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Beedi Workers: A Study on Their Educational Status

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Abstract:

Beedi rolling is a home based industry in India, highly labour intensive and predominantly unorganized. Majority of workers are home based women workers. The beedi workers are socio-economically much backward which is influencing their educational status. This article attempt to present the educational status of beedi workers and analyze the impact of Government policy regarding education on it. West Bengal is one of the major beedi producing state where more than one million workers constitute. I have done a sample survey at the Purbasthali II Block of Burdwan District of West Bengal. Thousands workers engage in beedi rolling in the study area. I have chosen 50 households including 140 children of different age group. Beedi rolling is the main occupation of the selected households dominated by the women. However, Government of India has taken various initiatives to improve educational status of the beedi workers. Though they are not responding soundly due to lack of awareness.

Keywords: *Beedi rolling, home based, women, unorganized, education, backward, household*

1. Introduction

Beedi rolling is an agro-forest based and mainly home based Industry in India, highly labour intensive and predominantly unorganized. The beedi Industry is one of the largest sector which millions workers are engaged. The Government estimates about 4.4 million workers in the beedi rolling Industry, majority of who are home based women workers. The trade union claim that there are over 7 million beedi workers. In India about 300 manufacturers of major beedi brands and thousands of small scale contractors and manufacturers involved in beedi production. Beedi rolling is a women based work. The all India beedi, cigar and tobacco workers federation estimates women comprise around 90 percent of the total employment in beedi manufacturer. Women and female children constitute a very high percentage of labour force in this Industry. Beedi workers are mainly poor, illiterate and unskilled. They have been depriving from education day by day. Many children, mainly Girls dropped out from schools and engaged in beedi rolling to fulfill their family need. However, beedi rolling has identified as a 'Hazardous occupation' by labour authority. Beedi generally prepare by the poor households in backward areas where workers have no others means of employment. In fact, the beedi Industry in generally located in the unorganized sector which millions workers comprised. Only 10 percent workers belong to organized sector. So they are depriving from the benefits of the Government welfare scheme.

The Government has taken various initiatives to provide educational benefits for beedi workers. However, they have not responded soundly to the Government Schemes due to their lack of awareness. I have done a sample survey at Purbasthali II Block of Burdwan district of West Bengal where thousands beedi workers constitute. This article attempt to present the educational status of beedi workers in the study area. In this area mainly women has engaged in beedi rolling. Not only women, large number of female children has engaged in this activity. Consequently, they detach from school and end their education.

Sl. No.	State	No. of Beedi workers	Percentage
1	Andhra Pradesh	3,65,208	7.32
2	Tamil Nadu	5,65,538	11.33
3	West Bengal	14,01,778	28.09
4	Assam	7,062	0.14
5	Tripura	11,648	0.23
6	Maharashtra	2,45,696	4.92
7	Rajasthan	39,362	0.79
8	Gujarat	47,434	0.95
9	Jharkhand	1,06,786	2.14
10	Bihar	2,55,533	5.12
11	Uttar Pradesh	4,07,661	8.17
12	Madhya Pradesh	8,09,319	16.22

13	Chhattisgarh	20,809	0.42
14	Karnataka	4,08,418	8.18
15	Kerala	79,658	1.60
16	Orissa	2,18,158	4.37
	Total	49,90,068	100.00

*Table 1: State wise No. of Identified Beedi Workers in India
Source: Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2011*

2. Beedi Industry in India

Beedi Industry is the largest tobacco based Industry in India. It is not very clear as to when the beedi introduced. In first formal production of beedis started in 1902, although rural people known to prepare beedi for their own consumption much before this date. Madhyapradesh is one of the first largest state where beedi manufacturing began in 1902 in Jabalpur district. Andra Pradesh is the second largest state where beedi manufacturing started in 1901. Kerala developed central manufacturing beedi units with this spreading in Karnataka. Thereafter, the beedi rolling began in Guzrat, Maharastra, West Bengal and other states of India.

Beedi making is an agro-forest based cottage Industry dominated by the women workers. The main raw materials of beedis are Tendu leaves, Tobacco and Thread. The method of production of beedis varies from state to state and sometimes districts to districts, depending on local condition and on the business exigencies of manufacturer. There are three work system in beedi production, namely the direct system, contract system and sale-purchase system. In direct system, workers directly take raw materials from the employer and return the finished beedis. Under the contract system manufacturer, distribute the raw materials to the contractor who in turn either get the beedis through workers in their work shed or throughout-work in their homes. The contractor gets the finished beedis and supply to the manufacturer. In the sale-, purchase system manufacturer/contractor sale the raw materials to the contractor/workers and buy back finished beedis from them. This system helps to avoid the employer-employee relationship obligation under the beedi workers low. In India, beedi making activities have extended over 16 state. The Table no. 1 shows the distribution of identified of beedi workers across the states. The ministry of labour and employment (Govt. of India) stated that the largest numbers of workers constituted in West Bengal where about 28.09 percent workers engage in beddi rolling.

Beedi rolling is highly labour intensive, located in economically backward areas where cheap labours are available and no means of alternative employment. The workers working whole day to prepare 1000 beedis. Though they get very low wage, which is only 50 to 130 Rupees for thousand beedis. Government prescribed the minimum wages (41.3 to 137.58 Rupees) for thousand beedis. Nevertheless, the manufacturers give them low wage than minimum wage prescribed by the Government. Consequently, they fail to keep up their minimum living standard.

Beedi making is women based work which, large numbers of female children have engaged. Consequently, they drop out from school. In fact, beedi workers belong to the poor family and they have been depriving from education day by day. Plenty number of children (mainly female children) of the beedi rolling households give up education in the early days of school life engage in beedi making to fulfill their family need.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are-

1. Analyse the educational status of beedi workers in the study area.
2. Analyse the impact of Government schemes on education of the beedi workers.
3. Compare educational status between beedi workers and their next generation.

3.1. Source of Data and Methodology

The study has conducted at Purbasthali II Block of Burdwan district of West Bengal. The main reasons for selection of the study area firstly, many middle and small manufacturers situated here from long years ago. Secondly, numerous workers mainly women engage in beedi rolling. Thirdly, beedi rolling is one of the occupations, which is playing important roll in economic life of the study area. Fourthly, educational status of beedi workers in the study area is disappointing. Therefore, I have selected this area to discuss their (beedi workers) educational status in the context of Government policies. The data is insufficient for discussing this matter. Therefore, this study depends on only sample survey. I have chosen 50 beedi rolling households including 140 children (both male and female) of different age group. The data collected by well-designed questionnaire and result presented in a tabular form using simple statistical techniques.

3.2. Educational Status of Beedi Workers

Beedi rolling is one of the important occupations in West Bengal and it has extended all districts of the state. Burdwan is one of the states where large number of people has engaged in beedi rolling activities. Purbasthali II Block comprised in Burdwan district where thousand beedi workers (mainly women) constitute. There are no big beedi manufacturers but many middle and small manufacturers located. The socio-economic condition of the beedi workers is very poor and their educational condition is unsatisfying in this area. Table No. 2 shows that, among the total workers, 48 percent were illiterate, 24 percent completed the primary education and another 18 percent completed the upper primary education whereas only 4 percent passed in Matriculation in the study area. It is disappointing that only 2 percent workers hold Higher Secondary Education (Table 2). There is no representative in the higher education among the sample households. In fact, the educational status of beedi workers is unsatisfying. Mainly beedi workers belong to economically

backward families. Consequently, they dropped out from school. If discussed their past it would seen that they (mainly women) were engaged in beedi rolling in school going age to fulfill the family need. In fact, large numbers of women beedi workers have been continuing their activity after marriage.

	Illiterate	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	H.S	Graduate	Post Graduate	Total
No. of Workers	24	12	9	4	1	-	-	50
Percentage	48%	24%	18%	8%	2%	-	-	100%

Table 2: Educational status of Beedi Workers (According Sample Households)

Source: Sample Data

Some examples are presenting. Rehena Bibi, a woman beedi worker was not going to school and she started beedi rolling in the age of twelve years. Chabila Bibi another beedi worker who is illiterate and she engaged beedi making in the same age. Rajia Sultana dropped out from school in class VI and Rupali Khatun detached from school in the same class. Mina Khatun another worker who completed class VIII and did not continue her education due to poor economic condition. All examples show that all women workers engaged in beedi making in school going age. It has also found most women workers dropped out before matriculation. However, this is the fact that few completed matriculation (Table.2) but did not continue higher education.

However, educational status of beedi workers is disappointing. Nevertheless, their view about education (both boys and girls) has examined. Table No.3 shows, 20 percent workers have agreed that higher education is necessary for boys whereas only 8 percent have supported for girls education in the higher level. Most of the beedi workers (average 66%) have responded the secondary level of education is sufficient for both boys and girls. It is disappointing that 30 percent workers have responded the primary education is sufficient for girls and there is no need of secondary or higher education.

Sl. No.	View about Education	Education for Girls		Education for boys	
		No of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
1	Higher Secondary Education is necessary for children	10	20%	4	8%
2	Secondary Education is sufficient for children	35	70%	31	62%
3	Primary to Upper Primary Education is sufficient for children	5	10%	15	30%
	Total	50	100%	50	100%

Table 3: View of Respondents about Education both boys & girls (according to Sample data)

3.3. Educational Status of next Generation of Beedi Workers

Education is the key for all progress. It depends on socio-economic condition. The beedi workers are socio-economically much backward. However, recent time little but significant change has come among the next generation of beedi workers in education. There is no children who belong to beedi rolling households are illiterate and all children have enrolled in school. About 68 percent of total children, both boys and girls have enrolled at the upper primary to the secondary level and 9 percent have enrolled at the higher secondary level (Table 4). In secondary level, enrollment rate of boys and girls is same which good sign for girl's education is. Enrollment in the graduation and post graduation levels are only 6.92 percent and 2.14 percent for both boys and girls (Table 4). However, the participation of boys and girls (beedi rolling households) has little improved in the upper primary and secondary levels but in higher education their participation (mainly girls) are much lower. Only 4 percent girls are enrolled in the graduate level whereas above 8 percent boys enrolled in the same level. However, overall participation of the children who belong to beedi rolling households is better than previous generation.

	Illiterate	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	H.S	Graduation	Post graduation	Total
Boys	—	10	20	23	8	6	3	70
Girls	—	10	28	24	5	3	—	70
Total	—	20	48	47	13	9	3	140
Percentage	—	14	34.28	33.57	9	6.92	2.14	100

Table 4: Educational status of children who belong to Beedi rolling households (according to Sample Data)

Compare educational status between beedi workers and their next generation it has found that every level of education the participation of the children is much better than previous generation (beedi worker). All children of beedi workers are enrolling in the School and no single child is illiterate in recent time while 48 percent beedi workers are illiterate. About 34 percent children have enrolled in the secondary level and 9 percent at the Higher Secondary level while only 18 percent workers enrolled in the Secondary level and 2 percent at the Higher Secondary level. On the other hand, there was not single representative in the higher education among the beedi workers whereas 9 percent (total graduation and post graduation level) boys and girls of the next generation have enrolled in the same levels (Table 5). This improvement is little but significant in the context of their poor socio-economic condition.

	Illiterate	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	H.S	Graduation	Post Graduation	Total
Beedi Workers	48%	24%	18%	8%	2%	–	–	100%
Next Generation	–	14%	34%	33.57%	9%	6.92%	2.14%	100%

Table 5: Difference of percentage between Beedi Workers and their Next Generation in Education (according to Sample Data)

4. Constitutional Commitment

The constitution of India had committed to provide education for all citizens including workers group. Article 45 stated, “The state shall endeavor to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years”. Another article 21 stated, “The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of age six to fourteen years”. In 2002, Government took great initiative, which the education as a fundamental right had endorsed through 86th amendment to the constitution. The main purpose of these commitments to spread provides education from the upper to grassroots level in the society. In spite of the workers, class who belong to under poverty level has been depriving from the education. Generally economically backward beedi workers has been depriving to the education. In this circumstance, Government took some special schemes for beedi workers to improve their educational status.

4.1. Government Schemes for Beedi Workers

The Government of India has taken special schemes for the beedi workers to enhance their educational status. The scholarships are given to the children of beedi workers studying in class I and above in recognized institution ranging from Rupees 250 for class I to Rupees 8000 for professional degree per child per annul (Table 6). The special scholarships are given to the girls to attend school and college. The Government is also providing financial assistance to school going children for purchase of dress, notebooks, and textbooks. During the year 2008-09, 936558 (Report of standing committee 2010-11) children benefited by the scholarship under beedi workers wale fare scheme. However, the amount of scholarship especially amount for professional degree course is not sufficient and Government admitted it.

Group	Class	Rates	
		Girls	Boys
Group I	Class I to IV	250	250
Group II	Class V to VIII	940	500
Group III	Class IX	1140	700
Group IV	Class X	1840	1400
Group V	Class XI to XII	2440	2000
Group VI	Non-professional degree courses, non-professional post graduate courses, 2/3years □ Diploma courses, BCA, BBA & PGDCA.	3000	3000
GROUP VII	Professional degree courses {BE/B.Tech/MBBS/BAMS/BUMS/B.Sc. (Agri.) and MCA/MBA}.	8000	8000

Table 6: Rates of scholarship per students per year (According to Government wale fare schemes)

It has found that many children do not get benefit of wale fare schemes due to lack of awareness of their families. Table No. 7. Shows that only 20 percent workers have known about Government schemes and 80 percent have not known about it in the study area. Similarly 16 percent has gotten the scholarship. On the other hand 84 percent are not able to get benefit of the wale fare schemes due to lack of awareness and lack of Government supervision. Therefore, Government should take strong initiatives for beedi workers. The standing committee of labour in 2010-11, noted that the entire family of a beedi worker must work for the whole day to meet the target of rolling 1000 beedis to secure full day wage. In such a circumstance, children forego per force their education to supplement their family income. The committee also stated that a suitable mechanism evolved and awareness campaign lunched so that the children of beedi workers could get at least the elementary education. This is the reality that without improvement of socio-economic condition of beedi workers, educational status will not being improved. Majority of children of beedi workers drop out from school due to poor economic condition. So alternative employment and strong continuous programmers are essential to enhance their educational status.

	About Govt. Schemes		Total
	Known	Unknown	
No of Respondents	10	40	50
Percentage	20%	80%	100%
	Scholarship Recipients		Total
	Yes	No	
No of Children	22	118	140
Percentage	15.71%	84.29%	100%

Table 7: Awareness of Beedi rolling households about Govt. Schemes & Percentage of children who have gotten Scholarship
Source: Sample Data

5. Conclusion

The all-round development of the nation is possible by the universal development of education. If any sector or part of society is depriving from educational opportunities, the dream of strong nation must be broken down. The beedi workers are the significant part of the working class in India. They constitute all major states including West Bengal. The educational status of beedi workers is unsatisfying in West Bengal like other states. However, recent times have seen little but significant change in educational status among the beedi workers. All children of beedi workers are going to school and enrollment rate is increasing every level of education. However, large numbers of children are dropping out from the schools at the upper primary and secondary level until now. Mainly numerous girls' children give up education and engage in beedi rolling in the age of 12 to 16 years. The Government has taken initiatives to hold them in school. Some children are getting benefit of welfare schemes. Though Government schemes are not sufficient for change radically their educational status. The amount of scholarship and number of scholarship holders should be increased. Government should take responsibility to increase awareness by the electronic or printed media about various schemes wherein the beedi workers can take benefit of those schemes. Finally, it can be said that improvement of socio-economic condition by the alternative employment is very essential for the beedi workers to enhance their educational status.

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