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A Sociological Study on Workers' Problems in Chengalpattu District

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the social and economic challenges faced by the workers in the Chengalpattu district of Tamil Nadu. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study gathers understanding through structured questionnaires and personal interviews with workers from various sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and informal employment. The study found that many workers continue to struggle with low and irregular wages, unstable jobs, and very little access to social security benefits. Poor safety at workplaces and limited chances for skill training make their situation even harder. On top of that, problems like gender inequality, exploitation by middlemen, and seasonal unemployment add to their difficulties. The research highlights the urgent need for stronger government action—such as enforcing labor laws more strictly, improving welfare programs, and offering more vocational training—to help workers live better lives and support fair growth in semi-urban and rural industrial areas.

Key words: Informal employment, Industrialization, Labor welfare, Workers' livelihood, Policy interventions, Poverty and inequality, Sociological perspective

1.Introduction:

Work is an important part of the people's lives, it influences not only how they earn money but also how the families and communities function. In a developing country like India, workers form the backbone of the India's economy. Understanding these issues from a social perspective shows how work is connected to the larger social and economic life in modern India.

Chengalpattu district, located near Chennai, has become an important center for both industrial and service-related jobs in Tamil Nadu. Its economy relies on a variety of sectors, including construction, small-scale manufacturing, transportation, and informal labor. Even with new job opportunities, workers still face many challenges, such as irregular work, low income, poor living conditions, little knowledge of labor laws, and limited access to government welfare programs.

Looking at the situation of workers in Chengalpattu helps us understand how social and economic factors affect their daily lives. Things like caste, gender, education, migration, and government policies all influence their experiences.

Selection of Sample

This research focuses on workers from various occupations in the **Chengalpattu District**. Because it wasn't practical to include every worker in the study, a sample group was chosen. In total, **100 workers** were selected to serve as the respondents.

Statement of the Problem:

Workers in the Chengalpattu district, like those in many fast-growing regions of Tamil Nadu, face several social and economic challenges in their daily lives. In face of their major contribution to the local economy through jobs in agriculture, construction, small-scale industries, and informal work, their living and working conditions remain far from satisfactory. Many of them struggle with low wages, lack of job stability, and limited access to social welfare benefits.

A significant number of workers are also unaware of their legal rights and government entitlements. Most are employed without proper contracts or safety measures, which makes them easy targets for exploitation and job insecurity. Problems such as gender inequality, seasonal employment, and the

difficulties faced by migrant laborers further add to their hardships. The situation is made worse by weak labor unions, poor policy execution, and insufficient enforcement of labor laws.

As Chengalpattu continues to experience rapid industrialization and urban growth, understanding the everyday struggles of its workforce becomes increasingly important.

Objectives:

- ✓ **To identify the major socio-economic and occupational problems faced by workers in Chengalpattu district, including issues related to wages, job security, housing, healthcare, and access to education.**
- ✓ **To examine the gender-based disparities and specific challenges encountered by male and female workers.**
- ✓ **To analyze the impact of seasonal employment and labor migration on workers' income stability and family well-being.**

Need for study:

1. **To examine the gap between policy and practice:** Even though India has a several labor laws and welfare schemes, their implementation remains weak, particularly for unorganized and informal workers.
2. **To understand the social dimensions of labor problems:** Factors such as the caste, gender, migration, and family responsibilities have deeply influences the everyday experiences of the workers.
3. **To provide useful insights for policymakers:** The findings from this research can help the government bodies and NGO's design to truly reflect the workers' needs.

2.Review of the Study:

In Tamil Nadu, several the researchers have explored the living and working conditions of informal sector ,laborers, including daily wage earners who are often excluded from labor policies and welfare programs. For example, **Kannan and Papola (2017)** they found that the informal workers across India rarely have access to the benefits such as health insurance, pension plans, or adequate housing. **Venkatachalam (2019)**, in a study on southern Tamil Nadu, highlights how the workers—particularly those in the constructions and brick kiln sectors—are frequently utilized by contractors.

Even though the area has seen steady industrial and urban growth, the well-being of workers hasn't improved at the same rate. Early reports from government and non-government sources show that many laborers—especially migrants and those in informal jobs—still face problems like delayed wages, unsafe working conditions, and limited knowledge of their legal rights.

This study aims to fill that gap by offering current, local insights into the socio-economic conditions of workers in Chengalpattu. It builds on earlier research while highlighting the challenges faced by workers in this newly developing industrial and semi-urban area.

RESEARCH GAP

Even though there are many studies about the social and economic conditions of workers across India and Tamil Nadu, very few have looked closely at the situation in the Chengalpattu District. Most earlier research talks about worker issues at the state or national level, often missing the unique problems faced by people working in fast-developing industrial areas like Chengalpattu.

Since Chengalpattu became a separate district not too long ago, it has seen quick growth in industries and cities. Even with all the development, there isn't much information about how these changes have affected local workers—especially those in unorganized jobs like construction, domestic work, and small-scale industries.

Another important gap is that we don't know much about how aware workers are of their rights and social security benefits. There is also little research on how local authorities take care of workers' welfare. This study looks closely at the real problems workers face in Chengalpattu District and suggests practical ways to make their work and life better.

Methodology

Study Area

This research was conducted in Chengalpattu District, Tamil Nadu, a region going through rapid industrial and urban growth. The district is home to a large number of workers, both in organized and unorganized sectors, employed in areas like construction, manufacturing, services, and informal labor.

Its a mixed economic structure makes it a suitable location for studying workers' socio-economic and occupational conditions.

Sources of Data

The study used both primary and secondary data sources:

- **Primary Data:** Primary data is collected directly from the workers through the structured questionnaires, interviews to understand their daily challenges and experiences.
- **Secondary Data:** These data taken from the official publications such as government and NGO reports.

Sampling Design

- **Population (Universe):** The research is done with the all types of workers living in Chengalpattu District.
- **Sample Size:** 100 respondents were chosen to represent different types of jobs.

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

- **Interview Schedule / Questionnaire:** Contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions to collect numbers and personal experiences.
- **Observation:** This observations helped to understand the working conditions ,and living situations

Variables Considered

The study looked at different aspects of workers' lives:

- **Socio-demographic:** Age, gender, education, marital status, and family size.
- **Work-related:** Working hours, safety measures, and relationships with employers.

Definitions and Terms Used in the Study

- **Worker:** Any person doing manual or wage-based labor, whether in formal or informal sectors, including construction workers, agricultural laborers, factory workers, domestic helpers, and self-employed workers doing physical or low-income jobs.
- **Informal Sector:** These are jobs without government rules or protections. They don't have contract or benefits for the workers
- **Wage:** The money workers earn, which could be daily, weekly, or monthly. It includes basic pay and sometimes extra for specific work.
- **Social Security Benefits:** Government schemes like health insurance, pensions, are the social security benefits which helps workers
- **Chengalpattu District:** The area of Chengalpattu, which became its own district separate from Kanchipuram in 2019. And it helps may migrant workers to earn by industrial sectors.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:-

Table 1: Age Distribution of Workers (N=100)

Age Group (Years)	Number of Workers	Percentage (percent.)
Below 20	10	10
21–30	35	35
31–40	30	30
41–50	15	15
Above 50	10	10
Total	100	100

Source:Field data

A majority of 65 percent. of the workers fall within the age group of 21–40 years, indicating that the most young workers are active in the workforce. This age group contributes significantly to productivity but they still faces socio-economic insecurities which affecting their livelihood and family stability.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Workers (N=100)

Gender	Number of Workers	Percentage (percent.)
Male	60	60
Female	40	40
Total	100	100

SOURCES: Field Data

Male workers constitute the majority of 60 percent. of the workforce, while females make up 40 percent of the work force

Table 3: Income Levels of Workers (Monthly) (N=100)

Income Level (₹)	Number of Workers	Percentage (percent.)
Below 10,000	50	50
10,001–20,000	35	35
20,001–30,000	10	10
Above 30,000	5	5
TOTAL	100	100

Source:- Field Data

Nearly half of the workers i.e., 50 workers out of 100 workers received only rupees 10,000 as a salary for a month which is a critical situation for the financial stability to run a life. Only about 15 percent receive wages above ₹20,000, this reveals that how low the overall income levels are within the district's labor force.

Table 4: Low Wages as a Problem (N=100)

Response	Number of Workers	Percentage (percent.)
Yes	60	60
No	40	40
Total	100	100

Source:- Field Data

A majority 60percent. of the respondents are identified low wages as a major problem. Low pay continues to limit access to basic needs such as healthcare, education, and housing, especially for female workers.

Table 5: Job Security (N=100)

Job Security Status	Number of Workers	Percentage
Secure	45	45
Insecure	55	55
Total	100	100

Source:- Field Data

Job insecurity affects more than half of the respondents i.e., 55 percent of the respondents. This instability leads to uncertainty in income, highlighting the weakness of casual and contract workers.

Table 6: Housing Condition (N=100)

Housing Type	Number of Workers	Percentage
Proper Housing	45	45
Improper Housing	55	55
Total	100	100

Source:- Field Data

More than half of the respondents 55 percent. lives in a inadequate housing conditions

Table 8: Education for Children (N=100)

Gender of Respondent	Children in School (percent.)	Children Not in School (percent.)	Total (percent.)
Male	45	20	65
Female	13	22	35
Total	58	42	100

Source:- Field Data

A higher proportion of male workers 45percent. report their children attending school, whereas only 13percent. of female workers' children are enrolled. Economic hardship and migration are major reasons why 42percent. of children are not in school.

Table 9: Seasonal Employment and Migration (N=100)

Employment Type	Migrated for Work	Did Not Migrate	Total (percent.)
Seasonal	25	30	55
Permanent	5	40	45
Total (percent.)	30	70	100

Source:- Field Data

Seasonal workers are more likely to migrate 45percent compared to permanent workers 11percent.

Table 10: Suggested Policy Measures (N=100)

Policy Measure	Yes	No	Percentage (percent.)
Regular Wages & Job Security	75	25	100
Affordable Housing	50	50	100
Access to Healthcare	45	55	100
Better Education for Children	55	45	100
Awareness of Workers' Rights	40	60	100

Source:- Field Data

Awareness of workers' rights is also necessary to improve social and occupational conditions.

Table 11: Workplace Safety Conditions (N=100)

Gender	Safe Workplace	Unsafe Workplace	Total (percent.)
Male	40(68.96)	30 (71.42)	70
Female	18(31.03)	12(28.57)	30
Total	58	42	100

Source:- Field Data

Among 58 respondents from the study area, 68 per cent of the male are feeling safe in the working place followed by 31. 03 per cent females are feeling safe in the work place.

Among the 42 respondents, 71.per cent of the male are feeling unsafe in the working place followed by 28 per cent female are feeling unsafe in the working place.

Table 12: Family Support for Work (N=100)

Gender	Full Support (percent.)	Partial Support (percent.)	No Support (percent.)	Total (percent.)
Male	25	30	5	60
Female	10	20	10	30
Total (percent.)	35	50	15	100

Source:- Field Data

Female workers receive less family support compared to males. While 25percent. of males receive full family support, only 10percent. of females do. This limits women's ability to balance work and household responsibilities.

Table 13: Access to Social Security Benefits (N=100)

Employment Type	Access (percent.)	No Access (percent.)	Total (percent.)
Permanent workers	50	50	100
Seasonal	18.2	81.8	100
Average Access Rate (percent.)	34.1	65.9	100

Source:- Field Data

Permanent workers have relatively better access to social security, but half of still remain uncovered. Among seasonal workers, 81.8percent lack social protection, which increases their economic weakness

Table 14: Work-Life Balance Challenges (N=100)

Gender	Easily Manage Work & Family (percent.)	Difficult to Manage (percent.)	Very Difficult (percent.)	Total (percent.)
Male	20	20	5	45
Female	5	30	20	55
Total (percent.)	25	50	25	100

Source:- Field Data

Work life balance challenges a serious issues especially for female workers about 55 percent. Of females have responded in this 20 percent feel very difficult and 30 feel difficult to manage and whereas only 5 percent workers feels easy.

Table 15: Awareness of Workers' Rights (N=100)

Gender	Aware (percent.)	Not Aware (percent.)	Total (percent.)
Male	37.5	62.5	100
Female	37.5	62.5	100
Combined Total (percent.)	37.5	62.5	100

Source:- Field Data

A majority of 62.5 percent. of workers are unaware of their labor rights, including minimum wage laws and social security benefits.

Suggestion for the growth of workers

1. **Increase Minimum Wages:** The government should increase the wages of the workers to meet their daily needs thus they can deal healthy life
2. **Promote Job Security:** Employers, especially in the unorganized sector, they should provide job agreements
3. **Improve Workplace Safety:** Regular inspections and awareness programs should ensure that workers have proper safety equipment, and clean workspaces, and good health protection.

Findings of the Study

A survey of 100 workers revealed the following:

1. Employment and Work Conditions

- **Type of Employment:** 60 percentage worked in the unorganized sector (daily wage labor, construction, domestic work), and 40percentage in organized jobs.
- **Working Hours:** 70 percentage worked more than 8 hours a day, 20percentage worked 6–8 hours, and 10percentage less than 6 hours.
- **Job Security:** 65 percentage said their jobs were unstable, with frequent temporary work or sudden termination.

2. Wages and Income

- **Monthly Income:** 50percentage earned below ₹10,000, 35percentage earned ₹10,000–20,000, and 15percentage earned above ₹20,000.
- **Wage Delays:** 40percentage faced delays in payment, causing financial stress.
- **Income Satisfaction:** Only 25percentage were satisfied with their income; most said it wasn't enough for daily needs.

Conclusion

The study “**A Sociological Study on Workers’ Problems in Chengalpattu District**” shows that workers in both organized and unorganized sectors face serious challenges. Most are young or middle-aged, have limited education, and work in low-paying, unstable jobs. To run their day to day life many of them earn below rupees 10,000 per month ,and irregular payment and workers feels unsafe especially female workers and they face health risks. Workers are with limited awareness.

Research Questions

1. What are the main socio-economic and work-related problems faced by workers in Chengalpattu District?
2. Are there differences or challenges based on gender among male and female workers?
3. How do seasonal jobs and migration affect workers’ livelihoods?

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