



Indo - Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IAJMR) ISSN: 2454-1370

SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF BAMBOO HANDICRAFT WORKERS

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Abstract

Bamboo handicraft workers are people who produce products out of bamboo. They are classified as unorganized workers. This particular study deals socio-economic profile of them. It elaborates the social condition such as legal identity, memberships, participation in public contests, celebrations, accessibility, discrimination, health problems and their habits. Economic condition such as living house, possession of house, irrigative land, facilities, income, work availability, savings and loans. Environmental condition such as traditionalism, experience, working area, working hours, health condition and satisfaction. The study also explains the correlation among social, economical and environmental status of them. Further, it discusses the constitutional provisions for their welfare and it traces the means and ways to develop the socio economic condition.

Key words: Bamboo handicraft, Unorganized workers and Socio economic status.

1. Introduction

Bamboo is utilized for various purposes depending upon its properties. It plays an important role in the daily life of people; for house construction, agricultural tools and implements, as food material and weaponry etc. Besides being a convenient source of cellulose for paper manufacture and rayon, it supports a number of traditional cottage industries. Bamboo craft is one of the oldest of traditional cottage industries in India. The origin of this rural craft is traced from the beginning of the civilization when man started cultivation of food crops thousands of years back. People started making baskets, mats and many other products of household use with bamboo that was abundantly available in nearby forests. Later, tribal and rural people in the vicinity of bamboo forest took up this as a means of livelihood. Now

bamboo craft is spread in all rural areas of the country and it feeds millions of traditional workers (Sreekumar, 1999). The bamboo handicraft workers in our country are still unorganized, uncohesive, socio-economically backward and semi-skilled. They are not getting regular employment, meaningful wages and they still experience some notable social discrimination. So, this research studied about the work environment, social and economic status of the bamboo handicraft workers at Vishamangalam, Vellore district.

2. Objective of the Study

In general, the study attempts to know the socio-economic status of the bamboo handicraft workers at Vishamangalam. Particularly, it tries to know the family background, educational qualification, health status, work environment, social status, economic status and find the possible means and ways to improve their socio economic condition.

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Received: 23.07.2016; Revised: 30.08.2016;

Accepted: 25.09.2016.



Socio-Economic Status: The Socio-Economic status means the accessibility, affordability, acceptability and actual utilization of various available common facilities of the people.

Bamboo Handicraft Workers: Bamboo handicraft Workers means workers, who are involving in the process of making things from bamboo such as Winnowing Pan and Basket.

3. Methodology

The research was conducted on a universal study basis. The population size was eight six. Data were collected from the respondents in 'Kodiur' of Vishamangalam village, Tirupattur taluk, Vellore District, Tamilnadu. This particular research follows the quantitative research methodology. An interview schedule was prepared based on the objectives of the research. Direct personal interview technique is used to collect data from the respondents. The Study followed descriptive study design. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) package was used to analyze the data.

Age Group

The Bamboo Handicraft Workers prevail on all range of age group from below twenty years to above sixty years. Traditionally practiced, home based could be the causes for inclusive of workers to all range of age group. Among the workers, a little less than two third (65.1 %) of the workers fall between twenty to forty years of age group. During the period of age, the health and other aspects could support the respondent in practicing the occupation. Hence, the study found the maximum number of workers present in the particular age group. The study proves that there is a significance relationship between age and work experience of the respondents. Hence, it could be concluded that higher the age of the respondents has higher work experience.

Education

Education is one of the most important aspects that may influence on social status of

particular individual as well as community. The study found that half (50 %) of the population is illiterate. A little less than one third (32.6 %) of the population was studied up to primary education and less than one fifth (15.1 %) of the population was studied up to high school education. Very few (2.4 %) studied more than high school. When we interact with the study population we could arrived the following reasons for more number of illiterate, they were lack of awareness on education, lack of proper guidance, nature of work, etc., now they realized the importance of education. As a result, the respondents wish to provide better education. In addition to, there is no significance relationship between educational and income of the respondents. So, the education is not influencing the income of the respondent either or each other.

Monthly Income

Most of the families of study population were nuclear. Very rarely we could find the joint family. Less than two third (64 %) of the study population earns Rs.1000/- to Rs.5000/-. This population may have only couples or individual, hence they could not earn more than Rs.5000/-. But, exactly one fifth of the population earns Rs.5000/- to Rs.10000/- as family income for one month. Very few earns more than Rs.10000/- as well as less than Rs.1000/- per month (5.8 % and 7 % respectively). Those families earn more than Rs. 5000/-, the family could have more number of illiterate, hence possibly all could involve in the same occupation. As a result their income ranges higher than others, the study found that they may not live quality life with the income they earn as family for one month. If the family adopts modern value added skill on bamboo handicraft, they would earn sufficient money and also there is no significant difference in means of monthly family income across the different age groups of workers.

Various Acts Applicable to Workers in the Unorganized Sector

The following Acts are applicable to the workers in the unorganized sector also:



(i) The Payment of Wages Act, 1936; (ii) The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948; (iii) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951; (iv) The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; (v) The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972; and (vi) The Personal Injuries (Compensation Insurance) Act, 1963.

The Ministry of Labour has also set up welfare funds in respect of various categories and sub-categories of workers in the unorganized sector such as Mica Mines, Iron Ore, Manganese Ore and Chrome Ore Mines, Beedi, Limestone and Dolomite Mines and Cine Workers (Ministry of Labour, 2002, P 73).

Work Environment

The study attempts to know the work environment status of the respondents. The study comprises traditionalism of the workers, years of work experience, place in which the occupation is practiced, working hours in a day, health condition due to occupation, willingness to teach the occupation to their children, job satisfaction level and job updating status and updating opinion characteristics to measure the level of work environment status of the respondents.

Table – 1: Work Environment Status of the Respondents

Work Environment	Frequency	Percent
Poor	41	47.7
Moderate	43	50.0
Good	2	2.3
Total	86	100.0

Table – 1 reveals that only minority (2.3 %) of the population was enjoying the better work environment conditions. Nearly half (47.7 %) of them are working in the poor environment conditions. Government provided group house facility to the people since they belong to scheduled caste population. Only a few people have got some extra place to work freely with sufficient raw materials. Others are using their home to work and live. If common storage place, common bamboo process place, common natural

call attending buildings, etc., provided, the majority may get better environmental condition to work as the present minority enjoys and also there is a significance relationship between work environment and economic status of the respondents.

Social Status

This study consist various dimensional characteristics such as legal identical documents possession, membership from various group, participation in public contests, celebrations, accessibility, discrimination, health problems and habits in order to measure the level of social status of the respondents.

Table – 2: Social Status of the Respondents

Social Status	Frequency	Percent
Low	14	16.3
Moderate	53	61.6
High	19	22.1
Total	86	100.0

Table – 2 shows that, a little more one fifth (22.1 %) of the population has high level of social status among the study population. Other hand, less than one fifth (16.3 %) of the population has low level social status. The old people still they have a mindset that they have number of social discrimination presents, but many of them were disappeared and they are not experienced by the present young generation. This could be a notable factor for variation in the levels of social status.

Economic Status

The study consist the aspects of type of house living in, possession of house, irrigative land, facility available, income, work availability, savings and loans to measure the level of economic status of bamboo handicraft workers.

Table – 3 shows that level of economic status of the bamboo handicraft workers. A little less three fourth (74.4 %) of the population has moderate level of economic status. Less than one tenth (9.3 %) of the population has high level of



economic status and less than one fifth (16.3 %) of the population has low level economic status.

Table – 3: Economic Status of the Respondents

Economic Status	Frequency	Percent
Low	14	16.3
Moderate	64	74.4
High	8	9.3
Total	86	100.0

Correlations between Social, Economical and Environmental Status

The study confirmed that there is a significance relationship between social and economical status by a valid test. Further, the study found the correlations among social, economical and work environmental status of the study population. Hence, the following test was carried out. The following table shows the result of correlation test.

Table – 4: Correlation between Social, Economical and Work Environment Status

Status	Social Status	Economic Status	Work Environment Status
Social Status	1		
Economic Status	.353**	1	
Work Environment Status	-.117	-.088	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Table – 4 above proves that there is significance and strong positive correlation between social and economic status for bamboo handicraft workers. At the same time, the table shows that work environment status negatively correlate with social and economical status for bamboo handicraft workers.

Socio-Economic Status of the Respondents

As we discussed in the earlier sections, this study consist various dimensional characteristics and aspects to measure the social and economic status. The scores were defined for each aspect and counted for measuring the socio economic status of bamboo handicraft workers. This study proves that less than three fourth (70.9 %) of the population has moderate level of socio-economic status, a little more than one tenth (12.8 %) of the population has low level socio-economic status and more than one tenth (16.3 %) of the population has high level of socio-economic status. In the forth coming sections explains the means and ways to improve their status.

Possible Means and Ways for their Socio Economic Development

Suggestions are stated in this section for better socio economic status of bamboo handicraft workers. Financial assistance with subsidy could be provided to encourage and to meet the capital and running cost of the business through various government schemes such as PMEGP, etc., The government or any volunteer organization could form bamboo estate in the suitable place for continues supply of raw materials (Bamboo). The government could find the possibility of building Common Toilet and bathing facility through available schemes like SJSRY, etc., The Bamboo Handicraft workers could be integrated and organized as cluster or association or cooperative society or self help group from which they could be given valid ID Card. This could establish social status for some extent. Common infrastructure could be given to the community with the help of financial institution such as NABARD, MSME, etc. these institution has schemes for this kind of purpose such as common facility centre, cluster, etc., Awareness, orientation and basic and value added training should be arranged with the help of government and government aided schemes such as REDP, MDP, ODAP, ESDP, etc., Volunteer organizations with government could plan for uninterrupted current and water facility with available and renewable resources.



Modern technology could be Identified and introduced to the target group for better income generation activity. Bamboo cultivation could be introduced and the bamboos should be collected by the government and distributed to the target group as ration shop system. The bamboo handicraft workers should be provided proper valid license to exhibit their products in district/state/national and international exhibition.

To encourage their saving habit the banking institutions could open an account with no minimum deposit. The ministry which has been working for entrepreneurial development could establish strong mechanism for marketing their products across the globe. Investigate the abuse and exploitation of workers by agents and employers and prosecute such agents and employers. Provide special equipments to protect them from the occupational hazards. NGO's working for unorganized workers could consider the difficulties of the workers and plan strategies to ensure quality education of their children. The health department could organize public medical camps where bamboo workers are working. Constant inspection from the government part is required to reduce the plight of the bamboo workers. If we fulfill or making the community is to fulfill it, then their socio economic status will be increased in the society.

4. Conclusion

Moreover, the unorganized workers were being neglected from all concerns not only by the governments but also the Non-Governmental Organizations. The bamboo handicraft workers need to be brought out of their helpless, isolated state and to be able to think independently. Several issues like health, work environment, education, social, economic and skill upgradation need to be tackled as welfare and developmental activities. The laws and the so-called development programmes launched by the government have not achieved the desired success to ameliorate the position of the bamboo handicraft workers. Majority of respondents are leading their life below poverty line due to various causes. They struggle for better working, social and economic

conditions, but could not achieve. Thus viable, workable solutions must be evolved. Non-Governmental Organisations can play an active role in developing demonstrative model of intervention which can be adopted by the governmental agencies for the bamboo handicraft workers.

5. References

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