

## HEALTH PROBLEMS AND STATUS OF WOMEN MATCH STICK WORKERS IN THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

Match industry workers development should be viewed as an issue in social development but also seen as an essential component in every dimension of development. The match industry is considered a vital one in many respects. It provides major employment opportunities to workers in Thoothukudi district. The present study is an attempt to study the problems faced by the workers of match industry in Thoothukudi District. In Thoothukudi district, employment not possible throughout the year, low piece rate, most of the workers are not getting HRA and loss of life was found to be the major problem among the match industry workers. The findings of the present study will be highly useful to the workers, chambers of commerce associations, State and Central Government and employers of the match industry in particular to improve the quality of the life of workers in the match industry. The study suggested that, the government must be strict enough to make the owners to implement the welfare measures for the benefit of workers and care must be taken for the welfare of the workers in the match industry at various levels. Labour leaders must be involved in the policy formulation and other decision making process relating to the welfare of the match stick workers.

**Key Word:** Match stick, Women, Workers, Health, welfare

### INTRODUCTION

The work of the match industry has been shifted to home based work. Such is the situation when workers in the match industry have to provide security of employment against sickness, accident, maternity benefits, old age and the dependence in case of death of the employee. This would affect their morale thereby production and productivity.

Several health hazards and general problems are associated with the match stick workers. These problems affect the standard of living as well as the employment. Though their effects are not uniformly the same, all these problems are of considerable concern. They are discussed in this chapter in detail.

### PROBLEM FOCUS

In and around, Kovilpatti Taluk in Thoothukudi District, there are 1834 match works and 126 fireworks factories employing more than twenty thousand workers. The synergistic effect of chemicals in the presence of excessive heat and lack of ventilation, and improper ergonomic condition, the people working in the match factories are exposed to major occupational health problems. Common acute occupational illnesses observed are allergic skin diseases, allergic lung disorders, and irritation of eyes with lacrimation, photophobia and conjunctivitis. Long

working hours, exposure to excessive heat, low illumination, improper posture, overcrowded working space, continuous sitting in one posture cause health problems like pain in joints, body ache, fatigue and other muscle-skeletal problems, resulting in stunted physical growth and development etc Most of the match stick workers are working in these conditions. It is very important to strengthen their morale and make them empowered. Review of the Study

Mangaiyarkarasi (2003), in her study analyses the work pattern of women industrial workers, their job satisfaction and the problems they face. The women surveyed stated that they preferred this employment because it provides more recognition than domestic work. The rising trend of factory employment for women can be encouraged by giving adequate training opportunities.

Mehra (1994) in his study, “the working conditions of women workers in informal sector” has indicated that self-employed women in unorganized sector being poor are exploited and are low class workers. Labour laws and others special benefits which are available to women workers in organized sector are not available for informal sector.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the important objectives of this study.

1. to study the problems faced by the match stick workers in the study area: and
2. to suggest policy measures for the match stick workers.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher selected Thoothukudi district in Tamil Nadu as the study area of the present investigation. Thoothukudi district comprises of nine taluks and 12 blocks. Among them, Kovilpatti block and Kayathar block of Kovilpatti taluk have been chosen as the study area. The period of study was restricted to one financial year from April 2017 to March 2018. The total numbers of 734 sample respondents were selected by using proportionate random sampling method. The statistical tools help us to evaluate the problem of study in a judicial manner. Statistical tools like percentage, Garrett’s ranking technique and ANOVA test were used to analyse the match industry workers.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION GENERAL PROBLEMS

The following problems were faced by the match industry workers in Thoothukudi district. They are no fixed wages, employment not possible throughout the year, non-implementation of the Minimum Wages Act, lesser wages paid to women than men, permanent disability in work and non-implementation of welfare measure for non-union workers.

In order to identify the main problems of the match industry workers, Garrett’s ranking technique was adopted. The sample respondents in the study area were asked to rank the problems faced by them as per priority. The rank assigned to each constraint by the respondents was converted into percentage by using the following formula:

$$\text{Present Position} = \frac{100(R_{ij} \div 0.5)}{N_j}$$

$R_{ij}$  = Rank given  $j^{\text{th}}$  individual for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  factor, and  $N_j$  = number of factors ranked by the  $j^{\text{th}}$  individual.

The percentage thus obtained was converted into scores by referring to the Garrett's ranking table. The scores of all respondents for each factor were added together and then divided by the number of respondents, for each factor experiencing that particular problem. The mean scores of each factor were arranged in the descending order and the corresponding ranks allotted.

The problems identified by the match industry workers are given in Table 1.

**Table – 1: Problems Faced by the Match Industry Workers**

Problems	Garrett Ranking Mean Score	Rank
No Fixed Wages	56.12	VI
Employment not Possible throughout the Year	64.07	I
Non-implementation of the Minimum Wages Act	58.24	IV
Lesser Wages paid to Women than Men	59.21	III
Permanent Disability in Work	57.69	V
Non-implementation of Welfare measure for Non-union Workers	60.68	II

In Thoothukudi district, „employment not possible throughout the year“ (64.07%) was found to be the major problem among the match industry workers. It is assigned the first rank and followed by „non-implementation of welfare measures (60.68%), for non- union workers“, „lesser wages paid to men than women“ (59.21%), non-implementation of Minimum Wages Act“ (58.24%), „permanent disability in work“ (57.69%) and last one „no fixed wage“ (56.12%) were assigned second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth rank respectively.

## PROBLEMS REGARDING THE WORKING CONDITION

The problems faced by the match industry workers regarding the working conditions are analysed using ANOVA and the results presented in the Table 2.

**Table – 2: Problems regarding the Working Condition**

Problems	Mean Score				F-Statistics
	Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban	Overall	
Dirty Place	3.264	3.523	3.819	3.431	7.687
Lack of Safety Measures	3.731	3.445	3.647	3.529	4.874*
Long Working Hours	3.487	3.884	3.977	3.676	9.870
Over Time	3.225	3.505	3.636	3.437	4.812

\* Significant at 5 per cent level

From Table2, it is understood that most of the match workers are facing the problem of long working hours as the means of correlation is 9.870. Long working hours is the predominant problem among the semi- urban and urban workers as their mean scores are 3.884 and 3.977 respectively whereas the dominant problem among the rural area workers is the lack of safety measures as their mean score is 3.731. Among the various problems relating to working condition, the problems relating to safety measures is statistically significant at 5 per cent level.

## PROBLEMS REGARDING WAGES

The problems faced by the match industry workers regarding the wages are analysed using ANOVA and the results presented in the Table 3.

**Table - 3 Problems regarding Wages**

Problems	Mean Score				F-Statistics
	Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban	Overall	
Inadequate Wages	2.824	3.166	3.138	3.247	6.584
Low Piece Rate	3.418	3.498	3.436	3.636	1.278
Low Time Rate	2.681	2.814	2.911	2.714	2.398
Irregularity in the Payment of Daily Wages	2.918	3.487	3.577	3.361	8.159*

\* Significant at 5 per cent level

From Table 3, it is understood that most of the match industry workers are facing the problem of low piece rate as the mean score is 3.636. Among the urban area workers the dominant problem is „irregularity in the payment of daily wages“ as the mean score is 3.577. Among the semi-urban and rural area workers the dominant problem is the low piece rate as the mean scores are 3.418 and 3.498 respectively. But the irregularity in the payment of daily wages is statistically significant at 5 per cent level.

## PROBLEMS REGARDING THE BENEFITS GIVEN TO WORKERS

The problems faced by the match industry workers regarding the benefits given to workers are analysed using ANOVA and the results presented in the Table 4.

**Table – 4: Problems regarding the Benefits given to Workers**

Problems	Mean Score				F-Statistics
	Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban	Overall	
No welfare Measures	2.854	3.104	3.951	2.454	6.248
No HRA	3.946	3.878	3.846	4.657	5.671*
No DA	3.058	2.936	3.145	3.088	2.108
No TA	3.012	2.918	2.866	3.144	0.948

\* Significant at 5 per cent level

From Table 4, it is understood that most of the workers are not getting HRA as the mean score is 4.657. The predominant problem among the urban workers is the lack of welfare measures in the match industries, whereas for the semi-urban and rural workers their major problem is lack of HRA as their mean scores are 3.946 and 3.878 respectively. On the whole not providing HRA is statistically significant at 5 per cent level.

## PROBLEMS REGARDING RISK

The problems faced by the match industry workers regarding the risk are analysed using ANOVA and the results presented in the Table 5.

**Table - 5 Problems regarding Risk**

Problems	Means of Correlation				F-Statistics
	Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban	Overall	
Fire accident	3.658	3.891	3.156	3.918	4.674*
Loss of Life	3.912	3.988	2.910	4.177	0.897
Harmful Chemical	3.056	3.068	3.819	3.314	2.618
Inflammable Chemicals	2.819	2.926	3.230	2.919	2.516

\* Significant at 5 per cent level

From Table 5, it is understood that the major risk in working in the match industry is the high rate of death as the mean score is 4.177. Among the urban area workers the problem of handling harmful chemicals dominates the risk as the mean score is 3.819. Among the semi-urban and rural area workers the major perceived risk is loss of life as their mean scores are 3.912 and 3.988 respectively. But the problem of fire accident is statistically significant at 5 per cent.

## CONCLUSION

Match industry workers development should be viewed as an issue insocial development but also seen as an essential component in every dimension of development. The match industry is considered a vital one in many respects. It provides major employment opportunities to workers in Thoothukudi district. The present study is an attempt to study the problems faced by the workers of match industry in Thoothukudi District. In Thoothukudi district, employment not possible throughout the year, low piece rate, most of the workers are not getting HRA and loss of life was found to be the major problem among the match industry workers. The findings of the present study will be highly useful to the workers, chambers of commerce associations, State and Central Government and employers of the match industry in particular to improve the quality of the life of workers in the match industry. The study suggested that, the government must be strict enough to make the owners to implement the welfare measures for the benefit of workers and care must be taken for the welfare of the workers in the match industry at various levels. Labour leaders must be involved in the policy formulation and other decision making process relating to the welfare of the match industry workers.

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