Preferred Places	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
At Home Only	153	50.50 %
In factory Only	150	49.50 %
Total	303	100 %

From the above table it is reveals that, 50.50% respondents are preferred to work from their home only so that, they can manage the domestic works also along with the beedi rolling activity. 49.50% respondents preferred to work at the factory only. Factory owners are also

allowed to roll beedies at home so that they can avoid the binding to provide required facilities as per the Acts.

Following table shows the educational status of the respondents.

Table No.3 Educational status of the respondents

Educational status	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	100	33.0 %
Primary Education	110	36.3 %
Secondary Education	85	28.1 %
Higher Secondary Education	08	2.6 %
Total	303	100 %

Poverty, ignorance towards education, lack of educational opportunities are some of the major reasons for illiteracy and less education among the women beedi rollers. It is clearly evident from the above table that, illiteracy among respondents is 33.0% where as 36.3% respondents have completed their primary level education. 28.1% respondents have completed secondary level education and only 2.06% respondents have completed their Secondary education. It is observed that, through the educational level is increasing among the women beedi rollers, there is no appropriate employment opportunities available to them in the selected study areas and therefore, they induced to accept beedi rolling work to earn money for their livelihood.

The following table indicates the socio-economic and working conditions of the respondents. The given table highlight the adverse effects of beedi rolling occupation on the livelihood of the respondents.

Table No.4 Adverse effects of beedi rolling occupation on the livelihood of Women Beedi Rollers.

Adverse effects	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Health Problems Increased	48	15.8 %
Negligence towards Child care	23	7.6 %
Indebtedness increased due to low earning	36	11.9%
Limitations on family duties due to heavy work loads	41	13.5%
All the above effects	155	51.1%
Total	303	100 %

As per the information provided by the respondents 15.8% of them are facing the health problems. 7.6% respondents have stated that, due to full day engaged in beedi rolling work, they are unable to take care of their child. 11.9 % respondents have stated that. They are not getting sufficient money from this occupation to maintain their family. Due to full

day working and heavy work load there are many limitations on the family duties stated by 13.5 % respondents. Majority of the respondents (51.1%) have stated that, due to beedi rolling occupation, all the above stated adverse effects have been occurred in their daily life.

It is relevant to understand the main reasons to enter in beedi rolling profession. The following table indicates the facts regarding this.

Table No. 5 Reasons to enter in Beedi Rolling work (Multi Response)

Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Extreme Poverty	301	99.3 %
Unemployment	206	67.9 %
Other reasons	16	5.2 %

Above table shows that, out of 303 respondents, 301(99.3%) respondents have stated that, poverty is the major reason for them to enter in to beedi rolling work. 67.9% respondents have stated that unemployment and lack of alternative opportunities is also one of the major reason for them to enter into the beedi rolling work, and apart from this, need of extra earing for the family expenditure, unemployment and addicted male family head expenditure on children education, expenditure on medical treatment are also the major reason for them to enter into the beedi rolling work, as stated by 5.2% respondents. Significantly no any respondents have stated that, they entered in to the beedi rolling work with self-motivation.

Table No. 6 Daily Working Hours

Working Hours	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 8 Hours	05	1.6 %
8 Hours to 12 Hours	140	46.2 %
Above 12 Hours	158	52.1 %
Total	303	100 %

The above table shows that, majority of the respondents(52.1%) working more than 12 hours daily. The reason is that, to roll 1000 beedies women workers required more than 12 hours and apart from this they have to do their household works, care of children and elderly people etc. 26.2% respondents working for 8 hours to 12 hours daily. Only 1.6% respondents have stated that, they are working below 8 hours daily. Some time it may happen that, employer/contractor use to give heavy work load of rolling 2000 beedies, therefore, women beedi roller are working even upto 19 hours to complete the work target. It shows that, respondents have to work for a long hours. Due to poverty they have to work daily for a longer period. All these things are adversely affected on the physical and mental health of the women beedi rollers.

Following table indicates the various facilities available for women beedi rollers.

Table No. 7 Various Facilities Available in the Factory.

Facilities	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Ventilated and Specious place for work	07	2.3 %
Proper sitting arrangement	21	7.0 %
Provision of drinking water	31	10.3 %
Toilets & Urinals	08	2.6 %
Other facilities	-	-
No any facilities	236	77.8 %
Total	303	100 %

From the above table it is revealed that, notmuch facilities are available from the employer or contractors to the women beedi rollers. Only 2.3% respondents have stated that, they have provided ventilated and specious place for the work. 7.0% respondents have stated that, there is a proper sitting arrangement in the factory. 10.3% have stated that, there is a provision for drinking water. There is proper arrangement of toilet and urinals in the factory stated by only 2.6% respondents. There is no facilities like crèche for the children and the canteen facilities in the factory for the women beedi rollers. It is observed that, majority of the factories are just like godown with no basic facilities. Due to lack of proper ventilation, tobacco dust saturated at the work places which is caused to various diseases. Apart from this, tobacco and tendu leaves stored in the same building the beedi rollers do not have a proper place to sit and work. Majority of the respondents (77.8%) have stated that, they are not getting any facilities from their employer.

The following table through a light on the monthly income range of the women beedi rollers.

Table No. 8 Monthly Income from the Beedi rolling work

Income Range	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Up to Rs. 500	150	49.5 %
Rs. 501 to Rs. 1000	33	10.9 %
Rs. 1001 to Rs. 2000	30	9.9 %
Rs. 2001 to Rs.3000	88	29.0 %
Rs. 3001 to Rs.4000	01	0.3 %
Rs. 4001 to Rs.5000	01	0.3 %
Total	303	100 %

From the above table it is revealed that, there is hardly any respondent can earn more than Rs. 3000/- per month. It is seen that, majority of respondents (49.5%) earn only Rs.500/- or less in a month. 10.9% respondents are earning Rs.501/- to Rs.1000/- per month. It is also observed that 29.0% respondents are earning Rs.2001/- to Rs.3000/- per month from the beedi rolling work. Only 0.3% respondents earn Rs.3001/- to Rs.4000/- per month and

only 0.3% have earn above Rs.4000/- per month. It appears from the above table that, as the income of beedi rollers(respondents)depends on the rate per 1000 beedies rolled, and this rate is very less. Therefore, the majority of respondents have stated that, they are not getting sufficient money to maintain their family. Apart from this there are some mal practices also take place in beedi rolling job like providing lesser quantity and lower quality of tendu leaves, high rejection of rolled beedies by the contractors or employer. All these things are also adversely impacted on the economic condition of the respondents.

Due to lower income from the beedi rolling job indebtedness has also increased among the women beedi rollers. The fact regarding the indebtedness of women beedi rollers has been indicated in the following table.

Table No. 9 Indebtedness among respondents

Indebtedness	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	210	69.3 %
No	93	30.6 %
Total	303	100 %

The above table shows the fact about indebted ness among the women beedi rollers. It is revealed that, majority of the respondents rollers (69.3%) have taken the loan to fulfill their necessities or needs. The loan is taken for the purpose of marriage, children education, construction or repairing of house, medical treatment etc. Only 30.6% women beedi rollers have not taken any loan. The loan was taken from the money lenders, relatives or friends and private or public banks etc. some time it may happen that, due to rigid rules and regulations, and lack of authentic documents like Adhar Card, Voter ID card etc. It is difficult to get a loan from the banks, therefore, majority of the respondents take a loan from private money lenders on the higher interest rates, which is again creates difficulties for them in repayment of loan. On this background it is highly impossible for them to save some money. To understand the extend of monthly saving made by the respondents, is also one of the important objectives of the present study.

Table No. 10 Extend of Monthly Saving made by the Respondents.

Monthly Savings	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
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Up to Rs. 100/-	139	45.9%
Rs. 101/- to Rs. 500/-	23	7.6%
Rs. 501/- to Rs. 1000/-	01	0.3%
No any savings	140	46.2%
Total	303	100%

From the above table it is revealed that, 46.2% respondents are not able to save any money. 45.9% have stated up to Rs.100/- per month. 7.6% respondents can save Rs.101/- to Rs.500/- and only 0.3% respondents can save Rs.501/- to Rs.1000/- per month from their earnings. They save money for their better future and emergency needs. According to the information provided by the respondents, not many of them are able to save money from their earnings due to poverty, indebtedness and increasing cost of standard of living.

XI) Major findings of the study :

- 1) Extreme poverty, ignorance toward education, lack of educational opportunities are some of the major reasons for illiteracy and lower educational level among the women beedi rollers in the selected study area. The study area is not industrially developed and therefore, there is no adequate employment opportunities. Therefore, women and girls are forced to accept the job of beedi rolling.
- 2) It is found that, due to acceptance of beedi rolling job, majority of the respondents are facing several socio-economic and family problems like negligence towards child care and household duties, increased indebtedness etc. Apart from this, due to continuous contact with tobacco dust, majority of the respondents are also facing health problems.
- 3) It is found that majority of the respondents work for more than 12 hours to 16 hours in a day. There is no other option for them and they have to accept tedious job of beedi rolling for that they get meager wages as compensation.
- 4) Through the study it is observed that, not much facility is available in the factory for the respondents. There is lack of basic facilities like toilets, crèche, urinals etc. and there is not a proper provision of drinking water. The place of work is also shanty and there is a lack of proper ventilation. The working places are just like godown. Some working places are so congested, that the people are not able to breathe. Women beedi rollers are not getting other facilities like medical benefit, maternity benefits, bonus, etc.
- 5) It is found that, hardly any respondent can earn more than Rs.3000/- to Rs.4000/- per month. The income of beedi rollers depends on the rate per 1000 beedies that they rolled. Majority of the respondents hardly earn up to Rs.500/- per month. There are so many mal practices in the payment of the wages and therefore, majority of the respondents get very

less amount in hand. There is a high rate of rejection of rolled beedies by the employer or contractor due to providing lower quality of tendu leaves.

- 6) It is observed that, majority of the respondents could not save even Rs.100/- per month, and very few of them save up to Rs.501 to Rs.1000/- per month. It is observed that, saving rate among the respondents was very less due to poverty, increasing cost of standard of living, and increasing indebtedness.

XII) Conclusion :

On the basis of collected information and finding of the study it is concluded that, the socio-economic conditions of women beedi rollers in the study area are adversely affected due to acceptance of beedi rolling job. They are also facing many serious chronic diseases due to tobacco dust and unhygienic working conditions in the factory. Majority of beedi rollers are facing several socio-economic and health problems, as very few alternate survival options are available for them in the selected study area. The study areas are drought prone and unindustrialized areas in the Ahmednagar district. There is lack of job opportunities and thus, they are forced to accept beedi rolling job to earn money and maintain their household expenditure.

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