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SOCIO –ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF POWER LOOM WORKERS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The power loom sector is the labour intensive one. For efficient functioning of the unit, problems of the workers must be addressed. The problems of the workers generally are of socio and economic nature. In general the behavior of the workers is influenced by many factors at the work place as well as at home. Young and educated workers perform well at the work place. Noise, pollution and lack of basic amenities at work place are having a major influence on the efficiency of the worker. His income and expenditure on different social obligations are creating stress on the worker. Addiction or habituation to various intoxicants is also a major problem. An in-depth analysis of various socio – economic factors and conditions will be helpful to know the factors which attract, motivate and influence the power loom workers.

KEYWORDS: Literacy, Intoxication, Pollution, Stress, Earnings, Absenteeism.

INTRODUCTION :

The textile industry has an important role in Indian economy. It is accommodating near about 45 million people directly and 82 million people indirectly. It is the second highest employment provider in the country after agriculture. Its importance is underlined by the fact that it accounts for around 4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, 14 per cent of industrial production, 9 per cent of excise collections and 18 per cent of employment in industrial sector along with 11 per cent of the country's total export earnings. It is one of the largest contributing sectors of India's exports worldwide. Power loom sector is the main contributor in textile industry. In India 5.38 lakh power loom units with 24.34 lakh power looms employing 60.86 lakhs and contributing 58.26 percent of total cloth production. There are 1.25 lakh shuttles less looms functioning in unorganized power sector in textile industry. Satisfied worker is an asset to the industry. But the power loom workers are unhappy due to various socio economic factors like age, literacy, marital status, absenteeism, earnings, owner attitude etc.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The weavers and other workers are directly involved in the process of cloth production are suffering from socio-economic problems such as illiteracy, age, length of service, income, intoxication, working conditions and other factors. These factors certainly show their impact and influence the unorganized power loom sector.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main intention of this study is to identify the socio-economic problems of power loom workers and to suggest suitable measures to overcome these problems. The following are the basic objectives of the present study:

1. To examine the socio and economic reasons for preferring the job of worker in power looms.
2. To understand the social, marital and economic status of the workers.
3. To study the influence of literacy and education of power loom workers on power loom sector.
4. To understand the nature of the work and evaluation of health of the workers.
5. To study the influence of age and length of service on power loom workers.

METHODOLOGY:

The present research study is based on the primary data collected from 180 workers in well-structured questionnaire from different areas of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh to make an in-depth analysis. In the sample study 52 per cent of respondents' information is gathered from Telangana region, 31 per cent from Rayalaseema and 17 per cent from Andhra region depending on the concentration of power looms in Andhra Pradesh. The systematic tabulation and analysis is made to find the solutions. The personal interviews and discussions with the government officials, labour union leaders, NGOs who are concerned with the power looms are also considered.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A research work on labour absenteeism in Textile industry in Sholapur and its causes and its effect on power looms industry is did by V.S.Mangnale (1987). This study identified the workers problems such as meager income, working condition of the unit, age and literacy. Meager income is found to be the main problem. A research work on socio economic problems of power loom industry in Malegaon is conducted by B.M. Dolle (1992). This study identified many socio – economic problems of power loom workers in the power loom industry of Malegaon– old age, poor technology, unhygienic working conditions and also the problems of owners like scarcity of finance, marketing problems etc. Y. N. Rao (1994) had studied all the aspects related to the financial position and modernization of the Indian textile industry. He stated that the government should reduce taxes & duties on the textile industry. Swadeshi Jagaran Munch(2008) an NGO studied the causes of weavers' deaths in power looms and identified meager income, frequent strikes and unit shut downs, power shortage, old age, indebtedness, accumulated stocks are the reasons for this in their study. S. Galab and E. Revati (2009) did her study on causes for suicides in weavers at Siricilla in Karimanagar district and identified the old age, illiteracy, family burdens, low incomes, unavailability of regular work, frequent power disturbance, ill health etc are the main socio economic problems of power loom workers. Uttam Paul (2013) of West Bengal identified the illiteracy of workers, low income, indebtedness, age etc are the socio economic problems of workers and little technology looms, low productivity, shortage of finance, tax structure etc. are the main problems of power loom units. Pradeep Gangurde(2014) made a study on socio economic conditions of the power loom workers of Bhiwandi and found low income, unhygienic conditions, health problems, addiction, low technology of looms etc are the problems faced by the workers. Fatima Mehar Sultana (2016) attempted on socio-economic conditions of power loom weavers and identified as low earnings, literacy, age etc are influencing the power loom weavers.

ANALYSIS:

1. Age Composition: When age of the power loom workers is considered, different age groups are found among the workers. The maximum workers are in the middle age group between 35 years to 50 years. They constitute 67 percent. Only 16 percent are below 35 years, 12 percent are above 50 years of age. The data shows that the power loom industry is not able to attract the able younger group.

The youth is not showing much interest in the decentralized power loom sector. The reasons given by the respondents are the nature of the work, working conditions, working hours and above all the little amount of income. Due to age related problems like joint pains, eyesight, hearing problems and respiratory problems, the old age people have to stick to the workers' job in power looms. The reasons for the middle age work force, which constitute the maximum number, are different. They are continuing in the profession because of lack of technical knowledge to get a good job, non-availability of other jobs near their native places, family responsibilities and burdens.

2. Community Composition of Power Loom Workers: It is found in the study that 74 percent of workers belong to

B.Cs, 14 percent from S.Cs, 7 percent from S.Ts and 5 percent from other communities. As a traditional occupation, since ancient period, castes like Saley, Padmashali, Karnasali, Devanga, Thogata etc. are in the weaving activity of cloth manufacturing. These are backward classes. At present the scenario is changed and different other backward castes like Kurava, Yadava, Kummara, Gandla, Kapu, Gouda and other castes also entered into this field of power loom sector. Working in power looms is being treated like any other profession. The weaving and other skills which are related to power looms can be easily acquired with little training. The government is also offering short term training courses and apprenticeship to the aspirants by paying stipend irrespective of community.

3. Level of Education in Power Loom Workers: Out of the sample study 131 or 73 percent are literates. The level of education among literate power loom workers varies. In this sample study 56 percent of workers had primary level of education, 28 percent had secondary education, 14 percent had intermediate education and 2 percent had the qualifications of graduation and other. Education is the most important element in improving the technical skills of the workers. It makes them alert to understand up to-date information, trends and changes in labour laws, rights and protection from exploitation from owners.

4. Types of Houses of Power Loom Workers: Their financial status reflected in the nature of their residential houses' status. In this study it is found that 27 percent of sample study staying in huts, 34 percent in tiles houses, 28 percent in roof sheets houses and only 11 percent of workers residing in RCC buildings. Most of them are living in unhygienic conditions. For the frequent repairs of huts and thatched houses workers are spending significant amount of money and time at the cost of loss of work hours. Repairs also cause for inconvenience to family members.

5. Family Size of the Workers: In the study, 49 percent of respondents are having the family size of four or below four the remaining 51 percent of workers are having more than four members in the family. The average family size is 5.1 members. It is found in the study that 31 percent of respondents having the family size of four members, 28 percent with five members, and 23 percent with six and above members, 14 percent with three members and 4 percent with two members.

6. Type of Schools attended by children: Out of 180 families 11 families are not providing education to their school age children. It is found in the present study that 63 percent of children are going to private schools and 37 percent are attending the government/aided/municipal schools. Their preference is mostly for private schools and it is increasing their financial burden.

7. Designations of the Workers: At power looms different categories of workers are employed based on nature of the work. In the sample study 52 percent are weavers, 27 percent are japers, 7 percent are wypenys, 7 percent are warpers, 5 percent are electricians and 2 percent are in other categories.

The wages to weavers, wypenys and warpers is paid on piece rate on the basis of peeks counting. These workers have to work 12 hours per day in two shifts. The remaining categories work in day shift and paid on time rate basis. Weavers' job is the most tedious job. In duty periods he has to manage 8 power looms at a time and for vigilant observations they have to move in between them to observe the yarn breakages. On an average a weaver walks nearly 22 KM to 25 KM in between the power looms in a shift. It results strain on the legs especially on joints causing the joint pains and forcing them to absent from the duties and in long run they leave the power loom industry. One more reason is, the weaver has to change the shuttles every fifteen minutes in each power loom. This requires concentration of the weaver and ultimately results in mental strain.

8. Reasons for Entering into this Profession: The respondents showed different reasons for their entry into the power loom sector. In the sample study of 180 respondents, 56 percent respondents took it as hereditary occupation, 9 percent stated it as an interest, 9 percent mentioned it as easy availability, 6 percent chosen for its

good demand, 8 percent preferred it as it is nearer to their native place and 3 percent for its flexibility. There are certain families in ancient period who were dedicated only to weaving of cloth as their community profession and they are called as weaver community.

9. Experience and length of service in power looms: The length of service below 5 years is recorded in 10 percent of workers, 5 to 10 years in 25 percent, 10 to 15 years in 39 percent, 15 to 20 in 14 percent, 20 to 25 years in 8 percent and 25 years and above service employees found as 4 percent. The overall 78 percent of respondents are having the service in between 5 to 20 years.

10. Total Income of the Family: The family income of power loom worker includes the wages of workers and earnings of the other family members. In the study, the respondents said that on an average each power loom worker earns rupees 2000 to 2500 per six days week, if he did his duties regularly.

In the study it is found that 12 percent of the families earns below 5000 rupees, 24 percent of respondents earn in between rupees 5000 – 7500, 29 percent earn between 7500 to 10000, 16 percent earn between 10000 to 12500, 10 percent earn between 12500 to 15000, 6 percent earns in between 15000 to 20000 rupees and remaining earn more than 20000 rupees per month.

Only 35 percent of the power loom workers who are earning more than ten thousand rupees per month are leading a comfortable life. The age of the respondents, responsibilities, other family member's incomes, health conditions, nature of work and other factors are influencing the power loom workers' earnings.

11. Occupation of the Spouses & other Family Members of Power Loom Workers: With regard to occupation of the spouses & other family members the 89 percent of workers are married. 84 percent of the spouses and other family members engaged in different financial activities. It is found that 3 percent of power loom workers' spouses are engaged in government jobs, mainly in teaching profession, 16 percent of spouses are staying as house wives, 46 percent engaged in beedi rolling, 6 percent in leaf plates manufacturing, 18 percent on tailoring & embroidery and 12 percent engaged in other activities like ayas, domestic servants, labours, private school teachers, kirana shops, beauty parlors and other business activities.

12. Family expenditures of the workers: In the study 5 percent of respondents' expenditure is below 5000 rupees, 44 percent spend rupees between 5000 to 7500, 32 percent in between 7500 to 10000 rupees, 15 percent's expenditure is 10000 to 15000 and only 4 percent of workers spend more than 15000 rupees per month. The expenditure on different items include food grains, house rent, cloths, children's education fee, medical expenses, recreation, phone charges and other miscellaneous expenses. 23 percent of workers family expenditure found more than that of their earnings.

13. Total Savings of the Workers: 23 percent of power loom workers do not have any savings, 24 percent save below 2000 per month, 18 percent save between 2000 to 5000 rupees, 17 percent save 5000 to 10000 rupees and 16 percent save more than 10000 rupees per month.

14. Debts Position of Workers: In the survey 76 percent of workers had debts and 24 percent of workers were free from debts. The workers expressed different opinions and reasons for their debts burden. Insufficient income from their jobs is the major reason. The frequent strikes and frequent shutdowns of power looms, ill health and family burdens and responsibilities forcing them to go for loans from other people and money lenders at higher interest.

15. Outstanding Debt amount of Workers: In the sample study 76 percent of respondents are suffering from debt burden. It is found in the study that 11 percent of workers had debts below 25000 rupees, 27 percent of workers had the debts of 25000 to 50000 rupees, 25 percent of respondents had the debts in between 50000 to 75000, 23 percent of workers had debt amount of 75000 to 100000 and 14 percent of respondents had more than 100000 rupees of debts. On an average every respondent had a debt amount of rupees 69526.

16. Source of Debt: It is found that 44 percent of debt respondents taken the loans from their friends and relatives, 2 percent loans from asamis/owners, 41 percent of respondents taken from money lenders, 9 percent from chit funds and 4 percent from banks and other institutions.

The banks charges 11 to 16 percent interest per annum whereas money lenders charge between 24 to 60 percent per annum. Many of the workers are mortgaging gold and other properties for loans. The lenders are very strict in recollection of their loans, if any person fails to pay the interest in a specified time they are forcing and creating additional loan for the defaulted amount.

17. Purpose of Debt: The respondents expressed various reasons for taking loans. They are forced to take loans in times of special occasions such as marriage ceremonies, religious functions, construction of houses, sickness, strikes etc. Another major reason is children's marriage. It is found that 18 percent of power loom workers borrowed the amount for the treatment of ill health, 15 percent for their children's education, 53 percent for their children marriages and 14 percent for other reasons.

The ill health includes the worker's and their family members. This category of expenditure is not predictable

18. Absenteeism: Absenteeism is the practice or habit of being an absentee and an absentee is one who habitually stays away from work. Absenteeism is the failure of the worker to report for work when he is scheduled to work. Absenteeism is the total man shifts lost because of absence as a percentage of the total number of man shifts scheduled to work.

In the study it is found that 7 percent of workers are absent for below 15 days, 18 percent are in between 15 to 30 days, 31 percent are between 30 to 45 days, 24 percent stayed in the range of 45 to 60 days and 20 percent absent for more than 60 days.

The absenteeism is found to be more in night shifts. Weavers, warper's absenteeism found more than the other workers in the study. The more absenteeism is a financial loss to the worker as well as owner of the power loom unit.

19. Reasons for Absenteeism: Many reasons are found for absenteeism in the study. Due to self-ill health 24 percent, family ill health 10 percent, 48 percent for tiredness and 14 percent for other reasons like functions, social & religious and festivals, remaining 4 percent stated the others reasons.

It is observed in the work sheds that proper ventilation, sanitation facilities and other hygienic facilities are absent. The absenteeism is not uniform in all seasons. In the summer season high temperature, sultry environment are the reasons for the workers absenteeism.

20. Intoxication: Many of the respondents are habituated to using intoxicants like addiction to tobacco, gutka, toddy, alcohol, cheap liquor which is made by local people of the area. It is found that 79 percent of workers addicted to intoxicating substances and 21 percent are not having the habit of liquor drinking or tobacco chewing.

The opinions of respondents are contradictory on liquor drinking habit. The workers who are addicted given various reasons like relief from tiredness, functions & festivals, friends & relatives, to forget the problems, avoid mental stress, sufficient sleep before and after night shifts, extra energy etc. The other workers said that the drinking habit is not good for health and it also consumes wealth and pushes the worker into debts.

Some workers found as heavy drinkers and are frequently absent to their jobs and their family financial conditions are very poor comparing with other families in that area. The cheap liquor is totally adulterated with different chemicals and it shows adverse effect on power loom workers health. It is found in the study that some workers' hands and body shiver if he doesn't take cheap liquor.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

It can be concluded from the study that the most of the workers are middle aged group. Young age group is not attracted to this sector due to various reasons. The industry is going to suffer from want of workers in near future. As it is being considered like any other profession there is no influence of caste. The Income of the workers

is insufficient for a decent living. Most of the workers indebted due to social obligations like marriages and functions. Money lenders are charging hefty amounts of interest causing economic problem to workers. Ill health, low income, unhygienic conditions and addiction to alcohol are causing for severe damage to the welfare of the worker. In order to improve the socio economic conditions of the power loom workers the government should take the following measures;

- i. Youth must be encouraged by providing technical knowledge in power looms. In institutions like ITI, courses on textile industry will encourage the youth.
- ii. Employment resources for the spouses must be encouraged in surrounding areas and self-help groups must be encouraged.
- iii. Good educational institutions must be started in the vicinity of the power looms with financial aid for the children of the workers.
- iv. Working hours in power loom sector must be reduced to 8 hours per day.
- v. Function halls must be provided to the workers at cheaper rates.
- vi. Regular fee reimbursement for higher education must be initiated.
- vii. Banks must extent liberal personal loans to the workers.
- viii. Primary health centers must be improved in and around the power loom clusters.
- ix. Counseling for de-addiction must be started with professional counsellors.
- x. Hygienic and good amenities must be provided at work place.

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