An overview of workers employed in leather processing Industry

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ABSTRACT

The leather industry holds an important place in the economy of India. The tanning industry of UP has since the beginning of this century been concentrating in the Kanpur area, with a sharp growth in the number of tanneries (http://www.indianet.nl). The leather sector is highly labour-intensive and provides employment for over 2.5 million people in India. The researcher using purposive random sampling technique selected 30 workers employed in three leather units of Kanpur with the objective to get an overview of workers of leather processing industries.

Key Words : Overview, Leather, Processing, Workers, Employed, Industry

INTRODUCTION

The leather industry holds an important place in the economy of India. As India is the world's second largest producer of footwear and leather garments, the leather industry is among the top ten foreign exchange earners for the country. The leather sector is highly labour-intensive and provides employment for over 2.5 million people in India (https://thewire.in). Kanpur has a predominance of leather industry. Some 380 odd leather units are located in Jajmau area, right on the bank of river Ganga (http://s3.amazonaws.com).

The tanning industry of UP has since the beginning of this century been concentrating in the Kanpur area, with a sharp growth in the number of tanneries especially since 1985. Most of the tanners in Kanpur are Muslim, and the tanneries are family owned and family run. Sons take over after their father, and the tanning industry is thus a traditional occupation in the area. Most of the tanneries are located in Jajmau, an area south-east of the city, close to the military cantonment area, and on the southern bank of the river Ganges. This location was optimal in the early days, because the tanning activity was kept outside of the city area (so that stench and waste would not be a problem for the city dwellers). Also, to have access to water was important because the tanning industry has a high consumption of water. Today, the area of Jajmau is crowded, not only with tanneries, but also with the houses of the people living there. Jajmau is no longer separate from the city, and most of the people living there are workers in the tanneries. Many of the tannery owners also live there, even though Jajmau is considered a very poor area (Dubey and Srivastava, 2019). Kanpur known for its Leather industry has specialization in tanning and finishing of animal hides, and only centre which provides good quality leather in both semi-finished /finished form to leather production industries based on the end use requirement (Rao *et al.,* 2014). This industry is labour intensive especially for unskilled persons and it is raw material supplier/provider to the leather products industries. There is a need to look into this industry and its potential for creation of more employment opportunities to the nation (Koka and Srivastava, 2012).

Looking into the above facts, present research was conducted to get an overview of leather industry workers employed in processing units.

Locale and Sample selection:

The study was carried out in Kanpur city because it is known as third largest tanning center in India. The researcher purposively identified and prepared alist of 30 leather processing industries within Kanpur which have been registered since last 20 years and have tanneries which are family owned and family run and employed workers. Out of this 10 per cent units were selected through lottery system to select 30 workers, taking 10 each from all the three units. Prior permission was taken from the respective head of the selected leather industry to allow its workers to participate in the study.

METHODOLOGY

The survey method was used to elicit desired information about the socio-economic profile of selected respondents of leather processing industries using self developed structured interview schedule. The obtained data was statistically analyzed and presented in terms of frequency and percentage. The developed schedule was pre-tested on ten non sample subjects. The collected data was analyzed for statistical treatment in the light of objective of study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The background information of the respondents has been furnished in Table 1.

Age, Education:

The data presented in table 1 shows that majority of respondents (43.33%) were in the age group of 41 to 45 years, 23 per cent were between the age groups of 36 to 40 years and 20 per cent belonged to the age group of 46 to 45 years. Majority (90%) of the respondents were male, qualified up to middle level followed by 30 per cent respondents who were illiterate. It was observed that 23.33 per cent respondents had their education up to primary level.

Family type and Family size:

Majority of the respondents (63.33 %) belonged to the joint family and rest of them (36.67%) belonged to joint family. It was found that half of the respondents (50%) had large family size(up to 8 family members), followed by medium size family by 30 per cent respondents.

Monthly Family Income:

Data in Table 1 depicts that Majority of the

Table 1 : Percentage distribution of respondents on the basis of their Age, education level, family type, occupational status and monthly income (n = 30)			
Aspects	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)	30-35	4	13.33
	36-40	7	23.33
	41-45	13	43.33
	46-50	6	20.00
Gender	Male	27	90.00
	Female	3	10.00
Education	Illiterate	9	30.00
	Up to middle	13	43.33
	Up to primary	7	23.33
	Up to metric	1	3.33
Family type	Nuclear	11	36.67
	Joint	19	63.33
Family size	Small(up to 4 member)	6	20.00
	Medium (5-8 member)	9	30.00
	Large (8 or more member)	15	50.00
Monthly Family Income (in Rs)	Below 10,000	3	10.00
	10,000-15,000	6	20.00
	15,000-20,000	6	20.00
	20,000-25,000	15	50.00

respondents (50%) were in the income range of Rs. 20,000-25,000 per month followed by an equal percentage of respondents (20%) who had income of Rs. 10,000-15,000 and Rs 15,000-20,000 per month, respectively. It was found that 10 per cent of the respondents had income below Rs. 10,000 per month.

Secondary occupation:

It was found that only one third of the respondent's (33.33%) family members had secondary occupation. Remaining 66.67 per cent respondent's family members also work in tannery or production unit. Table 2 depicts that out of this, majority of family member of respondents (66.67%) worked in nearby local shops of mobile selling/repairing, car wash, cycle puncture, etc.

Table 2 : Percentage distribution of respondents by secondary occupation (n = 10)		
Aspect/Variable	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Agriculture	2	22.22
Local shops	6	66.66
Independent profession	2	22.22

Nature of job and working hours:

It was interesting to know that all the respondents interviewed were employed on permanent basis and their working hours ranged from 8-9 hours daily .

Work experience:

It is clear from the data in Table 3 that respondents were having work experience of 10 years to more than 20 years. Majority of the respondents (56.67%) had work experience of 10 to 20 years followed 20 to 30 years by 30 per cent respondents.

Table 3 : Percentage distribution of respondents by work experience (n=30)		
Aspect/Variable (in years)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
10	4	13.33
10 -20	17	56.67
20 -30	9	30.00

Duration of employment in the unit:

Data in Table 4 depicts the duration of employment of respondents in the selected unit. It can be seen that majority of respondents (60%) were employed from last 11 to 15 years followed by 23.33 per cent respondents who were working since last 6-10 years.

Table 4 : Percentage distribution of the respondents by duration of employment (n=30)		
Aspect/Variable (in years)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<5	3	10.00
6-10	7	23.33
11-15	18	60.00
16-20	2	6.67

Family member also work in leather unit:

It can be seen from Fig. 1 that 66.67 per cent respondents' family members also work in other leather unit whether it is processing or production unit.

Fig. 1 : Percentage distribution of respondents by family members employed in leather units

Training of workers:

It is clear from the data in Fig. 2 that majority of respondents (80%) did not receive any training in their units. However, remaining respondents (20%) said that when some new equipment replaces the old one in their subunit, the technicians of the suppliers gave demonstration to them for operating the machine. Trainings for workers were not organized by the processing units, generally they preferred trained workers who have past work experience on existing machineries.

Fig. 2 : Percentage distribution of respondents by training of workers

Working hours/Wages paid:

The working hours in the leather processing units

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were 8-9 hours /day. Data highlights that since all the workers were employed permanently, they work for 8-9 hrs daily depending on the shift, an**d** as per the government norms, wages were paid to them on the basis of their skill. Skilled workers were paid Rs. 350-600/-day, semi-skilled workers Rs. 300-450/-day and unskilled workers Rs. 200-300/-day.

Working department:

Perusal of data in Table 5 clearly shows that respondents were employed in different sub units of leather processing units based on their education, skill and past work experience. Majority of the respondents were working in wet blue , crusting each (20%), shaving and finishing each (16.67%), followed by 10 per cent each working in lime yard and trimming and splitting subunits.

Table 5 : Percentage distribution of the respondents by working sub units (n=30)		
Sub units of processing unit	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Lime yard	3	10.00
Wet blue	6	20.00
Shaving	5	16.67
Crusting	6	20.00
Finishing	5	16.67
Trimming, splitting	3	10.00
Dyeing	2	6.67

Use of protective equipment:

Data in Table 6 depicts that the respondents of leather processing unit use some protective equipment for personal protection like gloves (100%), boots (90%), apron (73.33%), earplugs (46.67%) and mask (43.33%). However, it was also revealed by them that the frequency of wearing this protective equipment vary a lot. Majority of respondents (66.66%) did not use these equipment/accessories daily, they used them occasionally. There is

Table 6 : Percentage distribution of respondent by use of protective equipment (n=30)		
Aspects/Variable	Frequency(f)*	Percentage(%)
Gloves	30	100
Boots	27	90
Apron	22	73.33
Earplugs	14	46.67
Mask	13	43.33

*multiple response

need to generate awareness among them about importance and need of wearing personal protective equipment for health benefits.

Similar results were reported by Koka and Srivastava (2012) that detrimental work practices in the textile units without the use of protective clothing resulted in various types of physical, chemical, ergonomically, mechanical, biological and psychological hazards among textile workers.

Smoking habit:

Majority of the respondents (73.33%) have smoking habit and out of these, 16.67 per cent of them started smoking from past 10 years while majority of them (53.33%) were having this habit since last 20 years. Very few respondents (3.33%) started smoking recently (last one year). Remaining 26.66 per cent respondents were not having any smoking habit. Since the smoking is prohibited at the workplace, so the workers takeout time to smoke during break time. Majority of them (60%) smoke daily and 13.33 per cent workers smoke occasionally (Table 7).

Table 7 : Percentage distribution of the respondents by smoking habit (n=30)		
Aspect/variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Smoking habit		
Yes	22	73.33
No	8	26.67
Past record of smoking		
Last 10 years	5	16.67
20 years	16	53.33
Recently	1	3.33
Frequency of smoking		
Daily	18	60.00
Occasionally	4	13.33

Facilities provided to workers:

It was interesting to note that all the selected leather processing units were providing some facilities/amenities to the workers. The detail of these has been presented in Table 8. Cent per cent respondents revealed that the employer unit provided them good facility of drinking water, canteen, wash room, uniform and protective accessories and transport facility. However, it was stated by respondents that there was no residential facility nearby for workers. Free medical checkup and protective equipments were provided as reported by 66.67 per cent respondents. Incentives were also given to workers by

Table 8 : Percentage distribution of respondents by facilities provided (n=30)		
Facilities for workers	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Washroom		
Yes	30	100
No	00	00
Free medical checkups		
Yes	20	66.67
No	10	33.33
Canteen		
Yes	30	100
No	00	00
Drinking water		
Yes	30	100
No	00	00
Transportation facility		
Yes	30	100
No	00	00
Uniform		
Yes	30	100
No	00	00
Protective equipments/accessories		
Yes	20	66.67
No	10	33.33

Table 9 : Percentage distribution of workers by satisfaction with present job (n=30)		
Satisfied with job	Frequency(f)	Percentage(%)
Yes	18	60.00
No	12	40.00
Reason behind not satisfied		
Work pressure	10	33.33
Long working hours	8	26.67
Monotonous work	4	13.33
Low wages	12	40
Poor relation with supervisor	8	26.67

all the units in the form of bonus depending on their position in the subunit. It was reported by the respondents that Health education/awareness camp, etc. were not organized by the units.

Satisfaction with present occupation:

Perusal of data in Table 9 shows clearly that majority of respondents (60 %) were satisfied with their present job because they were doing this from last 10-20 years. However, 40 per cent respondents were not satisfied with their present job. The reasons given by them for their dissatisfaction with jobs included work pressure (33.33%), long working hours (26.67%), monotonous work (13.33%), low wages (40%) and poor relation with supervisor as reported by 26.67 per cent respondents.

Conclusion:

The leather industry of Kanpur is a boon to local people on account of employment generation. Findings revealed that most of the respondents employed in leather processing units were poor, economically backward, illiterate, having joint family with medium to large family size. Inspite of including earnings of other family members, their monthly family income was very meager to meet out their family needs. Majority of them had working experience of 15-20 years and satisfied with present job. They were not concern about their health, have smoking habit and occasionally used to wear personal protective equipment. There is need to generate awareness among them about health aspect and safety at work place.

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