



Psychological Determinants of Quality of Work Life among Tamil Nadu Coir Industries Workers

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ABSTRACT

Tamil Nadu produces nearly one-thirds of the total coir fibre of the country, while production of coir products particularly the two-ply twisted coir yarn is gaining momentum in recent years. Nearly 72,840 people are engaged in the production of coir fibre and the coir products in the state and as such the industry contributes significantly for the socio-economic development of the State in general and provision of employment particularly to women in rural areas. Studies show up that coir industries are highly decentralized spread throughout the State particularly in villages; they are highly unorganized. Similarly the workers in the coir sector are mostly from deprived sections of the community; they are mostly land less labourers, seeking daily wage to eke their livelihood. Study was carried out by employing field survey method among the coir workers of mechanized coir producing units located in Periyakulam Coir Cluster in Tamil Nadu. And it concludes that unless a special derive or campaign is launched at the State level, the psychological factors affecting the coir workers cannot be addressed.

Keywords: Coir Industry, Human Rights, Psychological determinants, Quality of Work Life.

Introduction

Kerala is the home land for her Coir industry in our Country as the State has large number of her population traditionally involved in coir sector since long back. Thus the State deserves its credential for coir products. However TamilNadu of late, has recorded an upward trend in terms of production of coir fibre (Alka Srivastava, 2000). Tamil Nadu produces nearly one-thirds of the total coir fibre of the country, while production of coir products particularly the two-ply twisted coir yarn is gaining momentum in recent years (Lalitha, N. 1999). Nearly 72,840 people are engaged in the production of coir fibre and the coir products in the state and as such the industry contributes significantly for the socio-economic development of the State in general and provision of employment particularly to women in rural areas and quality work life is one of the most important at workplace (Jayan, R., & Shameem, A. 2017). It is reported that out of 72840 workers engaged in coir sector, 73 percent are women. In Tamil Nadu, the production of coir yarn is carried out by two categories of spinners

and workers are facing critical work place issues in Tamil Nadu (Poongavanam, S., Prasad, R. R., Srinivasan, R., & Rengamani. 2017). One is those produce coir yarn with the help of traditional ratts operated through man power and the other one is the entrepreneurs who take up production of coir yarn with the help of machines operated through electric power. The spinners under the former category have adopted coir spinning as their traditional household activity, while the latter have adopted it as their entrepreneurial activity. Increased demand for coir yarn particularly in the form of geo-textiles in up-country regions and advancement in technological innovations in coir spinning, have geared up entrepreneurial development in the coir sector in the State (Vasundhara,2007). It is reported that although women are involved in coir spinning, they are prominently engaged as workers in the mechanized coir yarn spinning units.

Relevance of the Study

Studies show up that coir industries are highly decentralized spread throughout the State particularly in villages; they are highly unorganized. Similarly the workers in the coir sector are mostly from deprived sections of the community; they are mostly land less labourers, seeking daily wage to eke their livelihood (Poongavanam, S., Rengamani, Srinivasan, R., & Prasad, R. R. 2017). They are highly vulnerable and unorganized. It is reported that they do not have assured employment and suffer from livelihood security (Rengamani, J., Shameem, A., & Poongavanam, S. 2017). Problems are more in the rural areas especially for the industrial workers (Vettriselvan, R., Ruben Anto M., & JesuRajan, FSA. 2018). They are engaged on 'hire and fire' basis. Working condition and duration of work are far from reasons (Shameem, A., & Divyaranjani, R. 2017). They do not get benefited from the socio-economic and security schemes / measures so applicable to the workers under organized sector (Shameem, A., & Charith, B. 2017). Their voices remain mute and silence. They are to be cared and readdressed in the future research (Vettriselvan R., Sathya M., & Balakrishnan A. 2014). In these context, certain specific issues such as; what is the socio-economic profile of coir workers in the mechanized coir yarn spinning units? What is the duration of their working hours? Are they provided wages in tune to the norms of Minimum Wages Act? Are they benefited under the savings and social security schemes as applicable to unorganized sector workers? If no, why do they not have availed the benefits? What are the problems impinging upon the basic human rights of coir workers? and the like. These and other related issues need a thorough and an in-depth field investigation and therefore an empirical research is a sine-qua- non. In this context, a field survey was carried out among workers of the mechanized coir yarn spinning units. This paper presents a summary of major inferences of the survey and draws conclusions of policy implications.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the psychological determinants of quality of work life;
- To understand the present Status of coir industry workers;
- To understand the present problems existing among the coir industry workers; and
- To suggest suitable measures to eliminate the present problems faced by the coir industry workers.

Methodology of the Study

Present study is descriptive cum analytical in nature to describe the present status of the psychological determinants of quality of work life among the Coier industry workers in the study area. It employed both primary and secondary data in order to fulfill the study objectives. Secondary data were collected from the district officials for the details of coier industries. Primary data were collected through structured interview schedule, field observation and focus group discussion. Employment pattern, work nature, duration of working hours, monetary benefits and physical comforts were used as the major factors to determine the quality of work life in this study from 20 coier industries.

Summary of Findings

Survey carried out among 250 workers employed in the mechanized coir yarn producing units has brought out the following major inferences. A few of demographic, social and economic variables of coir workers, duration of employment in coir production units, nature of work on which the coir workers are engaged, duration of working hours, annual employment on coir spinning, wage pattern and income through labouring on coir spinning, receipt of monetary and non-monetary benefits from employer, reasons for not availing the benefits of the saving and social security measures / schemes of the government as applicable to workers in unorganized sector and the like, are discussed.

Demographic Profile

A majority 92 percent of the workers employed in the mechanized coir yarn producing units (respondents) are females, belong to BC / SC social stratification of the community. 64 percent of the respondents belong to middle age category (ranging between 25 and 45 years). More than 80 percent have formal education at elementary school level. As high as 79 percent are married, possessing children and the remaining 21 percent are empty nest. Nearly 65 percent of the respondents are landless workers and another 20 percent are dry farming land holders operating 0.89 acre – 2.5 acres of land area. The rest 15 percent possess land holdings each operating 1.15 acre – 2.65 acres, undertaking cultivation of seasonal agricultural crops. However majority of them depend primarily on the wage for their labour in coir producing units. As such coir sector seem to be the major sources of employment as well as income to the households of the workers.

Employment in Coir Spinning Units

Duration of employment, nature of the work, duration of working hours and other related issues are analyzed. So far as duration of employment is concerned, the study finds that as high as 64 percent of the workers belonging to middle age category are reported to be working in coir spinning units for more than 2 years, though not continually in a production unit, but necessarily elsewhere on coir spinning in the locality.

Table 1
Duration of Employment in Coir Spinning

S. No	Age Category	Duration of employment	Number of respondents			Total (% to column total)
			Less than one year	1-2 year	More than 2 years	
1	Young		40 (100)	-	-	40 (16)
2	Middle		-	48 (30)	112 (70)	160 (64)
3	Old		-	50 (100)	-	50 (20)
Total			40 (16)	98 (39.2)	112 (44.8)	250 (100)

Figures in brackets are percentage to row total.

As shown in Table 1, nearly 16 percent of the coir workers falling under young age category have less than a year of experience on coir spinning. This denotes that they are the new entrants opting coir spinning as their employment avenue. Similarly about 20 percent of the workers falling under old age category are reported to be engaged in coir spinning for about 1 – 2 years. Thus it is evident that none of the middle as well as old age people opts for coir spinning in recent years.

Table 2
Nature of Work in Coir Production Units

S. No	Production Process	Age Category	Number of Respondents			Total
			Young	Middle	Old	
1	Willowing		-	45(28)	35(70)	80(32)
2	Sleeving (carding)		-	50(31)	15(30)	65(26)
3	Spinning		30(75)	55(34)	-	85(34)
4	Bundling		10(25)	05(03)	-	15(06)
Total			40(16)	160(64)	50(20)	250(100)

Figures in brackets are percentage to row total.

It is observed that production of coir yarn is a team work. It involves various stages of work to be carried out very systematically, failing which the end results may go wasted. So far mechanized coir yarn spinning is concerned; we have identified three major production stages viz, willowing of coir fibre, sleeving of fibre into fibre cards and spinning including bundling of coir yarn. The study finds that most of the workers have acquired the skills in all the three major production process and therefore they are engaged invariably in all the activities involved in the above major process of coir production. However, as shown Table 2, majority of the respondents belonging under young and middle age categories are engaged in spinning and bundling activities while majority of the old age respondents are engaged in willowing of coir fibre.

Duration of Working hours

Table 3
Real hours of work of the Respondents

S. No	Production Process Duration of work per day (in hours)	Number of respondents				Total
		Willowing	Sleeving	Spinning	Bundling	
1	5 – 6	65(81)	-	-	-	65(26)
2	6 – 7	15(19)	45(69)	32(37)	-	92(37)
3	7 – 8	-	20(31)	45(53)	10(66)	75(30)
4	8 – 9	-	-	08(9)	05(33)	13(5)
Total		80(100)	65(100)	85(100)	15(100)	250(100)
Mean hours (per day)		5.69	6.80	7.21	7.42	6.64

Figures in brackets are percentage to row total.

It is observed that majority of the production units operate during day hours commencing from 7 – 8 am to 5 – 6 pm and thus the duration of working hours of the production units is estimated at 10 hours a day. However the ‘real hours of work’ vary among production units and also among production activities.

Table 3 reveals that the actual real hours of work in a production unit is 6.64 hours per day. However the mean real hours of work for those engaged in willowing activity is 5.69 hours and it is 6.80 hours for those engaged in sleeving. The real hours of work for those engaged in spinning and bundling ranges from 7.21 to 7.42 hours a day.

Annual Employment

Table 4
Annual Employment in Coir Production Units

S.No	Number of days of employment per annum	Number of workers		Total (% to column total)
		Rural areas	Urban areas	
1	50 – 100 days	43(26)	06(7)	49(20)
2	101 – 150 days	86(52)	41(48)	127(5)
3	151 – 200 days	26(16)	17(20)	43(17)
4	201 – 250 days	10(6)	11(13)	21(8)
5	Above 250 days	-	10(12)	10(4)
Total		165(100)	85(100)	250(100)
Annual mean number of days of employment		126	162	138

Figures in brackets are percentage to row total.

It is estimated, on an average a worker was employed for 169 days per annum. However variations in number of days of annual employment through coir production are shown in the table 4. Survey shows up that coir production units located in urban areas seem to provide employment for more number of days per annum than that of those located in rural areas. Mean number of days of employment provided by coir production units in rural areas is 126 days per annum while it is 162 days per annum by those located in urban areas. Non availability of continued power supply /

uninformed power-cut especially in rural areas are reported as the major reason for the creation of less number of employment through coir spinning in rural areas.

Wage Pattern

The study finds that majority of the respondents (coir workers) are daily wage earners. They receive their wages every 6th day in a week and only 22 percent of the workers (respondents) receive their wages every 15th day in a month. There are two bases prevailing for wage determination. One is the hourly basis (physical presence in the work spot) and the other is the production basis. The workers under former category are paid daily wage ranging from ₹ 65 to ₹ 80 for 9 – 10 hours duration of physical presence in the work spot per day, while the workers under latter category are paid wages in accordance with the wage rate upon which they agreed to work in the coir production unit. Such a wage rate is given to individuals or a group of workers. For instances, the spinners are paid individually a piece rate at ₹.2 – 3 for the production of one kilogram of coir yarn or a piece rate at ₹.170 – ₹.185 for the production of a bundle comprising 30 Kgs of coir yarn for a group of 7-8 workers. During the field study, it is observed that the system of payment of wage on hourly basis is administered in most of the production units that are located in rural / semi rural areas, while the system of contract wage structure is administered in a few production units, mostly located in urban areas. Variations in the availability of continuous un-interrupted electric power supply to the production unit is attributed as the major reason for administering two sets of wage pattern among coir workers. Electric power supply is more erratic in rural areas as compared to that in urban areas and therefore the production units in rural areas administer hourly basis of wage determination, while majority of production units in urban areas administer contract wage system due to availability of uninterrupted power supply except the days of general power cut (shut down).

Annual Income through Wage Labouring on Coir Production

In the Focus Group Discussion held among coir workers revealed that a majority of coir workers have adopted labouring on coir production as their prime occupation. Analysis of the demographic profile of the respondents reveals that about 15 -20 percent of workers have alternative employment avenues as they possess small plots of cultivating land. This situation prevails more among workers hailing from rural areas than the workers hailing from urban areas. Thus the study observed differences in the annual income of coir workers.

Table 5
Annual Income through Wage labouring on Coir Production

S.No	Annual Income (range)	Number of respondents		Total
		Rural areas	Urban areas	
1	Up to ₹.5000	18	05	23
2	₹.5001 – 10000	68	36	104
3	₹.10001 – 15000	44	23	67
4	₹.15001 – 20000	25	05	30
5	₹.20001 – 25000	08	08	16
6	Above ₹.25000	02	08	10
Total		165	85	250
Mean income (in ₹.)		10750	12450	11350

As shown in Table 5, the mean annual income of workers through labouring on coir spinning is ₹.11350. However the mean annual income earned through labouring on coir spinning by workers in rural areas is ₹.10750 and it is ₹.12450 for workers in urban areas. Though the annual income earned through labouring on coir spinning is a little more for workers in urban areas, their household income seems to be a little lesser as compared to that of the workers in rural areas. It is reported that the workers in rural areas avail the benefits of the NREG Scheme besides availing labouring wage from agricultural sector. Whereas the workers in urban areas are deprived such alternative sources of employment. In the event of continued closer / non working of the coir production units, the workers of coir spinning units in urban areas search for alternative employment sources. If such sources warrant their continued attendance, they seldom seek the job and they never wish to lose the employment avenues in the coir sector.

Benefits of Overtime Allowances

The study finds that provision of overtime benefits is not a permanent feature. Only less than 49 percent of workers avail overtime allowances in coir production units further, such allowances are availed by workers who work on hourly basis. The wage for overtime work ranges from ₹.8 to ₹.10 per hour. It is reported that such benefits are availed by workers who mostly opt spinning activities in the production unit.

Table 6
Benefits of Over Time Allowances

S.No	Work category	Number of respondents		Total
		Rural areas	Urban areas	
	Availed OTB			
1	Willowing	05 (3)	10(11)	15(6)
2	Sleeving	05(3)	10(11)	15(6)
3	Spinning	45(27)	43(50)	88(35)
4	Bundling	-	10(11)	10(4)
	Not availed OTB	110(66)	12(14)	122(49)
	Total	165(100)	85(100)	250(100)

Figures in brackets are percentage to row total.

As shown in Table 6, the study finds differences in overtime benefits availed by workers in rural and urban areas. Nearly 33 percent of rural workers and as high as 86 percent of urban workers have availed overtime benefits. This indicates that production units in urban areas seem to work for more hours a day when compared to that in rural areas. Availability of continuous power supply is attributed for long hours of work. The Focus Group Discussions held that most of the production units provide overtime benefits during October - December months when the price for coir yarn is usually high; and similarly the lay-off is usually high during summer due to intermittent power cut and shut down.

Other Monetary Benefits Availed

The study finds that none of the workers are provided with bonus, production incentives, medical aids and any category of leave as well as leave benefits, provident fund benefits, insurance cover and such other benefits as specified in savings and

social security schemes applicable to workers under unorganized sector. However a few of the production units have provided cash advances to the tune of 20 times of the daily wage rate, to be repayable in 10 installments at free of interest. Further, the workers have got gifts in lieu of Deepavali / Pongal celebrations. The worth of the gifts / cash benefits ranged from ₹.200 to ₹.350. They are provided mostly in kind form like cloths, sweets, etc and to a little extent, in cash form.

Physical Comforts

The physical comforts such as facilities for launching, urinals / toilets, clock rooms, arrangement for drinking water, first aid kits, etc, provided in the premises of the production units are observed during the field visits.

Table 7
Facilities for Physical Comforts

S.No	Item	Number of Production Units		Total (N=20)
		Rural areas (N=12)	Urban areas (N=8)	
1	Launching space	05(42)	08(100)	13(65)
2	Clock room	06(50)	08(100)	14(70)
3	Urinal / Toilet	04(33)	08(100)	12(60)
4	First aid kit	03(25)	08(100)	11(55)
5	Facility of E-communication	03(25)	08(100)	11(55)
6	Drinking water	12(100)	8(100)	20(100)

Figures in brackets are percentage to 'N'.

The Table 7 shows that the production units located in urban areas seem to provide facilities for physical comfort to a greater extent than the production units located in rural areas. However, provision for drinking water is arranged in all the production units. So far as facilities for launching, toilet / urinals, etc, the production units located in rural areas pay least attention due to availability of surplus space in and around the production units. So far as provision of first aid and phone services, the production units located in rural areas pay seldom attention.

Conclusion

The study concludes that human right issues are found among coir workers employed in mechanized two-ply twisted coir yarn production units. The workers so employed are predominately females hailing from deprived sections of the community. They are unskilled workers and they are employed on a 'hire and fire' basis. Although there is no significant level of violation of human rights with respect to duration of working hours, the study finds violation of human rights with regard to the issues of absence of assured employment, absence of wage structure in tune to the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, absence of provident fund benefits under Provident Fund Act, 1952, absence of leave and leave benefits under Factories Act, 1948 and 1956, absence of physical comforts in the work spot as per provisions of the Factories Act, 1948 and 1956, absence of medical and insurance cover as per Employee State Insurance Act, 1950, absence of compensatory benefits under Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923 and absence of social security benefits under Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008 such as: employment injury benefits,

skill up gradation schemes, old age benefits, health and maternity benefits, life and disability cover and children education and housing. Although a many number of legislations exist to safeguard the socio - economic interests of workers under unorganized sector, the questions still need to be addressed is: why the provisions of the above legislations do not benefit the workers under unorganized sector in general and coir workers in particular? An in-depth analyses of the provisions of the above Acts show up that provisions of the above Acts could not be enforced because of the following inherent problems prevail among coir workers. The Acts will apply to those workers who have a clear Employer – Employee relationship. This does not exist among coir workers. Provisions of the Acts could be enforced among workers, whose number atleast shall be 25 at any point of time, working in an enterprise. Unfortunately not more than 10 – 15 workers are employed in coir production units. Certain provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, Factories Act, Compensation Act, etc could be applied only when a worker had worked for a continuous period of 240 days per annum. Unfortunately none of the coir production unit provides employment for more than 162 days per annum and that too, they are not engaged continuously in a year. Above all, since the coir production enterprises are tiny enterprises, found scattered and highly unorganized, the workers employed in such enterprises are very feeble in their numbers; they are highly unorganized and have no bargaining power. They are too weak to demand benefits under the Acts. No social security system has been devised which would meet the needs of these workers. For instances, many of these workers are migratory (casual workers) and also have no fixed income enabling to subscribe to any of the social security system. Last, but not the least, the laws are to be implemented through the Government bureaucracy which is not free from limitations. It concludes that unless a special derive or campaign is launched at the State level, the psychological factors that affecting the quality of work life among the coir workers cannot be addressed.

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