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PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF MINING WORKERS IN BELLARY DISTRICT: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Though mining is one of the noted sector in terms of national productivity, the mining workers are suffering from many of the problems at their work places. Bellary district is well known for fine quality iron and manganese ore all over the world. As such, thousands of workers are engaged in extracting iron ore and manganese ore in Bellary district. It is noted that, unscientific methods of mining are followed in Bellary district. Due to such mining, the workers' health is affected. Hence, to look into the problems and challenges faced by mining workers, the present study is made. To collect the primary data, a sample survey of 150 mining workers working in Bellary district was made through interview schedules. It is found that, though there are fair wages, there are poor working conditions and as such, the workers' health is affected adversely. It is suggested to employers to give emphasis to social security benefits to mining workers.

KEYWORDS :national productivity, problems and challenges faced.

INTRODUCTION

The Mines Act 1952 defines a mine as any excavation where any operation for the purpose of searching or obtaining minerals has been or being carried on. Excavation may be open cast or underground including all process. Further, it defines an owner meaning any person who is the immediate proprietor or occupier of mine or any part thereof. Here comes the role and recognition of labour as a human factor in exploration and



exploitation of mineral resources.

Mining workers render greater service to the material benefit of the country and its people. The activities of mining and quarrying cover underground and surface mines quarries and wells. These include extraction of minerals and all those supplemental activities such as dressing and beneficiation of ores, crossing, screening, washing, cleaning, grading, milling, floatation, melting, palletizing, topping and other preparation carried by the workers at the mine site which are needed to render the material marketable (Devata, 2010).

Mining workers not only suffers from external environmental situation of mines also they faces reduction in quality of life due to denial of access of food availability livelihoods. India, in this aspect poses a much more

dangerous situation as mining is in developing stage here. Despite people suffering from several forms of environmental diseases, physical and mental deformities, poor nutritional status, occupational hazards, constant exposure of chronic diseases as a result of mining, there is a tragic gap in the availability of 'scientific' data on hazards of mining in India and specially coal mine workers. This is the root cause of mining industries to walk away from their responsibility towards the health of workers community. The apathy, lack of understanding the human values, absence of strong political will and gross corruption in the government enhances the scope of coal industry to continue with impunity. As health issue is considered technical and scientific|| part of any industry, the complains and evidences from worker community are brushed under the carpet as the relationship between mining management and workers is not based on humanities and the ill-health problems are tackled by the law implementing, monitoring and judicial authority on the pretext of improper and inadequate scientific collaboration (Dabhadker, et al, 2013).

Bellary district is one of such area which constitutes rich deposits of iron ore and manganese ore. Thousands of workers are working in the mines located at Sandur, Hospet and a few parts of Bellary. It is observed that, though there are many of the large scale industries engaged in mining, they have neglected the welfare of mining workers. As such, the mining workers are facing many of the problems and challenges in family, society and work places. The present study is an attempt to explore the problems and challenges faced by mining workers in Bellary district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study is made:

- ✦ To look into personal background such as age, education, etc of mining workers in Bellary district;
- ✦ To study the socio-economic conditions of mining workers; and
- ✦ To know the health problems faced by mining workers in Bellary district.

METHODOLOGY:

The problems faced by mining workers are assessed by analyzing the studies which were already conducted and published in research journals. Based on such problems of mines workers, it was decided to conduct survey of the mines workers working in Bellary district of Karnataka. As there are thousands of workers are working in the district, a sample survey of total 150 workers was made to collect the primary data and primary data was collected through interviews. Totally 96 male and 54 female workers working in mines were surveyed. The collected primary data is analyzed, interpreted and discussed as under.

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion:

1. Age:

Age of the respondents helps to know about the level of awareness and knowledge of the respondents on different aspects such as work aspects, family, conventions, etc. Hence the information collected on the age of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 1. Age

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 18 Years	18	12.0
19-25 Years	33	22.0
26-40 Years	62	41.3
41-55 Years	26	17.3
More than 55 Years	11	7.3
Total	150	100

The age group of the respondents shows that, 62 (41.3%) are between the age group 26 to 40 years, followed by 33 (22.0%) are between 19 to 25 years, 26 (17.3%) are of the age between 41 to 55 years, 18 (12.0%) of the respondents are below the age of 18 years and only about 11 (7.3%) are above 55 years. It is emphasized from the collected information that a great majority of the respondents are of middle age that is between 19 to 40 years and surprisingly, there is prevalence of child labour in mines sector.

2. Education:

Education of the respondents helps to know about the rights and privileges of workers in their work and also helps to understand general awareness on legislations, social life, etc. Hence, the information on the education of the respondents is collected and presented in the following table.

Table No. 2. Education

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	52	34.6
Lower Primary	41	27.3
Upper Primary	34	22.6
Secondary	23	15.3
Above Secondary	--	--
Total	150	100

Educational qualifications revealed that, 52 (34.6%) of the total respondents are illiterates, followed by only 41 (27.3%) have completed lower primary education, 34 (22.6%) have finished their higher primary education and only 23 (15.3%) have studied their Secondary school and none of the respondents have studied above the secondary level of education. Very interestingly, almost all of the respondents have completed education up to higher primary only. It shows that all the respondents are unskilled and under educated and also don't have knowledge about systematic and scientific mining.

3. Years of Mining Work Experience:

To a greater extent, mining work is unskilled. But it is noted that the mining work is risky, as women have to work in dust, dirt, scorching sun, poisonous gases, sharp weapons to carve stones, heights at the hill tops, deep grounds, etc. In this respect, to a greater extent, there is need for more experience is needed for the women to work in mining and quarrying.

Table No. 3. Years of Mining Work Experience

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Below 5 years	15	10.0
6-10 years	48	32.0
11-20 years	52	34.6
Above 20 years	35	23.3
Total	150	100

The work experiences of workers working in mining revealed that, of all the respondents, 15 (10.0%) have less than 05 years of mining work experience, 48 (32.0%) have mining experience between 06 to 10 years, 52 (34.6%) have mining work experience between 11 to 20 years and 35 (23.3%) have mining work experience of more than 20 years.

4. Children's Education:

Education of children is also an important aspect, which helps to know about the importance given to education by the respondents. In other words, as majority of the respondents are illiterates or under-educated, they may have realized the importance of education of their children. Hence, it was asked to the respondents that whether they are sending their children to the schools for getting education and the collected responses are tabulated as under.

Table No. 4. Children's Go To School

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	75	50.0
No	54	36.0
No Children	21	14.0
Total	150	100

Of all the respondents, 75 (50.0%) have stated that their children are going to schools and colleges to get education, 54 (36.0%) have expressed that their children are not going to schools and colleges to get education and 21 (14.0%) have no children. It is surprising to note that only half of the children of the respondents are going to schools to get education, whereas a many of the respondents are not sending their children to the schools or colleges to get education. Even though the governments are formulating plans for compulsory universal education, the women working in mining and quarrying are negligent about the education of their children. Hence, it is highly recommended to increase awareness among mining workers in mining and quarrying on the value of education in the life of their children.

5. Level of Satisfaction, Status and Respect in Outside Work:

The nature of mining work is unskilled and as a result, there is competition and due to all these factors, there is lower wages and wage discrimination. Hence, generally the level of status, respect and satisfaction is also lower. Hence, it was asked to respondents about the level of satisfaction, status and respect in their outside work and the collected information is presented in the following table.

Table No. 5. Level of Satisfaction, Respect and Status in Outside Work

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
To Full extent	42	28.0
To a Greater extent	45	30.0
Not At all	63	42.0
Total	150	100

On the level of satisfaction, respect and status in mining work, 63 (42.0%) are not satisfied with their status, respect and the satisfied on the outside job they are doing, followed by 45 (30.0%) have expressed that they are getting the status, respect and satisfied to a greater extent in outside work and the remaining only 42 (28.0%) of the respondents stated that they are fully satisfied with their work, status and respect.

6. Average Monthly Income:

Monthly income of the respondents reveals their standard of living and economic status. Of course, many of the respondents have expressed that they do not have work throughout the year. For this purpose, information on average monthly income was collected and shown in the following table.

Table No. 6. Average Monthly Income

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Less than Rs. 5000	16	10.6
Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10000	40	26.6
Rs. 10001 to Rs. 15000	81	54.0
More than Rs. 15000	13	8.6
Total	150	100

It is observed from the above table that, 16 (10.6%) of the respondents have monthly wages of less than Rs. 5000 per month, 40 (26.6%) of the respondents have monthly wages between Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10000, 81 (54.0%) have monthly wages between Rs. 10001 to Rs. 15000 and the remaining 13 (8.6%) of the respondents have wages of more than Rs. 15000 per month.

7. Daily Working Hours:

Working hours vary from work to work and employer to employer. As such, the working hours in case of unorganized sector work is not fixed. As such, the information on the working hours of the respondents in a day is collected and presented as under.

Table No. 7. Daily Working Hours

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 6 hours	21	14.0
6 to 8 hours	62	41.3
8 to 10 hours	53	35.3
More than 10 Hours	14	9.3
Total	150	100

Above table made it clear that, among all the respondents, 21 (14.0%) are working for less than 06 hours in a day, 62 (41.3%) are working for 06 to 08 hours, 53 (35.3%) are working for 08 to 10 hours and 14 (9.3%) are working for more than 10 hours. It shows that the working hours for the workers in mining are long.

8. Satisfaction on Working Conditions:

To work satisfactorily and efficiently, there is need for the satisfactory level of working conditions. The working conditions here refer to adequate security in the work place for workers, rest rooms, First Aid Box, Toilets, Doctors, etc. As such the information on the level of satisfaction on the working conditions of the mining workers was collected and presented as under.

Table No. 8. Satisfaction on Working Conditions

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Comfortable	27	18.0
Satisfactory	39	26.0
Not Satisfactory/ Poor	84	56.0
Total	150	100

As stated by all the respondents, only 27 (18.0%) are comfortable with their working conditions, 39 (26.0%) are satisfied with their working conditions and majority that is, 84 (56.0%) are not satisfied with their working conditions. Working conditions in the work place are not satisfactory as expressed by the majority of the respondents. It shows that even though the Factories Act laid down rules and regulations for the arrangement of different amenities for the workers, the employers have neglected the same.

9. Life is Secured against Accidents at Mines/ Quarries:

Mining work is risky, that the workers must have to work in the dust, stone blasts and dirt. The mining workers are always facing accidents and life threats in their mines and quarries. Hence, as per the Factories Act, certain safety measures should be taken by the employers so as to avoid accidents and threats such as providing Safety Helmets, First Aid Box, etc. These provide security to the life of the workers working in mining and quarrying. The information was collected from the respondents that whether their life is secured against accidents at their workplaces and presented in the following table.

Table No. 9. Life is Secured against Accidents at Mines/ Quarries

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	56	37.3
No	94	62.6
Total	150	100

Of all the respondents covered under the present study, only 56 (37.3%) are secured against the accidents at their mines and quarries, whereas the remaining 94 (62.6%) are not secured against the accidents at their mines and quarries. Only few of the respondents are got security in the workplace from the accidents and relatively a great major portion of the respondents are not secured against the accidents in their mines.

10. HEALTH PROBLEMS:

As discussed already, mining workers are suffering from different health problems due to unscientific mining in Bellary district. The health problems of the respondents covered under the study are shown as under.

Table No. 10. Health Problems

Particulars	No's of Respondents	Percentage
Respiratory Problems	44	29.3
Asthma	39	26.0
Allergy & Irritation	34	22.6
Musculoskeletal Problems	23	15.3
Any Other	07	4.6
None	65	43.3
Total	150	100

It is observed from the above table that, a few of the respondents have more than one type of health problem and few of the respondents don't have any of such health problems. Particularly, as stated by all the respondents, 44 (29.3%) are suffering from respiratory problems such as tuberculosis, 39 (26.0%) are suffering from Asthma, 34 (22.6%) are suffering from allergy and irritation, 23 (15.3%) are suffering from musculoskeletal health problems, 07 (4.6%) are suffering from other types of health problems and only 65 (43.3%) of all the respondents are not suffering from any of such health problems. Surprisingly, it is highlighted that a great majority of the respondents are suffering from health problems due to mining.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:

As discussed above, like other types of works in unorganized sector, the working conditions in mining including wage payment is also similar. As such, the workers are exploited economically. Due to lower wages, the standard of living and social status of mining workers is also lower. It is emphasized that, the mining workers are neglecting education of their children as they are not sending their children to schools and colleges to get education. Regarding the working conditions, a great majority of

the workers are not satisfied. Apart from these problems, there are few health problems due to their mining work. Hence, it is suggested to employers to maintain healthy environment at the mines and emphasize for scientific mining to maintain health of the workers. Further, it is suggested to employers to provide free health check-up and treatment for the workers. It is the duty of the employers to extend social welfare and social security benefits such as disability benefits, health benefits, safety measures such as insurance of workers, safety equipments, helmets, scientific mining, First Aid Boxes, free health facilities, etc. at the mining places.

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