



**A STUDY ON PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF WOMEN  
WORKERS IN COIR INDUSTRY (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO SINGAMPUNARI, SIVAGANGAI DISTRICT)**

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**Abstract:**

India is the largest coir producer in the world accounting for more than 80 per cent of the total world production of coir fibre. The coir sector in India is very diverse and involves households, co-operatives, NGOs, manufacturers and exporters. This is the best example of producing beautiful artifacts, handicrafts and utility products from coconut husks which otherwise is a waste. The coir industry employs more than 7.00 lakh persons of whom a majority is from rural areas belonging to the economically weaker sections of society. Nearly 80% of the coir workers in the fibre extraction and spinning sectors are women. The survey was conducted on the basis of convenience sampling method. For developing a sample design, totally 100 respondents were selected for this study. The data have been analyzed to verify the hypotheses framed in line with the objectives of the study. The data collected have been grouped and classified and tabulated with the help of a computer for applying the statistical data, namely percentage analysis, chi-square test and weighted average etc., thereby facilitating fast analysis and easy interpretation. In this context the main focus of the problems and prospects towards employment in coir industry, with special reference to Singampunari at sivagangai district, is studied in this study.

**Key Words:** Coir Industry, Women Worker & Level of Satisfaction

**Introduction:**

Although most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. Women plow fields and harvest crops while working on farms, women weave and make handicrafts while working in household industries, women sell food and gather wood while working in the informal sector. Additionally, women are traditionally responsible for the daily household chores (e.g., cooking, fetching water, and looking after children). Although the cultural restrictions women face is changing, women are still not as free as men to participate in the formal economy. India, where more stringent cultural restrictions are in place, it is likely that few women control family finances. Conditions of working women in India have improved considerably in the recent years. Ironically, despite the improvement in their status, they still find themselves dependent on men. It is because of the fact that man in patriarchal society has always wielded economic independence and power to take decision. Since the working woman earns an independent income in the same patriarchal set-up, where the basic infrastructure of society has hardly changed, though her own role within the same structure is passing through a transitional phase, it is but natural that she would remain vulnerable to exploitation even in her economically independent state. Society perhaps yet needs to accord due recognition to women to take the lead role and women, at the same time; need to be oriented vigorously towards assuming this role in the society. In this context the main focus of the problems and prospects towards employment in coir industry, with special reference to Singampunari at sivagangai district, is studied in this study.

Coir is the only natural fibre that does not get cultivated solely to extract the coir whereas jute and sisal are grown only to produce the fibres and in turn, the spun and woven products. Fibres like jute, sisal, cotton etc are derived from short cropping plants whereas coir originates from the near perennial coconut palm. The coconut palm has been the subject of great adulation and admiration across the world and down the ages. This is perhaps the only tree, which has a systematic recorded history dating back to nearly 3000 years before the birth of Christ.

Coir Industry in India is an export oriented one from very early days and the prosperity of the industry is therefore dependent on the foreign buyers. It may appear quite paradoxical that where in every other industry attempts are made towards greater modernisation in production methods, the coir industry has been the sad victim of a retrograde trend, the organised sector, which comprised of the large scale factories began to disintegrate at an amazingly incredible pace.

Coir Industry is an agro-based traditional industry, which originated in the state of Kerala and proliferated to the other coconut producing states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Assam, Tripura, etc. It is an export oriented industry and having greater potential to

enhance exports by value addition through technological interventions and diversified products like Coir Geotextiles etc. The acceptability of Coir products has increased rapidly due to its 'environment friendly' image.

India is the largest coir producer in the world accounting for more than 80 per cent of the total world production of coir fibre. The coir sector in India is very diverse and involves households, co-operatives, NGOs, manufacturers and exporters. This is the best example of producing beautiful artifacts, handicrafts and utility products from coconut husks which otherwise is a waste. The coir industry employs more than 7.00 lakh persons of whom a majority is from rural areas belonging to the economically weaker sections of society. Nearly 80% of the coir workers in the fibre extraction and spinning sectors are women.

- ✓ Coir Fiber
- ✓ Coir Yarn
- ✓ Floor Mats
- ✓ Curled Coir
- ✓ Mattresses
- ✓ Coir Ropes
- ✓ Anti-weed blankets
- ✓ Erosion Control Blankets
- ✓ Fishing Nets
- ✓ Coir Pith – A bi-product

#### **Statement of the Problem:**

The Coir Industry is one of the oldest industries in India. The raw material of which is Coconut Husk and it is a waste of Coconut. The extracted Coir out of the Coconut Husk has been used in several products like door mats, floor covering, brooms and brushes for regular use in day to day life. This Industry is providing employment to the rural masses that need not to relocate their native places. The final products from coir are mostly eco friendly and have good export potential. Both Union and State Governments are announcing several packages for the growth of this Industry and extending their support. In the light of the growth prospectus of the industry and a larger support from the Governments, the development role of coir industry owners and development of the women workers is considered to be most important for the prosperity of the coir Industry. Women's employment in the sector is rising due to various reasons. Women are employed as cheap substitute manual labour and they work in a situation which is sometimes not bearable but they are forced to do their job for the better life style. Unfortunately they are mostly illiterate and unaware about social status and reluctant to protest against the misconduct or prevailing situation at the workplace.

The unorganized coir industry sector is most vulnerable, ignored and diverse. Women in unorganized coir industry sector constitute a sizable number so it is important to study their problems and prospects. In the present study an attempt has been made to understand the socio economic condition, nature of work, working conditions and difficulties of women labourers in the coir industry. Hence the topic "A Study on problems and prospects of Women Workers in coir industry with Special Reference to Singampunari in Sivagangai District, Tamil Nadu" is of current study.

#### **Objectives of the Study:**

The specific objectives of the study are: to assess the problems and prospects of women workers in Coir Industry and examine the level of satisfaction of women workers and give suitable solution to problem in the study area.

#### **Limitation of the Study:**

The study has been conducted only in Singampunari, Sivagangai District. It may not represent the job satisfaction of women workers in coir industry in India. The sample size of 100 is relatively small for the study to be comprehensive.

#### **Hypotheses of the Study:**

- ✓ H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Age and satisfaction factors of women workers in coir industry.
- ✓ H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Education and women workers in coir industry.
- ✓ H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Marital Status and women workers in coir industry.
- ✓ H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between working Experience (in Years) and women workers in coir industry.
- ✓ H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Family size and women workers in coir industry.

#### **Methodology:**

##### **Study Area:**

In Sivagangai District, Singampunari Block in Sivagangai District is fully bloomed with Coir Industries. There are 22 fibre Industries, hundreds of hand ratts and 20 Automatic Yarn Spinning Units in and around Singampunari. In Singampunari Block 15 to 16 M. Tonnes of Yarn is produced daily. Nearly 80% of the productions come out from hand ratts which is the traditional simple production technology. The growth and development of this industry is restrained by unorganised set-up, traditional production set-up (hand rattles),

lack of advanced machinery and lack of product diversification and value addition. However the researcher took care to ensure that the sample represented the whole area of Singampunari Block in Sivangangai District.

**Sampling Design:**

The survey was conducted on the basis of convenience sampling method. For developing a sample design, totally 100 respondents were selected for this study.

**Statistical Tools Used in the Study:**

In the study to find out the degree of significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables, Chi – square test was applied. Percentage analyses and weighted average have been used for the interpretation of the data.

**Percentage Analyses:**

The percentage technique has been used throughout the report to express the opinion of the respondents.

**Chi – Square Test:**

For testing the relationship between personal variables of the respondents and level of satisfaction, Chi-square Test has been used. For computing Chi-square test, the following formula has been used.<sup>10</sup>

$$\text{Chi-Square} = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where

O = Observed frequency

E= Expected frequency

c = Number of columns in a contingency table and

r = Number of rows in a contingency table

The calculated value of Chi-square is measured with the table value of Chi-square for given level of significance usually at five per cent level. If the calculated value (C.V) is less than the table value (T.V), the null hypothesis is accepted and otherwise it is rejected.

**Period of the Study:**

The study was carried out in the month of April 2017.

**Analysis and Interpretation:**

An attempt had been made to analyse the socio-economic feature of the selected respondents regarding their age, educational status, experience, family size and the like.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Age		Educational Qualification	
20 To 30	5	Illiterate	83
30 To 40	23	Up to SSLC	12
40 To 50	39	HSC	1
Above 50	33	Degree	3
		Others	1
Marital Status		Experience (in Years)	
Married	75	5-10 years	12
Unmarried	15	10-15 years	15
Widow	6	15-20 years	14
Separated	4	20-25 years	26
		Above 25 years	33
Family size			
1 and 2	15		
3 and 4	35		
5 and 6	30		
Above 6	20		

Source: Primary Data

Age is an important factor which has a bearing on the active participation in innovative activities and the risk-taking ability. Usually the young in age have more risk-bearing capability and better exposure to the new economy. The young persons are generally more energetic, change prone, progressive and innovative than the aged. The elders have more experience than the youngsters, besides having a lot of patience to solve various problems of any nature. Table 1 presents that 39 percent of the women workers belonged to the age group of 40-50 years, 33 percent of them belonged to the age group of above 50 years. Similarly 23 percent belonged to the age group of 30 to 40 years. Hence majority of them belonged to the age group of above 40 to 50 years under study. Education has been regarded as the most significant instrument for changing women workers' position of suppression and subjugation in the society. Education not only develops the personality and

rationality of individuals but also improves socio-economic status and creates awareness of the opportunities for them which enrich their life. Moreover, the educated women workers could become economically independent. Table 4.9 illustrates the educational level of the sample respondents. 83 percent of respondents were illiterate, 12 percent of the respondents have studied up to SSLC, only 3 percent of respondents have studied up to degree level. It would be concluded that the most the women workers belonged to illiterate groups under study. The present day women workers are obliged to find their own source of income even after marriage. Marital status of the sample women workers respondents is, 75 percent of the respondents were married, 15 percent were unmarried, while 6 percent were widows and 4 percent were separated from their husbands. Experience has been regarded as the most significant instrument for enhancing women workers' to gain knowledge of production and marketing of coir products. Experience not only develops the personality and wisdom of women workers' but also improves life. Moreover, the experienced women workers could become economically independent. 33 percent of respondents had an experience of above 25 years in the production and marketing of coir products, 26 percent of the respondents had an experience of 20 to 25 years whereas only 12 percent of respondents had an experience of 5 to 10 years in the production and marketing of coir products under study.

**Level of Satisfaction:**

In order to analyze the perceptions of the women workers, they were asked to respond to different statement on women workers' level of satisfaction using Likert's Five Point Scale with the following scale: Highly satisfied (5) Satisfied (4) Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied (3) Dissatisfied (2) and Highly Dissatisfied (1). On the basis of the perception score, mean and rank have been calculated for each statement for the purpose of analysis.

**Satisfaction Factors:**

- ✓ Satisfied salary
- ✓ Reasonable allowances
- ✓ Fulfill all the requirements
- ✓ Better working condition
- ✓ Provides Job Security
- ✓ Adequate industrial safety
- ✓ Better welfare measures
- ✓ Pleasant work atmosphere
- ✓ Continuous work given
- ✓ Good relationship with the workers
- ✓ Fullest job satisfaction

Table 2: Association between – Personal Factors and Satisfaction Factors

Personal factors	X <sup>2</sup>	Result	Inference
Age	8.14	H <sub>0</sub> = Rejected	Significant
Educational	6.3	H <sub>0</sub> = Accepted	Not Significant
Marital Status	9.1	H <sub>0</sub> = Rejected	Significant
Working Experience (in Years)	18.25	H <sub>0</sub> = Rejected	Significant
Family size	13.6	H <sub>0</sub> = Rejected	Significant

S= Significant NS = Not Significant

There is no significant association between selected personal factors and satisfaction factors by the respondents. The hypothesis is tested with x<sup>2</sup> test in Table 2. Calculated value of x<sup>2</sup> is greater than the table value. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence age level and influencing satisfaction factors are dependent. There is a relationship between age and influencing satisfaction factors.

- ✓ Since the calculated value of x<sup>2</sup> is less than the table value, the hypothesis holds true. Hence there is no relationship between Education and influencing satisfaction factors.
- ✓ Calculated value of x<sup>2</sup> is greater than the table value. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence there is relationship between Marital Status and influencing satisfaction factors.
- ✓ Calculated value of x<sup>2</sup> is greater than the table value. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence there is a relationship between working Experience (in Years) and influencing satisfaction factors.
- ✓ Calculated value of x<sup>2</sup> is greater than the table value. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence there is a relationship between Family size and influencing satisfaction factors.

Table 3: Ranking on the Problems in Coir Industry faced by Women Workers

S.No	Factors	Respondents				Weightage Score	Rank
		Very Good	Good	Bad	Very Bad		
1	Heavy and Continuous Work in the Premises Causes Trouble in Health Conditions	22	30	30	18	256	6
2	Not Able to Expect the Minimum	15	25	15	45	210	8

	Humanity and Equity in Work Allotted						
3	No Reward to Honest, Hard Working and Efficient Workers is given	29	30	21	20	268	2
4	Senior Workers and Owners' Behaviour are Rude in Work Place	12	30	20	38	216	7
5	The Infrastructure is totally poor and it creates a Sense of Uneasiness in Work	25	36	29	10	276	1
6	Occupation Does Not Give Enough Time to Spare with Family Members	15	18	22	45	203	9
7	Not Able to Exhibit My Ability and Competency Independently	12	16	23	49	191	10
8	The Work Timings and the Interval Timings Are Not Suitable	32	23	25	20	267	3
9	Very Heavy Stress at Work	30	28	19	23	265	4
10	No Welfare Facility and Refreshment at Work Place	25	29	24	22	257	5

Source: Primary Data

Very good-4 points, good-3 points, bad-2 points, very good 1 points

Table 3 reveals that "The Infrastructure is totally poor and it creates a Sense of Uneasiness in Coir Industry faced by Women Workers is ranked first with the weight age score of 276: The second rank is given to the No Reward to Honest, Hard Working and Efficient Workers is given with the weightage score of 268; the third rank, The Work Timings and the Interval Timings Are Not Suitable with 267; the fourth rank, the Very Heavy Stress at Work with 265; the fifth rank, No Welfare Facility and Refreshment at Work Place with 257; the sixth rank, Heavy and Continuous Work in the Premises Causes Trouble in Health Conditions with 256; the seventh rank, Senior Workers and Owners' Behaviour are Rude in Work Place with 256; the eighth rank, Not Able to Expect the Minimum Humanity and Equity in Work Allotted with 210; the ninth rank, Occupation Does Not Give Enough Time to Spare with Family Members with 203; and the tenth rank, Not Able to Exhibit My Ability and Competency Independently with 191 in Coir Industry faced by Women Workers

#### **Suggestions and Conclusion:**

First aid facility has to be provided to all the women workers. As the workers feel that they are exploited by heavy work load, so it is advised that the employers have to consider a decrease in the work. The study reveals that coir workers are not given holidays even on important national and religious festival days. The national holidays may be declared as paid holidays to the coir workers. Hence it is suggested that the government may enforce labour welfare measures such as provident fund and medical facilities for coir workers. The Government may establish a separate department to safeguard the welfare of the coir industry workers. The Government must take the effort to increase the wages of coir industry workers. Similarly it is suggested that Equal pay for all kinds of unskilled work and schemes for skill up gradation for women should be undertaken, through strong endorsement of laws. In order to safe guard the interest of the women workers, it is suggested to offer the provision of housing toilet, drinking water and other minimum facilities must be ensured at work place and efforts must be directed towards ensuring adequate social security safety-nets in the form of supply of credit, medical and other benefits.

By this study, the researcher concluded that despite the growth of the coir industry, there has been only marginal improvement in the production levels, quality and artistic appeal of coir products, with the result that new consumers, particularly of the younger generation, are not attracted to these products. The future of the coir industry depends on the development of nonconventional products. Similarly for a long period of time, Indian rural communities especially women workers of coir industry have been facing number of socio-economic problems. So various planners and administrators of the coir board of the government must consider the threats faced by women workers to protect their interest as well as the interest of the nation to march towards a prosperous future.

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