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A Study of Socio-Economic Conditions of Industrial Workers (With special reference to Varanasi district)

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Abstract

The major objective of the present research study is to assess the socio-economic status of the industrial workers of Varanasi district in order to understand the relationship between income, education and living conditions with each other. The industrial sector of Varanasi is filled with its traditional crafts and more and more modern industrial units. A large part of the working population in Varanasi is employed in this sector, but at the same time very little attention is paid to the workers socio-economically. The study relies on very few indicators like income, education, health, housing, working conditions, etc. to determine the quality of life. Primary data has been used in this research work. Education was found to be one of the major determinants of income, with regression analysis showing that the two had a very significant positive relationship. Also, it has been confirmed that limited access to good quality education, irregular earning patterns and poor working conditions continue to be a pressing issue with regard to the limitations of workers even today.

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However, despite such factors, these workers have emerged resilient and are working hard for the industrial development of the region. The findings will help stakeholders to take a stance in favour of either industrial development or the well-being of workers.

Keywords: Socio-economic, workers, industrial, conditions, income, education.

1. Introduction

The socio-economic conditions of industrial workers play a vital role in shaping the economic and social fabric of a region. In Varanasi district, known for its rich cultural heritage and traditional industries such as Banarasi sarees, the industrial sector also includes a range of other manufacturing and small-scale units. Despite Varanasi's significant contribution to the economy of Uttar Pradesh, the socio-economic conditions of its industrial workers remain a topic that needs to be analysed. The present research aims to evaluate factors affecting industrial workers such as income levels, working conditions, access to infrastructure and social welfare measures. Understanding these conditions is essential to inform policies that can improve the lives of workers, promote fair labour practices and contribute to the local economy.

Studies on the socio-economic conditions of industrial workers in India have revealed that they face a number of challenges, including low wages, limited access to social security, poor working conditions and lack of job security (Sengupta et al., According to (2008), industrial workers in India often work in unsafe environments with inadequate protective measures, resulting in poor health outcomes and low productivity. This scenario is even worse in districts such as Varanasi, where informal employment is prevalent, and workers often lack access to adequate healthcare, education, and other essential services (Bhagat and Mohanty, 2009).

The socio-economic problems of industrial workers, emerging from income differentials and those born of social and infrastructural gaps,

For instance, Sharma (2016) cites an example of very poor housing facilities for many workers living in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions. Most of these workers are in informal employment in industries such as weaving, where they struggle to earn a continuous income and have to depend on taking loans because of economic insecurity. This study describes how the conditions of industries have carved life for these workers, in terms of the traditional and modern businesses available in the two cities. It aims to analyse and ascertain the socio-economic factors of industrial workers of the Varanasi district towards improving the quality of their lives by recommending measures for welfare enhancement. It is generally believed that improvements in socio-economic conditions will improve good labour productivity and thus, ultimately, economic development. The present paper shall rely on primary sources for a complete understanding of the problems and possible solutions facing the industrial workers of Varanasi district.

2. Review of Literature

The socio-economic status of industrial workers has been the subject of academic scrutiny due to its impact on labour policies, industrial productivity and regional economic growth. A survey of the literature on this issue points to a wide range of dimensions ranging from wage patterns, working conditions, access to basic amenities, health, education and social mobility (2.1 Income and Expenditure Patterns of Industrial Workers).

The income and expenditure patterns of industrial workers directly determine their quality of life. Studies conducted by Das and Ghosh (2017) show that income inequalities exist across industries, where the majority earn wages too low to sustain a living. The fact that unorganised industries have increased worker volatility has made the pockets of their workers vulnerable to economic shocks. When remuneration and social security are much higher for the organised sector, especially in cities, socio-economic

gender status also remains relatively high (Gaur and Pillai, 2019).

1. Working Conditions and Employment Security

There is a strong correlation between socio-economic status and employment security.

According to the survey of industrial workers, most employees in small and medium industries work on informal contracts that do not provide them with job security and other benefits such as provident fund and health insurance. Long working hours and poor working conditions are some of the major issues pointed out by Sharma et al. (2018). These issues have led to increased physical and psychological stress, which has resulted in a lower level of productivity and higher absenteeism for industrial workers.

1.3 Education and Skill Development

Education and skills are two important factors that affect the socio-economic outcomes of the industrial proletariat. Mishra and Kumar (2015) quote the following. Poor quality education sharply limits the upward mobility opportunities available to labourers, pushing them into low-wage work. Gupta et al. (2021) claim that skill upgradation initiatives have indeed been successful in increasing employment and income, which has been a more significant reason for the service industry, namely the technology sector.

1.4 Gender Differences

Involvement of women workers: Despite the fact that the level of female participation in industrial labour remains relatively low due to socio-cultural barriers and workplace discrimination, wage gaps, harassment, and a lack of maternity benefits have been issues in the textile and garment industries with respect to female workers (Basudharan & Krishnan, 2016). Labour-intensive jobs along with the household responsibilities of the double burden are additional socio-economic challenges. Empowerment through education and skill development, improved working conditions, and access to healthcare facilities has opened many avenues for

women to become economically independent. Case studies in Maharashtra (Patil, 2018) reveal that women in organized sectors reported greater decision-making power within their households, although such benefits are less pronounced in informal sectors.

2.5 Health Issues

Health is also another important factor that determines socio-economic status. Banerjee and Chaudhary, (2016) noted that employees in industrial sectors are most prone to diseases such as respiratory diseases, hearing disorders, chronic diseases, which increases health costs. Better health services are also not equally available to all, rural and semi-urban workers are always deprived of good health facilities. This results in a vicious circle of poverty and reduced productivity in the economy. Social mobility is a particularly important socioeconomic status indicator because they reflect the opportunities that move workers from worse to better living conditions over time. Patel and Singh (2019) note that "caste, gender and regional inequalities continue to hinder equal opportunities for industrial workers, with women and marginalised groups being the most affected." But in contrast, Verma (2021) reveals that community integration is being promoted in some areas by urbanisation and industrialisation. Integrated labour unions fighting for rights and social justice are growing. The industrial sector has many health risks to the workers. For example, studies such as those by Singh and Roy (2015) have indicated that occupational diseases are common, including respiratory conditions among workers in chemical and textile industries. The risks are further enhanced by ineffective safety measures and weak implementation of labour laws. Many factories do not observe the most basic safety standards, and accidents are very common, while long-term health complications are prevalent. Access to healthcare for industrial workers is restricted from proper access to the available healthcare facilities.

between the income levels and education of industrial workers in Varanasi district.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1):

There is a significant relationship between the income levels and education of industrial workers in Varanasi district.

5. Research Methodology

The presented research paper is based on primary and secondary sources. Primary data will be collected through interview schedule from the workers of industrial establishments located at different places in Varanasi district. Along with this, qualitative data of the workers will also be included in this research. Questions related to income, questions related to facilities provided and questions related to facilities will be included in the interview schedule. After data collection, the data will be analysed through various statistical methods such as regression, ANOVA, correlation, etc. Along with this, a comparative study of its findings with other research papers is also included.

6. Data Analysis

Out of the total workers included in the research study, 30.3 percent are female workers and 69.7 percent are male workers (Table 1). Statistics reflect gender inequality in the male-dominated industrial workforce, with women constituting one-third of the total workforce. All the workers belong to the unorganized sector and are not associated with any labour unions.

Table 1 No. of Industrial Workers by Gender

Gender	No. of workers	Percentage of total
Male	244	69.7
Female	106	30.3
Total	350	100

Source: Primary data of Varanasi district.

ties. Many labourers in the manufacturing industries within the Tamil Nadu state do have their health care from public institutions that are usually overcrowded (Narayanan 2018). Their outcomes towards health are also lowered as they cannot afford health services in private facilities. Also, gender-specific challenges may not be met on a timely basis, like reproduction health issues for females at the workplace.

2.6 Policy implications

Labour welfare schemes, minimum wage laws and industrial safety regulations are some of the policy interventions that have greatly impacted the socio-economic conditions of workers. However, according to Chattopadhyay (2022), gaps in the implementation and enforcement of policies remain significant barriers to achieving equal socio-economic conditions for industrial workers. Socio-economic analysis of the industrial workforce indicates that it is a complex of threats and opportunities. Economic inequality, poor working conditions and poor education and health facilities exist. However, special policy interventions and skill development programmes have brought about improvements in the socio-economic conditions. Longitudinal studies can be a great concern for future research to gain insights on how industries and globalization policies affect the socio-economic status of workers.

3. Research objectives

The aim of the study is to analyse the socio-economic status of industrial workers, focusing on their income levels, working conditions, educational attainment and access to health and social benefits. It examines how industrialisation affects their quality of life and socio-economic mobility, with special emphasis on gender inequalities. The analysis will provide insights to policy makers to improve worker welfare and industrial policies.

4. Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0):

There is no significant relationship between

Table 2 Educational Attainments of Industrial worker

Sr	Education	No.	Percent	Total	Percentage
1	Illiterate	41	84.6	49	9.3
2	Primary	4	8.2	49	9.3
3	Secondary	11	22.4	49	9.3
4	High school	2	4.1	49	9.3
5	Graduate	2	4.1	49	9.3
6	Post Graduate	2	4.1	49	9.3
7	Total	62	100	62	100

Source: Primary data of Varanasi district

As far as the education of these workers is concerned, their level of education is shown in Table 2. It is clear from the table that 30.3 percent of the workers have received education up to junior high school level, while 22.5 percent have received only primary level education. As far as technical level education is concerned, only 3.1 percent have received this education. As far as higher education of these workers is concerned, only 7.4 percent have received post-graduate level education, while 6.9 percent have received graduate level education. It is clear from these figures that the education of the workers is of low level and moreover, lack of technical education is also reflected in them.

Table 3 Classification of Age Structure of Industrial Workers

Sr	Age Group	No.	Percent	Total	Percentage
1	Below 15	20	32.3	62	32.3
2	15-25	18	29.0	62	29.0
3	25-35	16	25.8	62	25.8
4	Above 35	8	12.9	62	12.9
5	Total	62	100	62	100

Source: Primary data of Varanasi district

The age structure of workers working in the industrial sector has been analysed in Table 3. Looking at the table, it is clear that the maximum number of workers are in the age group of 18 to 35 years and their total percentage is 65.43. At the same time, 16.57 percent of the workers are in the age group of 36 to 45 years and 18 percent of the workers are above 46 years of age. It is clear from the analysis of the data that the majority of the workers working in the industrial sector are youngsters.

Table 4 Classification of industrial workers on the basis of family size

Sr	Family size	No. of workers	Percentage
1	Below 3	14	22.6
2	3-5	36	57.4
3	Above 5	12	19.9
4	Total	62	100

Source: Primary data of Varanasi district

Table 4 shows the family size structure of workers working in Varanasi district. The family size distribution shows that most families have 3 to 5 members which is 48.6 percent. A significant portion of families (36.6 percent) have 6 or more members while 19.9 percent have less than 3 members. The relatively low value of standard deviation (0.686) shows that the number of workers per family does not vary significantly. The relatively low variation in the number of workers by family size may indicate limited employment opportunities or cultural norms influencing workforce participation.

Table 5 Housing conditions of industrial workers

Sr	Housing type	No. of workers	Percentage
1	Rent	65	18.8
2	Pucca	217	76.1
3	Total	382	100

Source: Primary data of Varanasi district

Table 5 classifies the housing conditions of industrial workers based on three categories: kutchra, pucca and rented. It provides data on the number of workers living in each type of housing and the percentage share of each category in the total population of 350 workers surveyed. The high percentage of workers in pucca houses (76.1 per cent) suggests that housing conditions are relatively stable for most industrial workers in Varanasi. However, qualitative insights are needed to assess whether these pucca houses provide adequate living conditions. Nearly one-fifth of the workers, 18.6 per

Table 7 Working hours of workers employed in Varanasi district

Working hours	Male		Female		Total
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
0-8	15	95.2	0	0.0	15
9-10	14	41.5	11	34.4	25
11 & above	15	100	-	-	15
Total	244	100	11	100	255

Source: Primary data of Varanasi district.

Table 8 Indebtedness of industrial workers

S. no.	Male		Female		Total
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
01	15	95.2	0	0.0	15
02	14	41.5	11	34.4	25
03	15	100	-	-	15
Total	244	100	11	100	255

Source: Primary data of Varanasi district.

Table 6 shows the income classification of workers employed in Varanasi district. The income distribution of industrial workers in Varanasi reveals significant inequalities across income groups, with a clear gender imbalance. In the lowest income group (0-5000), there are only six female workers (100 per cent), highlighting their economic vulnerability. Most workers group, with men at 47.2 per cent and women at 52.8 per cent, indicating concentration of workers in low-paid jobs. A large proportion of workers earn between 10001-15000, where male workers dominate (96.4 per cent) while female workers earn only 3.6 per cent, indicating limited upward mobility for women. Higher income groups, such as 15001-20000, have 7.1 per cent men of all employees, while the highest income group (20001 and above) has only one cent of high-paying jobs. Overall, the male-to-female ratio in the workforce, while representing pay inequality and the need for targeted interventions to improve income levels and gender equality.

Table 6 shows the income classification of workers employed in Varanasi district.

Income Group	Male		Female		Total
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	
0-5000	6	4.1	0	0.0	6
5001-10000	14	4.1	0	0.0	14
10001-15000	14	4.1	0	0.0	14
15001-20000	14	4.1	0	0.0	14
20001 and above	14	4.1	0	0.0	14
Total	56	100	0	0.0	56

Source: Primary data of Varanasi district.

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5001-10000	14	4.1	0	0.0	14
10001-15000	14	4.1	0	0.0	14
15001-20000	14	4.1	0	0.0	14
20001 and above	14	4.1	0	0.0	14
Total	56	100	0	0.0	56

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with a 1998-1999 study, which found that 60% of small firms who are underfunded may be a direct result of the lack of access to credit, with financial institutions unwilling to lend to small businesses. Targeted financial institutions and programs to provide affordable credit and access to affordable financing are needed to address this issue.

Small business owners and managers need industrial workers to take

[illegible]

Model Summary

Category	No. of members	Percentage of total
Women	4	12.5
Men	4	12.5
Subtotal	8	25.0
Total	32	100

[illegible]

ANOMALIA

Item	Unit	Quantity	Unit Price	Total
1. Labor	hr	11,700	\$15.00	\$175,500
2. Material	kg	11,700	\$15.00	\$175,500
3. Overhead	hr	11,700	\$15.00	\$175,500
4. Total				\$526,500

Variable	Estimated Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	Prob> t
Constant	1.0000	0.0000	1.0000	1.0000
ln(IND)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(POP)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁵	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁷	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁸	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹⁰	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹¹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹⁴	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹⁵	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹⁷	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹⁸	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ¹⁹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²⁰	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²¹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²⁴	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²⁵	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²⁷	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²⁸	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ²⁹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³⁰	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³¹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³⁴	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³⁵	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³⁷	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³⁸	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ³⁹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴⁰	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴¹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴⁴	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴⁵	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴⁶	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴⁷	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴⁸	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁴⁹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁵⁰	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁵¹	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁵²	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁵³	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
ln(INDPOP) ⁵⁴	0.0000	0.00		

estimating that there are errors between actual and predicted income. The larger change of 20–50% proves to be significant (p -value = 0.003), meaning that education provides a statistically significant increase to the model designed with income. The Hausman test of 1.270 shows that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals.

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The socio-economic status of industrial workers in Kerala directly reflects several factors such as income, educational attainment, working conditions and access to social security. The common problems faced by workers range from low wages to fear of insecurity in jobs. Analysis shows that education plays an important role in improving income levels, with higher educational attainment leading to better economic outcomes. The level of education among women is a determinant of the level of income received as higher education is related to better job opportunities and economic stability. The district as they lack skills and vocational training. The lack of formal social security provisions is a major concern as it creates vulnerability in economic downturns and health emergencies. Financial policies in skill development should improve living standards. Such studies emphasize the need to develop focused educational strategies to address income inequality, thereby ensuring that education and training become a pathway to economic growth and improved living standards in industrial sectors.

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