

A Study of Socio-Economic Conditions of Goldsmith Workers in Ponnaiyarajapuram In Coimbatore City

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Abstract- *This study examines the socio-economic conditions and health issues of goldsmith workers in Ponnaiyarajapuram, Coimbatore, amidst a declining traditional craft due to industrial mechanization and modern technological advancements. Historically, goldsmiths held high social and economic status, crafting intricate gold jewellery with exceptional skill. However, the introduction of machines in the jewellery industry has drastically reduced their earnings and employment opportunities, leading many to abandon the profession. The study investigates the economic, social, and health challenges faced by these artisans, including musculoskeletal disorders and respiratory problems due to prolonged postures and exposure to hazardous materials in small, ill-equipped workshops. Furthermore, the research aims to identify solutions for improving their working conditions and livelihood opportunities in an increasingly mechanized industry.*

Keywords- Goldsmiths, socio-economic conditions, health issues, mechanization, Coimbatore

I. INTRODUCTION

Gold jewellery has been integral to human life since the Bronze Age, crafted by skilled goldsmiths who combine artistic talent with technical precision. These artisans, historically revered and often patronized by royalty, have faced significant challenges over the last two decades due to mechanization and the repeal of the Gold Control Act. Goldsmiths, who specialize in creating intricate ornaments, have historically passed their skills through apprenticeships, although modern training programs are now available. The malleable nature of gold, combined with its noble properties, has made it a favoured material for crafting jewellery and ceremonial items. Despite their cultural significance and high status in the caste system, goldsmiths have experienced declining incomes and job opportunities, leading many to abandon their traditional craft. In Coimbatore, a major gold jewellery hub in India, the introduction of advanced machinery has further diminished the demand for handcrafted items, significantly impacting the livelihoods of traditional goldsmiths from the Vishwakarma community. Health

concerns related to prolonged working postures and exposure to harmful substances have also emerged, emphasizing the need for interventions to support this vital yet struggling community.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To analyze the socio-economic conditions of goldsmith workers.
2. To identify the problem of the selected goldsmith workers.
3. To assess the health of the goldsmith workers.

LIMITATIONS:

The present study is an exploratory one based essentially on primary data. It is a known fact that primary data has its own limitations. The respondents were reluctant to provide correct details regarding their income, expenditure and savings. The respondents were apprehensive in sharing their health-related problems, housing and benefits received from the government in spite of the assurance given by the investigator that the information will be kept confidential. Based on the pilot survey, the questions on ancillary income were omitted from the questionnaire, as the respondents were either not willing to provide the necessary details or do not come under the category.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kaveri and John William (2015) in their study entitled, "Consumer perception towards Gold Jewellery on select Retailers in Coimbatore District" portrays the consumer perception on gold jewellery. Perhaps the main attraction of branded jewels is that they have a unique style of their own that differentiates them from others. Further the objective of the study is to get response about various factors affecting the buying behaviour of jewellery products. From the study it was identified that behind purchasing jewellery price, purity and design scores the maximum.

Neeru Jain (2011) Assistant Professor of Jewellery Design, IIS University, Jaipur, in her article, “Jewellery Design” has suggested the need for the study of jewellery, to implement hallmarking and bring about standardization in levels of gold purity because it is a growing issue of concern to all consumers and to make international quality ethnic jewellery to create a new stream of innovative, contemporary jewellery, both for the domestic as well as international markets.

World Gold Council (2010) in its article titled “India Heart of Gold Revival” has stated that India has one of the highest saving rates in the world; estimated at around 30 per cent of total income, of which 10 per cent is invested in gold. The article further reveals that only 21 per cent of rural India had no access to formal financial sources. Therefore, lack of availability of alternate avenues of investment might be resulting in heavy gold purchases.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Period and Collection of Data

The study's database was drawn from 50 respondents through a detailed interview schedule, personal observations, and locality surveys. The schedule covered socio-economic background, living conditions, income and expenditure patterns, health issues, and welfare schemes of goldsmiths. Based on a pilot survey, the schedule was revised, and data was collected through interviews in 2023.

Quantitative Techniques

To analyse the data, the following statistical tools were applied:

- **Percentages and Averages:** These were used to examine socio-economic factors influencing the earnings and lifestyle of goldsmiths.
- **t-test:** This was applied to determine if there was a significant difference in workplace and health-related problems faced by the goldsmiths.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table: Simple Percentage Analysis

Debt	No debt	21	42%
	Below 1 lakh	13	26%
	Above 1 lakh	16	32%
Benefit from welfare scheme amount	No Benefit received	35	70%
	Below 20000	7	14%
	Above 20000	8	16%

Source: Primary Data

t-TEST IN SPSS

S. No	Problem faced at work place	Mean Score
1.	Long hours of work	4.42
2.	No leave	3.9
3.	Rent house problem	3.62
4.	LPG – shortage of work	2.66
5.	Food timing	4.08
6.	Deadline	3.86
7.	Night shift	3.62

Source: Primary Data

S. No	Health Problem of master goldsmith	Mean score
1.	Eye problem	1.24
2.	Stomach problem	1.62
3.	Nerve disorder	1.7
4.	Respiratory disorder	1.7
5.	Musculoskeletal disorder	1.32
6.	Others (pressure, diabetes)	1.82

Factors	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Female	21	42%
	Male	29	58%
Type of unit working	Micro	2	4%
	Small	24	48%
	Medium	19	38%
	Large size	5	10%
Experience of work	0-10 years	30	60%
	10-20 years	10	20%
	Above 20 years	10	20%
Monthly Income Before Corona	Below 15,000	5	10%
	Above 15,000	45	90%
Monthly Income After Corona	Below 25,000	39	78%
	Above 25,000	11	22%

INTERPRETATION

Out of the 50 respondents, 42% were females and 58% were males among the selected goldsmith workers. About 4% in micro level were working units, 48% in small level, 38% in medium level, 10% in large level units. Around 60% of the respondents has less than 10 years of experience 20% of the respondents had to 10 – 20 years of experience and 20% of the respondents had above 20 years of experience. 10% of the goldsmith worker earned below Rs. 15,000 per month and 90% of the goldsmith worker earned above Rs. 15,000 per month. 78% of the goldsmith earned below Rs. 25,000 per month and 22% of the goldsmith worker earned above Rs. 15,000 of monthly income from after corona category. 42% of the goldsmith worker didn't have debt, 26% of the goldsmith worker had a debt of less than one lakh and 32% of the goldsmith worker had above one lakh debt. 70% of the goldsmith worker didn't have benefit from welfare scheme amount, 14% of the goldsmith worker had a benefit from welfare scheme amount of less than Rs.20000 and 16% of the goldsmith worker had above Rs.20000 of benefit from welfare scheme amount.

For the statement long hours of work (4.42), no leave (3.9), rent house problem (3.62), food timing (4.08), deadline (3.86) and night shift (3.62) the respondents agreed to the problems faced. However, the respondents were neutral to the problem of shortage of work due to LPG (2.66). For the health problem stomach problem (1.62), nerve disorder (1.7),

respiratory disorder (1.7) and others (1.82) the respondents replied in negative. Most of them faced the problems like eye (1.24) and musculoskeletal disorder (1.32).

FINDINGS

- Majority 58% of the respondents are Male.
- Majority 48% of the respondents are small level were working unit.
- Majority 60% of the respondents has less than 10 years of experience.
- Majority 90% of the goldsmith worker earned above Rs. 15,000 per month.
- Majority 78% of the goldsmith worker earned below Rs. 25,000 per month.
- Majority 42% of the goldsmith worker didn't have debt.

SUGGESTION

This study suggests that the goldsmith can adopt and switch over to the technological change, thus it helps their wellbeing in the society. The government should provide necessary technological skills for the upcoming generation and to sustain the jewel making business. Government and other local authorities should take necessary steps to help the goldsmiths otherwise they will be forced to leave their hereditary profession.

V. CONCLUSION

The study highlights the challenges faced by goldsmith workers in Ponnaiyarajapuram, Coimbatore. Despite their efforts, they earn only a moderate income, primarily from small orders placed by jewellery shops, which has made it difficult for them to save or improve their economic conditions. Rising living costs have led many to take loans for personal needs, while modern technology in jewellery making has reduced demand for handmade pieces, forcing them to seek alternate jobs. Additionally, the study underscores the lack of occupational safety, as workers are exposed to hazardous dust, fumes, and long hours of sitting, leading to respiratory and other health issues, yet few use protective equipment.

REFERENCES

- [1] Kaveri and John William (2015) in their study entitled, "Consumer perception towards Gold Jewellery on select Retailers in Coimbatore District".
- [2] Neeru Jain (2011) Assistant Professor of Jewellery Design, IIS University, Jaipur, in her article, "Jewellery Design".

- [3] World Gold Council (2010) in its article titled “India Heart of Gold Revival”.