
A Study on the Social and Economic Conditions of the Workers Engaged In the Coir Industry in Pollachi Taluk- An Analytical Perspective

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ABSTRACT:

Coir is a unique natural fiber used in diverse applications. It is mainly concentrated in coastal districts of the State. The major constituents in the coir sector are Co-operatives, Private, Public, Government undertakings and unorganized manufacturing units. But, over a period of time, the coir sector has not grown appreciably and has remained almost stagnant. In order to ascertain the causes for the present unsatisfactory situation, The researcher has made an attempt to conduct a Status Study of the industry, which will identify the problems of the various segments of the industry and arrive at likely solutions so that necessary policy measures can be initiated and further promotional and other schemes intended to mitigate the current problems in the industry. The objectives of the study are: 1) To understand the coir spinning unit performance. 2) To study the socio economic condition of coir unit workers. The following methodology was adopted to carry out the study: a) Collection of primary data by field survey b) Collection of secondary data from published sources. It is found out from the study that there is a shortage of fiber environmental degradation, poor result in the mechanization programme, etc. is other key factors for the backwardness of coir sector. Hence, it is clear that an action to bring in a structural shift in the industry is highly warranted not only to overcome the existing problems but also to surge ahead to bring more prosperity to the sector.

Key words: Coir, socio economic condition, unit performance

Introduction:

At present the coir loom industry in Pollachi, Coimbatore District is passing through a recessionary phase mainly because of repeated power cut, inadequate labour force, frequent fluctuation in fiber price, on-availability of local market, shortage of margin money, working capital constraints, and lack of technical skill in newer technology. In spite of the large number of problems associated with the sector, it has got tremendous potential and strength to meet the future challenges and it has proven its performance. Flexibility in manufacturing at reasonable cost with acceptable quality would be the strength of this sector in future too. This is a conventional and robust and well established industry enjoying considerable demand in the domestic as well as domestic markets. The decision of the government to continue with the technology up gradation scheme has generated positive vibrations. Each coir manufacturing factory requires about 50,000 coconut husks daily. "When China entered the market a few years ago, Pollachi saw a boom in the coir industry. The number of factories doubled, increasing the cost of raw material. Last year, when the district witnessed a drought, production dipped drastically, further increasing the raw material cost. While manufacturing costs went up, the cost to export from China remained the same, negatively impacting the Pollachi factories.

Objectives of the study:

- To understand the coir spinning unit performance.
- To study the socio economic condition of coir unit workers.

Methodology:

The following methodology was adopted to carry out the study:

- Collection of primary data by field survey
- Collection of secondary data from published sources;

Field Survey

To collect data for the purpose of this study, all the major segments of the coir sector were covered including the workers and production units.

Problem facing the industry:

The researcher has concentrated on the analysis and interpretation of various problems faced by the spinning sector in pollachi. The problems were grouped into (a)Raw material, (b)Labour, (c) Power (d) Production (e) Marketing and with help of mean score and finally ranked on the basis of total mean score.

a. Raw material

It is found that the primary reason for raw material is frequent price fluctuation that distresses them to do business, secondly non availability of required fiber for production, thirdly undesirable suppliers and seasonal variations in affecting the availability of fiber, finally the delay in supplier of raw material.

b. Labour

The problem perception on labour is identical in nature among the spinning units. The following are the common issues for a labour is inadequate skilled labour supply, huge advance payment, higher rate of absenteeism, immoral activities like smoking, alcoholism among workers during the working

hours. It is inferred that majority of the respondents has stated that on-job training is the best method to overcome shortage of the labour.

c. Power

This kind of problem is identical for all the units as it's closely associated with the government norms and few voltage fluctuation, difficulties in getting connection, uneconomic power traffic, unannounced power cut were few issues for spinning units.

d. Production

The production is primarily affected by non availability of raw material, skilled labour, power supply, lack of modernization, inadequate working capital. The researcher has made an attempt to analyze some selected variables to overcome the prevailing production problems.

e. Marketing

The problem of marketing of almost all the small units were identical associated with the intermediaries, lack of media applicability, no brand identity, lack of government support, lack of professional marketing, absence of diversified product.

Prospects in India:

Coir is a natural fiber extracted from the husk of the coconut. Among the natural fiber, coir has some unique characteristic particularly its rigidity, durability and friction. Coir Industry in India is one of the important rural industries. Although the coir industry has traditionally been associated with the State of Kerala, but now this industry has developed in Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Assam is one of the leading states of India in production of coconuts. There is significant production of coconuts in Tripura also. This could form the basis for development of the coir industry in the North East which can generate substantial employment. The main uses of coir rope/yarn are in the construction of houses, industrial building, tying ladders, and packing of large boxes and also for drawing water from wells. Market Potential is one of the main uses of coir rope in the construction of houses and buildings. Due to tremendous rise in the construction of Multi-storied building, ownership flat, shopping mall in the city and urban areas, stadium, Govt. and Private offices and RCC construction in the rural areas the demand of coir yarn or rope has been increasing drastically. As there is no automatic or semiautomatic yarn manufacturing unit in Assam, the present requirement of fiber are met from Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. As per the information available with Coir Board the present demand of Rs 4 Crores per year of coir rope is in the N.E. Region. Considering the demand of coir yarn/rope, coir spinning unit has viability.

The role of coir units in pollachi is very significant as it accounts for the natural source of coconut trees grown in Tamilnadu. The coir units have strong fiber as raw material produce base and a vast pool of small units entrepreneurial talented person engaged themselves in self employment and earn on daily and weekly basis by supplying their yarn to local marketers and at a meager rate.

Exports:

Prospects of exports to various other countries like Germany, Italy, France to be tapped by small unit manufactures and with support of coir board and government agencies in association with regulations and subsidy allowance will make the individual producers of coir yarn to marketing internationally.

The first part of the survey was to understand the coir spinning units and to assess the socioeconomic conditions of coir workers and the sample size was 500. Of these 78.6% were women. It was followed by a survey of manufacturing units in the coir sector.

The findings of the survey are:

- 40.5% workers are in the age group of 25-45;
- Majority of workers (57.8%) are having only education up to middle school level;
- OBC/OEC communities constitute 81 per cent of the work force;
- 46.4% of workers are having 4 -5 members in the family;
- 60.7% workers live in houses with tiled roofs;
- 42.1% of workers annual family income in the range of Rs.15,001-Rs.20,000/-;
- 32.4% of workers are living only on the income from coir sector;
- Most of the workers are employed in spinning sector;
- 32.8% of workers were employed for 151-200 days in a year
- 94.6% of the employment was full time.
- Unorganized sector employment is 68.7% work force
- 17.8% workers are suffering from some form of allergy due to the nature of work
- 89.7% of units are in small scale sector
- 51.5% units are working in the primary sector;
- 48.4% of units performance are non-mechanized and 19% are partly mechanized and 24% units are mechanized in the primary sector;
- Nearly 50% of the units performing are not registered.
- Fiber shortage is a major problem for their effective performance;
- Percentage of units availing term loan is about 20%;
- 92.8% units face raw material shortage, whereas 78.4% have manpower problem;
- 71.4% units expect Govt. assistance;
- 36% units has received subsidy from government

Conclusion:

Coir is a unique natural fiber used in diverse applications of great economic importance. The level of income is much below compared to other sectors. The shortage of fiber environmental degradation, poor result in the mechanization programme, etc. is other key factors for the backwardness of coir sector. The spinning unit in this industry is performing less due to lack of technological adoption by majority of the units. The coir fibre industry in Pollachi has seen a 50 per cent decline in domestic supply and a 30 per cent reduction in exports leaving thousands of people jobless. Hence, it is clear that an action to bring in a structural shift in the industry is highly warranted not only to overcome the existing problems but also to surge ahead to bring more prosperity to the sector and thus to the workers individually and in to the state.

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