

# Socio-economic Conditions of Women Workers in Sugar Industries of Bidar District

Kashinath Shivappa

Research Scholar, Department of Women's Studies, Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi: 585 106 Karnataka (India)

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### \*Corresponding Author

Email: rajkumardannur[at]gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

Women are playing significant role in unorganized sector work in India. Of these, many of the women are employed as labourers in sugar industries. These women are under-employed as the employment in sugar industries is for only few days, that is for 100 to 150 days in a year. Hence, these women have irregular income. Apart from irregular income, there is lower wages paid by the sugar industries. Even these women workers are facing many of the occupational problems due to poor environment in sugar industries. Hence, the present study is made to explore the socio-economic conditions of women workers in sugar industries of Bidar district of Karnataka. Totally 142 women workers were surveyed using interview schedule. The paper described the socio-economic conditions of women workers in sugar industries of Bidar district.

## 1. Introduction

Sugar industry is mostly dependent on unorganised farm sector, almost known as cane harvesters and transport workers. In 2010-11, there were 490 sugar mills in India. The States of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu occupy the first, second and third places respectively in having more number of sugar mills. Sugarcane is the main source from which sugar is produced in India. Sugarcane areas in India are broadly divided into two distinct belts, subtropical and tropical. The subtropical belt comprises the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, West Bengal, Assam, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. The tropical belt covers the States of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. The two belts are characterized by the marked difference in climate and agricultural conditions, more than three-fourth of the area under sugarcane in the country has long been in the subtropical belt (Buvaneshwari and Suresh Kumar, 2017).

Most of the sugar mills have poor occupational health and safety measures, inadequate policies and infrastructure to meet the health hazards (Biswas, 2016). Many of the sugar factories are without pure air and pure drinking water, which may cause respiratory problems for the women workers. The work provided by the sugar factories is seasonal and irregular, for at least 6 months, women workers have become unemployed with no income. As women are working for 8-12 hours in sugar mills, their families including elders, husband and children are neglected. Women are facing gender inequality and as such, they are discriminated, exploited and even harassed by the employers and superiors at sugar factories. In this way, women workers are facing many of the problems in sugar mills. Hence, the present study is made to know about the socio-economic conditions of women workers in sugar factories located in Bidar district of Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The present work is made to study the socio-economic conditions of women workers in selected sugar industries of Bidar district. The socio-economic conditions include age, education, caste, marital status, equality in marital relations, wages, social status and respect of women workers working in sugar industries.

## 3. Scope and Methodology

As discussed already, the author surveyed total 05 sugar factories located in Bidar district of Karnataka. It is estimated that, total about 220 women workers are working in selected sugar industries, of which 142 workers were selected for the survey. Interview schedule was used to collect the primary data. The collected primary data is analysed and discussed as under.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 1. Age-wise distribution of the Respondents:

Age is a considerable factor while determining the work that has to be made in sugar industry. To a major extent, it is also a criterion to determine the wages that are paid to the women workers. As the present study covered about 142 women respondents, their age-group is as under:

**Table No. 1: Age-wise distribution of the Respondents**

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Below 18 Years	26	18.31
19-25 Years	33	23.24
26-35 Years	28	19.72
36-45 Years	36	25.35
Above 45 Years	19	13.38
Total	142	100

The study covered about 26 (18.31%) respondents of below 18 years of age group, about 33 (23.24%) of the respondents are of 19-25 years, about 28 (19.72%) of the

respondents are of 26-35 years of age group, about 36 (25.35%) of the respondents are between 36-45 years of age group and remaining 19 (13.38%) are of above 45 years of age group.

**2. Caste-wise distribution of the Respondents:**

Caste is also an important determinant in deciding the occupations of the people. Caste is an essential factor to know especially in Indian culture, where there are innumerable castes and classes in the society. The various castes are grouped and the following table disclosed the caste-wise distribution of the respondents covered under the present study.

**Table No. 2: Caste-wise distribution of the Respondents**

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Scheduled Caste	33	23.24
Scheduled Tribe	21	14.79
Other Backward Classes	56	39.44
Others	32	22.53
Total	142	100

From the above table it is observed that, 33 (23.24%) of the respondents covered under the study belongs to Scheduled Caste, 21 (14.79%) of the respondents belongs to Scheduled Tribe, 56 (39.44%) of the respondents are from Other Backward Classes and the remaining 32 (22.53%) of the respondents are from other classes.

**3. Equality in Marital Relations:**

In many families, there is no equal status for women, as a sister, wife, daughter, mother or even granddaughter. In society, still the male members are preferred as superior having more authority in the family. Women are treated as subsidiary and unequal in the families. Hence, it is necessary to know whether the women workers are treated as equal to husband in their families. For this purpose, it was asked to the women workers that, whether they have equal partnership in marital relations between their husbands and themselves and also whether both husband and wife (respondents) respect each other equally in their families. The collected data is presented in the following table:

**Table No. 3: Whether equal in Marital Relations with Husband**

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
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Yes	32	22.53
No	91	64.08
Not Applicable	19	13.38
Total	142	100

Of the women workers covered under the present study, only 32 (22.53%) of the respondents are treated equal with husband in their families, whereas the remaining 91 (64.08%) of the respondents are not treated equal in their families with their husbands and it is not applicable to 19 (13.38%) of the respondents as they include widows, divorcees and unmarried respondents.

**4. Work Satisfaction of Women Workers in Sugar Industries:**

To do any work, there is need for work and job satisfaction. Unless there is satisfaction in the work, the work done will not be good. Hence, work and job satisfaction play an important role in hard work, efficiency, productivity of any worker. The work satisfaction as stated by the women workers covered under the present study is stated as under:

**Table No. 4: Work Satisfaction of Women Workers in Sugar Industries**

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Highly Satisfactory	22	15.49
Satisfactory	57	40.14
Not Satisfactory	63	44.37
Total	142	100

Majority of the women workers covered under the study expressed that they are not satisfied with their work. In particular, about 63 (44.37%) of the women workers surveyed have stated that they are not satisfactory about their work, followed by about 57 (40.14%) of the respondents stated that their work is satisfactory and the remaining 22 (15.49%) of the women workers are stated that their work is highly satisfactory.

**5. Monthly Income:**

Monthly income of the women workers in Sugar industries, their husbands and their family help to know about the standard of living of the respondents. Hence, it is necessary to know about the monthly income of the respondents and their relatives. In this respect, collected information is stated as under:

**Table No. 5: Monthly Income of the Respondents and their Family Members**

Particulars	Respondents' Income (Rs.)		Resp. Husband's Income (Rs.)		Family Income (Rs)	
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Less than Rs. 1500	04	2.82	--	--	--	--
Rs. 1500-2500	23	16.20	26	18.31	27	19.01
Rs. 2500-4000	33	23.24	29	20.42	34	23.94
Rs. 4000-6000	56	39.43	48	33.80	53	37.32
Above Rs. 6000	26	18.31	20	14.08	28	19.73
Not Applicable	--	--	19	13.38	--	--
Total	142	100	142	100	142	100

Among the women workers covered under the study, 04 (2.82%) are getting monthly wages of less than Rs. 1500, 23 (16.20%) are getting monthly wages between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2500, 33 (23.24%) are getting monthly wages between Rs. 2500 to Rs. 4000, 56 (39.43%) are getting monthly wages between Rs. 4000 to Rs. 6000 and the remaining 26 (18.31%) are getting monthly wages of more than Rs. 6000.

On the income of the husbands of the respondents, 26 (18.31%) have expressed that their husbands are getting monthly income between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2500, 29 (20.42%) have expressed that their husbands are earning monthly income between Rs. 2500 to Rs. 4000, 48 (33.80%) have stated that their husbands are earning income between Rs. 4000 to Rs. 6000, 20 (14.08%) have mentioned that their husbands are earning monthly income of more than Rs. 6000 and it is not applicable to 19 (13.38%) of the respondents as they include widows, divorcees and unmarried respondents.

Family income of the respondents revealed that, 27 (19.01%) of all the respondents have stated that they are getting monthly family income between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2500, 34 (23.94%) have mentioned that they are earning family income is between Rs. 2500 to Rs. 4000, 53 (37.32%) have agreed that their families are earning income between Rs. 4000 to Rs. 6000 per month and only 28 (19.73%) of the respondents have remarked that their families are earning monthly income of more than Rs. 6000.

**6. Sufficiency of Income to the Family Expenses:**

As already studied above about the income level of the women workers, it was found that there is less income for the respondents, compared to the workers in industrial sector. There is need to know about whether the existing income is sufficient to meet the family needs and expenses. In this respect, the collected information is presented in the following table:

**Table No. 6: Sufficiency of Income to the Family Expenses**

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
To the Full extent	19	13.38
To a Greater extent	25	17.61
Not Sufficient	98	69.01
Total	142	100

Of the total 142 (100%) women workers covered under the present study, it is surprising to note that about 98 (69.01%) are expressed that their income is not sufficient to meet the expenses and needs of the family, followed by about 25 (17.61%) of the respondents expressed that to a greater extent their income is able to meet the family needs and expenses and the remaining only 19 (13.38%) of the women workers stated that their income is able to meet the family needs and expenses.

**7. Lower Status of the Workers in Sugar Industries:**

Compared to other types of work, there is lesser and lower status for the workers in unorganized sector like sugar

industries. Because, the characteristics of the workers in general are unskilled, conventional, seasonal, getting lower wages, etc. Consequently, there is lower status of these workers in the society. It was asked to the women workers, whether there is lower status for the workers in sugar industries and the responses of the women workers are presented in the following table:

**Table No. 7: Lower Status for the Workers in Sugar Industries**

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	123	86.62
No	19	13.38
Total	142	100

As discussed above, majority of the respondents, that is 123 (86.62%) of the women workers covered under the study have agreed that there is lower status for the workers in sugar industries whereas only 19 (13.38%) of the respondents have disagreed to the same.

**5. Suggestions from the Study**

The following suggestions can be made for the improvement of the socio-economic position of the women workers in sugar industries in particular and women working in unorganized sector in general:

1. Better implementation of legislative measures.
2. Improvement in social aspects.
3. Better education for the women workers in unorganized sector
4. Creating alternative sources of employment
5. Prevention and control of exploitation of women workers
6. Improving the working conditions
7. Standardizing the wage rates for different works and sectors.
8. Equal Wages for the Women workers in industries.
9. Proper training for improving the skill of women workers in industries
10. Social and economic Empowerment of women workers.
11. Employment Guarantee Scheme to the rural women by encouraging Small and Home industries.

**6. Conclusion**

Although women constitute major portion of workers in unorganized sector, still these workers are being discriminated, exploited, suppressed and harassed in sugar industries in particular and unorganized sector in general. Hence, there is need to empower the women workforce by organizing training programmes in self-employment. Financial assistance to the women workers is emphasized for productive purposes such as for establishing home industries, encouraging handicrafts, animal husbandry, etc. This can help for the uplift in the economic status of the women workers. Once economic status is gained by these women workers, later the social status is gained automatically. It is needed to increase awareness of women workers on social security programmes and women

empowerment programmes, so that they can gain benefits from the same.

It is emphasized that there is wage discrimination for the women workers compared to that of men workers. There is

need to frame policies for the payment of equal wages both to men and women workers. The government also should look into the economic security of the women workers by providing different benefits such as insurance, provident fund, healthcare, etc.

## References

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