

“Problems Faced by Match Industry Workers - A Social Perspective¹”

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INTRODUCTION :

During the past three decades, the Indian match industry grew especially rapidly. Indian government policies have played an important role in the development of the match industry as a whole and in the encouragement and protection of the small-scale sector for the last fifty years. Government policies protected Indian matches by placing protective tariffs on imported products and specifically favored the expansion of the handmade, small-scale sector through the use of differential excise taxes. There are now 12,000 units in the small-scale, non-mechanized sector, of which 75 per cent to 90 per cent are situated in Southern India.

AIM:

This study intends to provide an overview of the Indian match industry, providing comparisons at the global level. The study also deals with the social security available to the match box industry workers and the difficulties faced by the workers in virudhunagar District.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

In Aruppukottai Taluk in Virudhunagar District, there are approximately 100 match works and 100 fireworks factories employing more than twenty thousand workers. Major processes are frame filling, wax dipping, head filling, drying, box farming and filling, side painting, band rolling, dozen packing and chemical grinding section.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

This study was conducted in three taluks of Tamilnadu namely Aruppukottai, sattur, sivakasi in Virudhunagar district, because Aruppukottai taluk have large number of safety match industries and more number of workers are employed in the safety match industries. The socio-economic profile of the labourers working in safety match industries and the problems faced by them were considered for this study”.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

The objectives are;

1. To study socio-economic profile of the labours working in safety match industries.
2. To evaluate the problems faced by the safety match industry.

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3. To trace out the solution to the problems of accidents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

- Meenakshi Gupta, “*Labour Welfare and Social Security in unorganized sector*”(2007). Unorganised sector: Problem of definitions and identification, categories of unorganized sector, labour welfare activities, agencies for labour work, social security and its scope, social security: unorganized sector, legislations related to organized sector, judicial response.
- Dr. Tanuja Trivedi, ‘*Social protection for Unorganised workers* (2009) social security measures: the experience, social security for the unorganized workers.
- Tinu K. Mathew (2008) conducted a study on the role of social movements in organizing the unorganised sector workers LEARN, Dharavi. This study tried to detect the problems as well as the prospects entailed in systematizing the unorganised workers and recognize the part social movements can play in regulating the unorganised sector workers. The intention was to appreciate the troubles and tribulations of the unorganized workers in general and women workers in particular in the state of Maharashtra with Dharavi as the center of attention. Qualitative methodology of research was used to analyse the conditions of informal sector workers. This was conducted through interview methods, which helped in identifying the positive impact of unions on the workers. This also gave an insight into the obstacles faced by the unions in organising the informal sector workers. In addition to participant observation, newspaper articles, books, journals and various government reports were referred as secondary data.²
- Kabita Das , K.B.Das, Subhransubala Mohanty (2012) conducted a study on Social Security in Informal Sector. The aim of this paper was to know the degree of social security of the working women in the informal sector in Odisha. Keeping in view the objective of the study, a sample survey was conducted in districts like Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Cuttack. Accordingly 100 women from each district were randomly selected and supplied with structured questionnaire pertaining to their availability of social security measures taken by the Govt. of Odisha. Available data suggested that social security in the organised sector was steadily shrinking but the major concern was for informal sector which imposes a heavy cost on society in terms of jobs, income and health care

² Tinu K. Mathew (2008), Role of Social Movements in Organizing The Unorganised Sector Workers: A Case Study of LEARN, Dharavi, pgs 16-19

- The Authors mentioned herein have dealt with social security measures for Domestic workers. The intention of the Researcher is find out the problem faced by the Domestic worker and specific legislative measures for Domestic workers. The Researcher has tried to fill the gaps left down in the study by the abovementioned authors in this research.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. The rating given by the employees and their opinion regarding their technology related problems in safety match industries do not differ significantly.
2. There is no significant difference between each segment and opinion of employees regarding management and supervisors in relation to work in match industries.
3. There is no significant relationship between the gender and the problems faced by the employees.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data were collected from the workers working in the safety match factories by interviewing them. Secondary data were collected from published reports, journals and magazines. This study is conducted in random sampling method to select 20 sample respondents who are working in the match factories in three taluks of Virudhunagar District .

ORIGIN OF MATCH INDUSTRY:

The origin of the safety match industry in India goes back to the beginning of this century. Around 1910 immigrant Japanese families who settled in Calcutta began making matches with simple hand-made and power-operated machines. Local people soon learned the necessary skills and a number of small match factories sprang up in and around Calcutta.

The factories in Calcutta were unable to compete with imports, and handmade match production shifted to Southern India, especially in the Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli districts of Tamil Nadu State. This shift was due to the pioneering efforts of P.Iya Nadar and A.Shanmuga Nadar who went to Calcutta to learn the process from Purna Chandra Ray, a local businessman, who had learned the trade in Germany. The Nadars set up a number of manual match production units in extremely poor regions of Tamil Nadu, where a combination of the dry climate, cheap labour and availability of raw materials from nearby Kerala created ideal conditions for match production.

BASIC RAW MATERIALS USED BY THEM:

Basic raw materials are produced within India. A full appreciation of the employment potential of the match industry should also consider the workers involved in the production of all of these raw materials. Raw materials used for manufacturing of safety matches include splints, veneers, wax, chlorate, sulphur, Bichromate of potassium, rosin, Manganese (red/black), glass powder, glue, phosphorous, copper sulphate, carbon black, gelatine, antimony, topioca flour, blue match paper, craft paper, bundle sheet and fuel. These are the match sticks, which are used for holding purpose. It is made out of soft wood. Normally the trees used for the splints are

- i). Aspheria
- ii). Matti
- iii). Pala
- iv). Rubber
- v). Aspin.

PROBLEMS REGARDING RISK AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH HAZARDS:

The labourers are exposed to physical, chemical and ergonomic hazards. Physical hazards include excessive heat superadded by poor ventilation. They are also exposed to high volume music being played by the employer so they cannot communicate with each other and have to be involved fully in the work. They are exposed various chemical hazards mainly potassium chlorate, commercial sulphur, glue, black and red manganese, red phosphorus, antimony glass powder etc.

Due to 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.

Accidents are a menace to the community from all points of view, national industrial and individual. Industrial accidents whenever they arise lead to physical duress, financial loss to worker and his family, loss of production and productivity, financial burden on the employer and the State as well as a great loss to the economy.

ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS:

The Indian match industry is a vigorous FBSSE which has succeeded in expanding at a relatively small-scale, hand-made, and labour-intensive level. There are, however, a number of important issues and major constraints that confront the industry. They are

- shortages of raw materials, particularly match quality soft woods, but also chemicals, match wax and wax paper;
- geographical distribution of the industry in one region and resulting labour shortages;
- the monopoly of the 18 “Match Kings”;
- exploitation of women and child labour by these monopolists;
- the failure of the cottage sector;
- the introduction of new technology in the hand made sector;
- and the unique problems of the veneer and splint making industry.

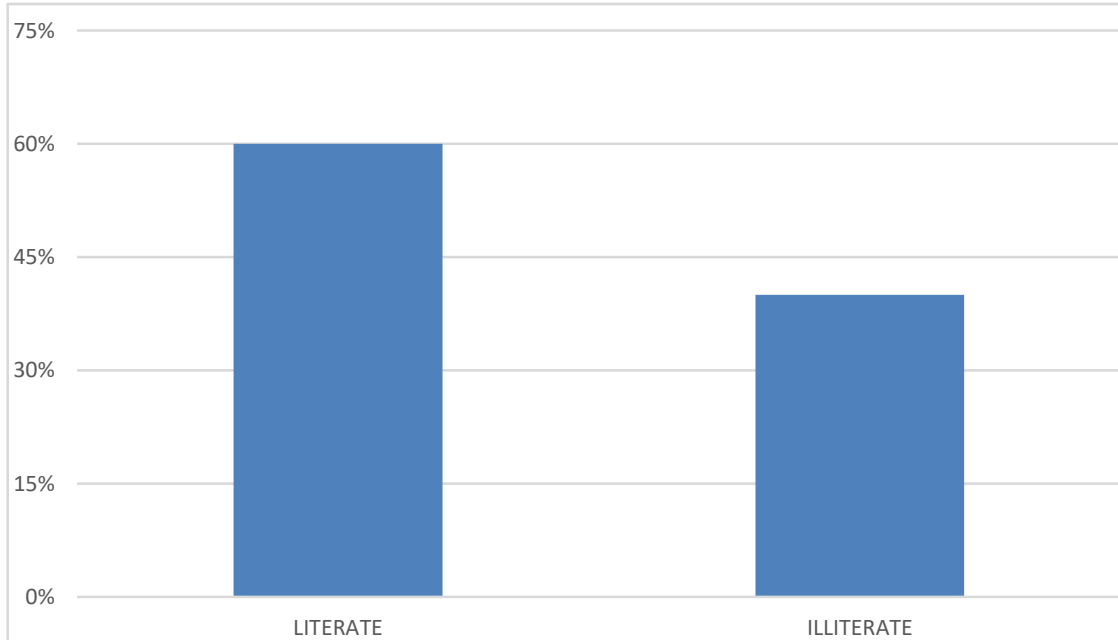
TRENDS ABOUT MATCH BOX INDUSTRY:**TALUK-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE MATCH MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES IN VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT**

S.No	Name of the Taluk	Number of Industries	Percentage in Total
1	Sattur	1,693	56.77
2	Sivakasi	717	24.04
3	Virudhunagar	243	8.14
4	Rajapalayam	156	5.23
5	Srivilliputhur	112	3.75
6	Arupukottai	43	1.44
7	Kariapatti	12	0.40
8 .	Tiruchuli	6	0.20
Total		2,982	100.00

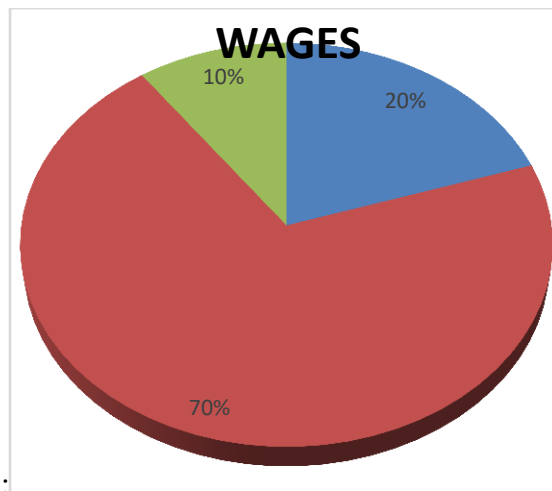
Source: Compiled from the Records of Arms Act Section, Virudhunagar Distrit.

DATA ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS OF LITERATE AND ILLITERATE PEOPLE



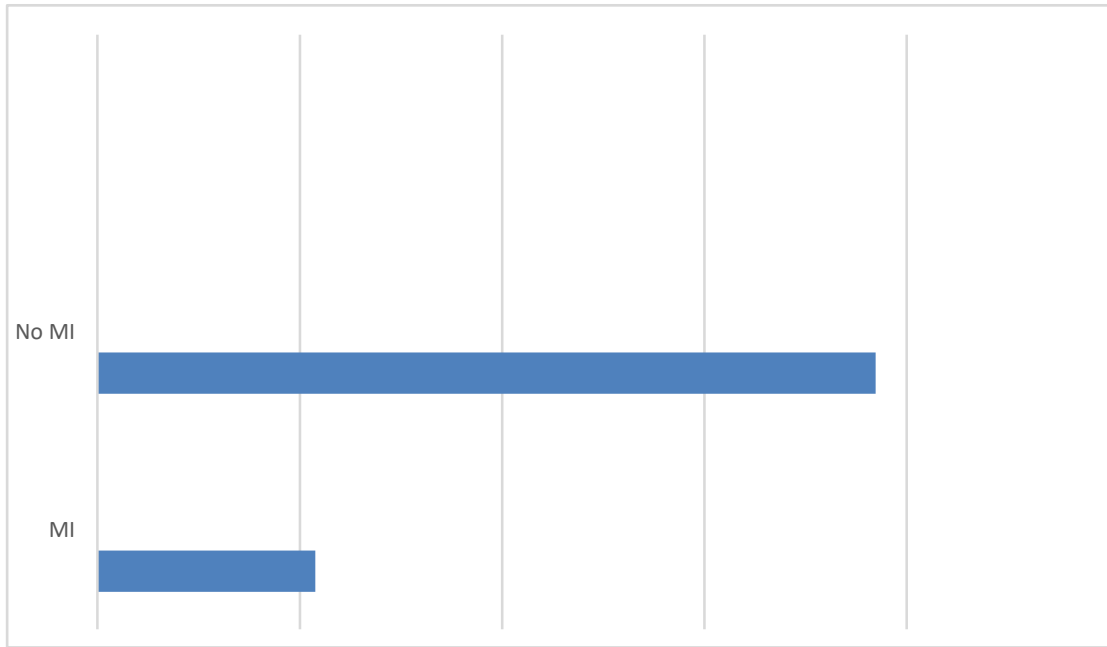
Based on the study 60% of workers are literate but studied maximum up to 10th std like that and 40% of workers are illiterate.



WAGES:

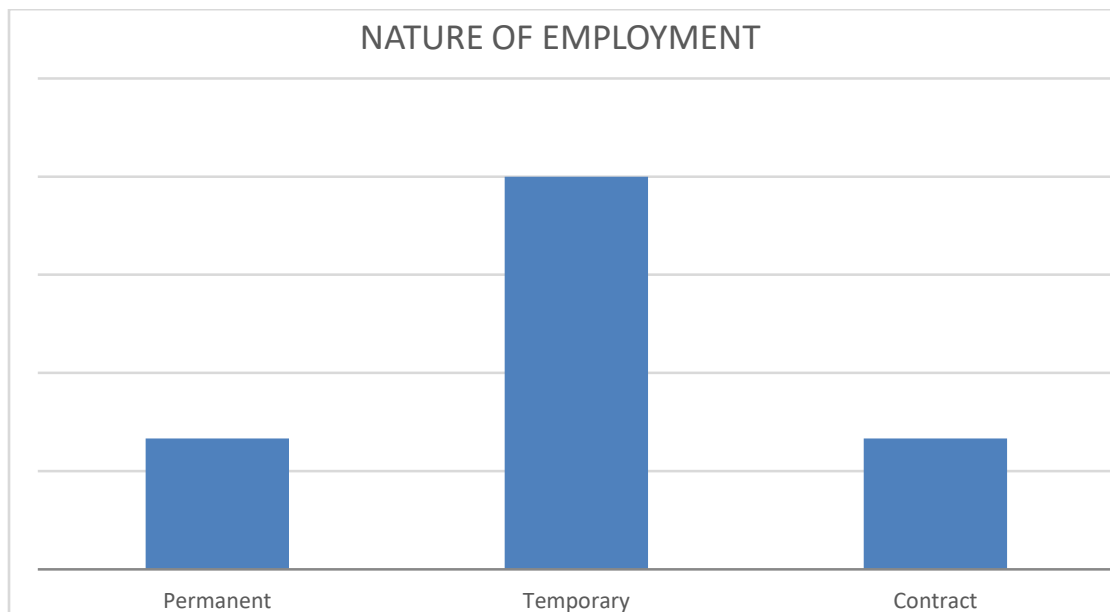
Wages are mostly paid in weekly payments . Rarely paid in piece rate if there is shortage and difficulties in work.

MEDICAL INSURANCE :



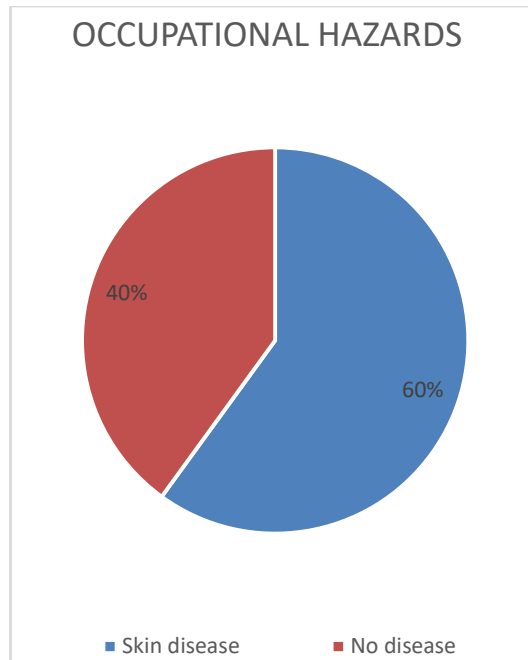
Mostly the medical insurance is made by the factory in case of accidents or fire accidents but in some factories no insurance is provided.

NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT:



Mostly 60% workers are categorized under temporary work and 20% for permanent and contract basis and those also for long termed workers.

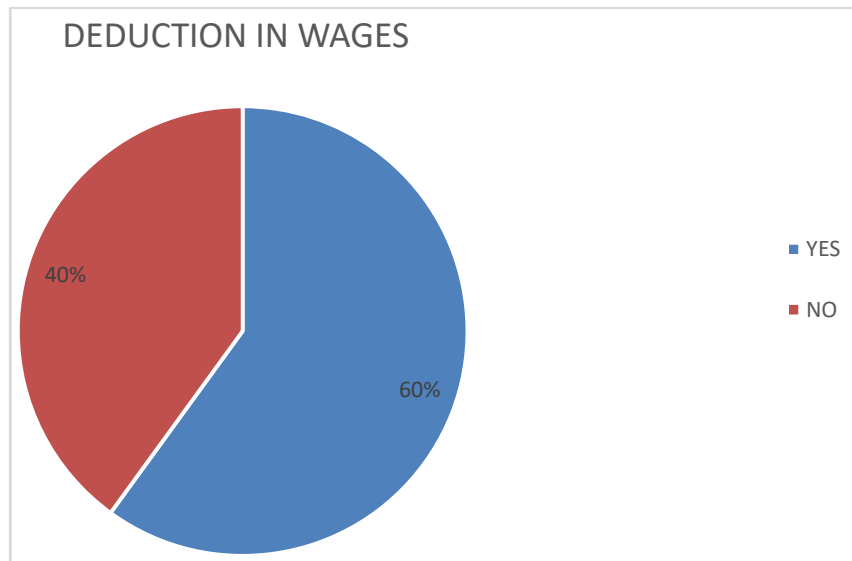
OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS:



Mainly most of workers are affected with skin injuries and diseases because of handling chemicals and some with side effects. Some of workers are not affected with skin diseases because they are working in place where they do only packing process. Later processed that most of workers are having leg problems because of sitting in the same place for number of hours. Mainly lung disease and skin cancer, Ear infections because of hearing continuous music and etc...

DEDUCTION IN WGAES:

Nearly 60% of the samples reported that their wages have been deducted in unauthorized manner. Such unauthorized deductions should be stopped and the workers should be given with full wages for their sweat and labour. Necessary action should be taken against the management who deduct wages from the workers for unnecessarily.



FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

An Industrial accident is an unfortunate occurrence resulting in cessation of work by a worker or a group of workers. Although the life of an industrial worker is generally full of risks and hazards and an accident may be the result of any unsafe act on his own part or any unsafe condition, investigations reveal that some people are “accident prone”. The problems faced by the safety match industry workers are divided into three categories. They are

- Risk and Occupational Health Hazards
- Technology Related Problems and Management
- Supervisor related problem
- Working hours is not properly seen. Some of the workers are working overtime with no wages, it should be avoided.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND PROTECTION

The workers in match industry sector face innumerable hurdles in their day to day life. Workers earn little respect from the society. For such group of workers, the reach and effectiveness of the social security schemes is of utmost importance.

➤ EMPLOYEES’ STATE INSURANCE

The Employees’ State Insurance Act, 1948 intends to give six kinds of benefits to the workers

- a. Sickness benefit
- b. Maternity benefit

- c. Disablement benefit
- d. Medical benefit
- e. Dependent benefit
- f. Funeral benefit

ESI Act is applicable to match industry workers. For this, the contributions are made by the workers and their employer.

➤ **PROVIDENT FUND**

The Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, which applies to scheduled factories and establishments employing 20 or more employees ensures terminal benefits of provident fund, superannuation pension and family pension in case of death during service.

➤ **OTHERS BENEFITS UNDER CENTRAL LEGISLATIONS**

- The Maternity benefit Act, 1961
- The Employees' Compensation Act, 1923 provides for the compensation to workers or his dependents in case of employment related injuries resulting in death or disability of the worker.
- The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 provides for the payment of gratuity to an employee on the termination of his employment after he has rendered continuous service for not less than five years on his superannuation, or on his retirement or resignation, or on his death or disablement due to accident or disease.

CONCLUSION:

At present, India has become self sufficient in respect of matches and also exports matches to other countries. It is an unforgettable fact that the genesis of the match industry was largely responsible for lowering caste tensions in many parts of Tamil Nadu, especially in Virudhunagar district. Earlier, due to unemployment, localities in the area indulged in illicit distillation of arrack, burning thorny bushes for charcoal and robbery. It is to be remembered that the match industry provides the bread and butter for thousands of cottage match unit owners and for six lakh direct as well as indirect employees of Virudhunagar district. It is high time both for the state and central governments to step into the field of cottage matches to devise suitable measures to tide over the problems faced by the match manufacturers.

SUGGESTIONS

The risk of fire and explosion is ever present in the safety match industry besides health hazards due to the inhalation of dust and fumes. It is suggested that, good housekeeping, fire resistance, provisions of alarm and training in using them are necessary to minimize the damages of fire.

- The management is suggested for free medical checkup should be provided to them

- The management must take precautionary measures to overcome occupational problems. This problem by keeping the chemicals used in the match manufacture separately or by giving glouse and safety gadgets to the workers to avoid this problem.
- It is the responsibility of the Labour Office to visit frequently to the match industry to ensure the cleanliness of the work place.