

Socio-Economic Conditions of Workers of Fireworks Industry in Virudhunagar District

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INTRODUCTION

An organization is a human grouping in which work is done for the accomplishment of some specific goals, or missions. The resources of men, money, materials and machinery are collected, coordinated and utilised through people. It is through the combined efforts of people that material and monetary resources are effectively utilised for the attainment of common objectives. Therefore, people are the most significant resource of any organisation. The principal component of an organization is its 'human resources' or 'people at work'. Human resources have been defined as from the national point of view, the knowledge skills, creative abilities, talents and aptitudes obtained in the population; whereas from the viewpoint of the individual enterprise, they represent the total of the inherent abilities, acquired knowledge and skills as exemplified in the talents and aptitudes of its employees.¹ Fireworks, a device, that create a display or make a noise, mainly for entertainment but sometimes for other purposes such as signaling. Some fireworks produce only light or smoke; others only noise; and still others produce light, smoke and noise. Fireworks that only make a loud noise are called firecrackers. Fireworks are also called pyrotechnics².

Virudhunagar District is famous for its fireworks and match industries. From a lone factory in 1927, the number of factories steadily increased to 460 by the end of 1999 and to about 536 by the end of March 2005, which includes large, medium and small factories. The growth of fireworks units was phenomenal in Virudhunagar District particularly from 1980 to 2007 (Table 1)

Table 1: Growth of Fireworks Units in Virudhunagar District

Year	1927	1930	1942	1980	1986	1993	1996	1999	2005	2007
Number of fireworks units	1	2	3	189	260	324	400	460	536	676

Source: Office of the Deputy Chief Controller of Explosives, Department of Explosives, Sivakasi.

Nearly 676 fireworks units have been registered under Factories Act in Virudhunagar District.³ More than 100,000 employees are working in these fireworks units. Out of 676 units registered in Virudhunagar district, 536 fireworks units are registered in Sivakasi Taluk alone.⁴

The proposed study highlights the socio-economic conditions of fireworks workers in Virudhunagar District. For that, different factors such as age, religion, level of education, marital status, type of family, size of family, number of dependents, monthly income, total income of the family, nature of accommodation, type of lights, sources of water supply, average expenditure in family, amount spent on food, clothes, rent, medical, education, social and religious ceremonies, miscellaneous items, habit of savings, debts, advance and the method of repayment, total hours of work, mode of payment, periodicity of payment, bonus made and the like are taken into consideration for analysis purposes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Fireworks industry plays a vital role in the promotion and the development of economy of Virudhunagar District. The large numbers of fireworks units in India, in general and in Virudhunagar District in particular, are unorganized units and hence the fireworks units are mainly employing unskilled or semiskilled workers who are neither educationally qualified nor technically experienced. Virudhunagar district provides employment opportunity to the fireworks workers throughout the year, the economic status of the people engaged in fireworks activities is not encouraging due to the reason that workers are cheaply available and therefore paid comparatively little wages. In this situation, the need to analyse the socio-economic conditions of the workers of fireworks units was felt.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present research endeavor was masterminded with the following objectives:

1. To analyse the socio-economic conditions of the workers of fireworks units in Virudhunagar district.
2. To offer suitable suggestions for improving the social status of the workers of fireworks units in Virudhunagar district.

HYPOTHESES

The following sets of hypotheses have been set based on the objectives to give a specific focus to the study.

1. There is a significant relationship between experience and income.
2. There is a significant relationship between gender and wages.
3. Wage income forms a major share in the annual income of the sample households.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are a number of similar studies in the field of socio-economic background of workers of various industries. But, so far, no attempt has been made to study the socio-economic conditions of fireworks industry which covers all kinds of labourers namely, women labourers and men labourers.

Ruskin. R, in his study titled "Economy of Match and Fireworks Industries in Tamil Nadu" has recognized many problems of match and fireworks, which include the problems of the prevailing dowry system, huge debts of workers and the like. He has also pointed out that the celebration of festivals is the main reason for borrowing more money from others with the result that the workers are put to untold sufferings. The workers are facing financial problems.⁵

Kamali C, in her study titled "Child Labour in Match and Firework units at Sivakasi" has analysed the socio-economic conditions of child labourers working in match and fire units. As per the analysis, it is clear that the conditions of the child labourers were pathetic⁶.

Laabs and Jennifer in their article, "Satisfy them with more than money", said that employees want fair, competitive compensation but they also want to be needed, valued, appreciated and recognized for their contribution. Money alone will not energize workers or boost performance. Giving employees more of what they want (within reason) will yield employer benefits too-higher production, performance and increased employee devotion.⁷

A survey was conducted under the chairmanship of Sri. Whitly, in the year 1927, with a view to study the labour conditions in various industries including fireworks units in India. To implement the recommendations of the committee, the Government of India has been formulating many positive measures to improve the workers' living conditions.⁸

A.P.Jain states that workmen in small industry are scattered and inarticulate. The trade union movement has left them untouched. The employer having obtained all assistance from the Government exploited the labour force. He recommends the insertion of a fair labour practice clause in terms of assistance and for setting up of some sort of special administrative machinery for agricultural labourers by the National Commission on Labour.⁹

The study made by Ramalakshmi of Madurai Kamaraj University reveals the economic and working conditions of women workers in the match units in Virudhunagar. Her findings bring to light that match industry is highly labour intensive and workers are given only piece wages. It also reveals that women are working due to economic compulsion and a considerable portion of the income is spent on bare necessities.¹⁰

S.R.Natarajan in his study examined the wage problems of women and child workers in the safety match industry. He observes that child and women labourers are getting low wages and that there is wage discrimination between these two and the men workers.¹¹

S.N.Tripathy in his study states that it is unfortunate that the diversity and socio-economic roles played by working women are not duly appreciated by the policy makers and administrators. Therefore, it is imperative to protect them from all sorts of exploitation.¹²

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The present study was based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from workers of different fireworks units in Virudhunagar District by using the interview schedule method. The secondary data were obtained from the offices of various agencies such as Inspector of Factories, Municipalities, and Central Excise Department, Labour Commission Office and also from various Government Reports connected with fireworks units. The study population consists of 676 fireworks units available in the Virudhunagar District. Stratified Random Sampling technique was adopted based on the average number of workers working in each

unit. Thus the sample consists of 200 male labourers and 300 female labourers working in the registered fireworks units in Virudhunagar District. Samples were selected by using Random Number Table. The primary data collected and used in the research report covers a period of one year i.e. 2007- 2008

AGE OF THE EMPLOYEES

The age of the workers indicates the experience and skill they have gained. Table 2 shows the age wise classification of the employees.

TABLE 2: AGE OF THE EMPLOYEES

S. No	Age of the employees	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	15-25 years	43	08.60
2.	26-35 years	114	22.80
3.	36-45 years	201	40.20
4.	46-55 years	126	25.20
5.	Above 55 years	16	03.20
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It could be seen from table 2 that 201 (40.20%) respondents are in ages between 36-45years, 126 (25.20%) respondents are in the ages between 46-55years, 114 (22.80%) respondents are in ages between 26-35 years, 43 (8.60%) respondents are in ages between 15-25 years, and 16 (3.20%) respondents are in the age above 55.

GENDER- WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE EMPLOYEES

Though the wages paid in the fireworks units are comparatively less, women are highly attracted because of greater safety and bonus.

Table 3: Gender-Wise Classification of The Employees

S. No	Gender of the Respondent	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Male	200	40.00
2.	Female	300	60.00
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is inferred from table 3 that, out of 500 total respondents, 200 (40.00 %) are male and 300 (60.00 %) are female.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE EMPLOYEES ON THE BASIS OF SOCIAL GROUP

In India, there are hundreds of social groups available, but all these groups can broadly be classified into four major categories namely, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Backward Community and Other communities.

Table 4: Social Group of The Employees

S. No	Social group of the employees	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Forward community	26	05.20
2.	Backward community	150	30.00
3.	Most backward community	95	19.00
4.	Scheduled Caste	167	33.40
5.	Other community	62	12.40
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It could be seen from table 4, that 30.00% of the total respondents (150 respondents) belong to backward community, 19% of the respondents (95 respondents) belong to most backward community, 33.40% of the respondents (167 respondents) belong to scheduled caste, 5.20% of the respondents (26 respondents) belong to forward community and the rest 12.40% of the respondents (62 respondents) belong to other community.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE EMPLOYEES

The level of education plays an important role in the analysis of socio-economic status of an individual. To find out the education level of the employees, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 5: Level of Education of The Employees

S. No	Level of Education	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	264	52.80
2.	Primary education	79	15.80
3.	Secondary education	124	24.80
4.	Higher secondary education	33	06.60
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is deduced from table 5 that the educational level of the fireworks employees is poor. The majority of them are illiterates. They form 52.80% of the total respondents. 24.80% of the respondents have finished secondary education. The percentage of employees who have completed primary education is 15.80%. Only 6.60% of the total respondents have finished up to higher secondary education.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE FAMILY OF THE EMPLOYEES

In the socio-economic analysis, the number of members in the family of the respondents is considered to be one among the important factors. To find out the size of family of the employees, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 6: Number of Members in The Family of The Employees

S. No	No. of members in the family	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than 4 members	309	61.80
2.	5 members	121	24.20
3.	More than 5 members	70	14.00
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is inferred from table 6 that 309 (61.80%) respondents have less than 4 members in their family, 121 (24.20%) respondents have 5 members in their family and the rest 70 (14.00%) respondents have more than 5 members in their family.

MONTHLY INCOME OF THE EMPLOYEES

Employees are paid according to requirements of their jobs, i.e., highly skilled jobs are paid more wages than low skilled jobs. Table 6 presents the monthly income of the employees.

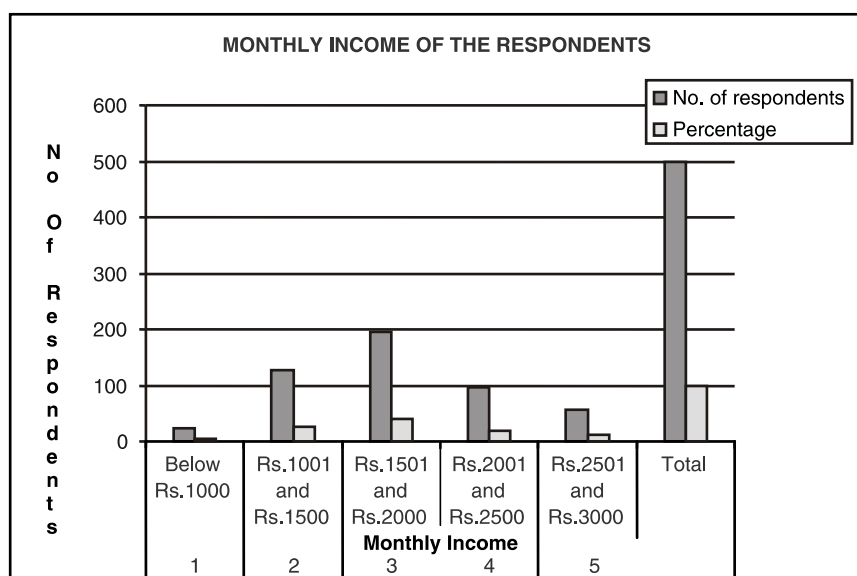


Table 7: Monthly Income of The Employees

S. No	Monthly income	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Below Rs.1000	24	04.80
2.	Income between Rs.1001 and Rs.1500	127	25.40
3.	Income between Rs.1501 and Rs.2000	196	39.20
4.	Income between Rs.2001 and Rs.2500	96	19.20
5.	Income between Rs.2501 and Rs.3000	57	11.40
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is evident from table 7 that 196 (39.20%) respondents earn a monthly income between Rs.1501 and Rs.2000, 127 (25.40%) respondents earn income between Rs.1001 and Rs.1500 per month, 96 (19.20%) respondents earn between Rs.2001 and Rs.2500 per month, and 57 (11.40%) respondents earn a monthly income between Rs.2501 and Rs.3000 and the rest 24 (4.80 %) respondents earn income below Rs.1000 per month.

THE TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME OF THE EMPLOYEES' FAMILY

Since the total monthly income of the respondents' family is one of the important factors in analyzing the socio-economic condition, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 8: The Total Monthly Income of The Employees' Family

S. No	Total monthly income	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Income Below Rs.2500	296	59.20
2.	Income between Rs.2501 and Rs.4000	204	40.80
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is inferred from table 8 that the total monthly income of 296 (59.20%) respondents is less than Rs.2500 and the total monthly income of the rest 204 (40.80%) respondents' ranges between Rs.2501 and Rs.4000.

NATURE OF HOUSE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Of all the requirements of the workers, decent and cheap housing accommodation is of great significance. Generally, workers reside in low cost houses. In order to find the nature of house of the respondents, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 9: Nature of House of The Respondents

S. No	Nature of House	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Thatched house	78	15.60
2.	Tiled house	204	40.80
3.	Roof concrete house	218	43.60
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is deduced from table 9 that 218 (43.60%) respondents live in roof concrete houses, 204 (40.80%) respondents live in houses with tiles and the rest 78 (15.60%) respondents live in thatched houses.

ELECTRICITY POWER SUPPLY IN THE EMPLOYEES' HOUSE

In order to analyse whether the employees' houses are equipped with power supply, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 10: Electricity Power Supply in The Employees' House

S. No	Electricity power supply	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Electricity power supply	447	89.40
2.	Kerosene lights	53	10.60
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It could be seen from table 10 that electric power supply is available in 447 (89.40%) respondents' house and kerosene lights are available in 53 (10.60%) respondents' house.

THE AVERAGE EXPENDITURE OF THE FAMILY PER MONTH

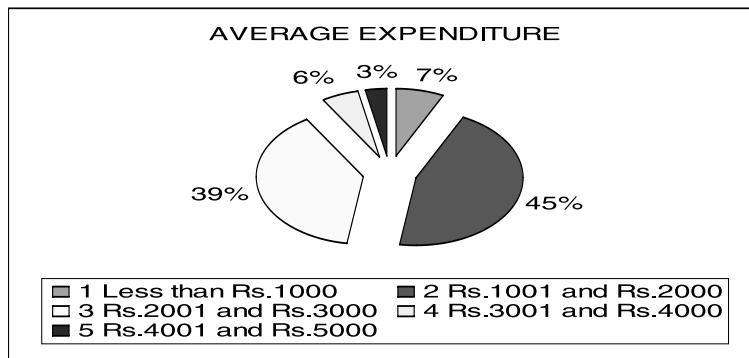
Workers spend their monthly earnings for different purposes. In the socio-economic analysis, the average monthly expenditure of the respondents is one among the important factors. Table presents the average expenditure of the respondents' family per month.

Table 11: The Average Expenditure of The Family Per Month

S. No	Average expenditure	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Amount Less than Rs.1000	36	07.20
2.	Amount between Rs.1001 and Rs.2000	226	45.20
3.	Amount between Rs.2001 and Rs.3000	194	38.80
4.	Amount between Rs.3001 and Rs.4000	28	05.60
5.	Amount between Rs.4001 and Rs.5000	16	03.20
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is clear from table 11 that the monthly average expenditure of 226 (45.20%) respondents is between Rs.1001 and Rs.2000, the monthly average expenditure of 194 (38.80%) respondents is between Rs.2001 and Rs.3000, , the average monthly expenditure of 36 (7.21%) respondents is less than Rs. 1000, the average monthly expenditure of 28 (5.60%) of the respondents is between Rs.3001 and Rs.4000, and the average monthly expenditure of 16 (3.2%) respondents is between Rs.4001 and Rs.5000 per month to look after their family.



AMOUNT SPENT ON FOOD PER MONTH

In general, workers spend maximum of their earnings only for purchasing food items. The amount of money spent on food varies from worker to worker based on their earnings. In order to find the amount spent on food, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 12: Amount Spent on Food Per Month

S. No	Amount spent on food per month	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than Rs.1000	190	38.00
2.	Between Rs.1001 and Rs.2000	265	53.00
3.	Between Rs.2001 and Rs.3000	45	09.00
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is deduced from table 12 that 265 (53%) respondents spend Rs.1001 to Rs.2000, 190 (38%) respondents spend less than Rs.1000 and the rest 45 (9%) of the respondents spend Rs.2001 to Rs.3000 per month on food.

AMOUNT SPENT ON CLOTHES PER MONTH

The amount of money spent for buying dress materials varies from season to season. During the festival season, the workers spend more money to buy clothes than in other seasons. The following table presents the details of amount spent on cloth per month.

Table 13: Amount Spent on Clothes Per Month

S. No	Amount spent on clothes per month	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than Rs.500	358	71.60
2.	Between Rs.501 and 1000	142	28.40
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is understood from table 13 that 358 (71.60%) of the respondents spend less than Rs.500 and the rest 142 (28.40%) of the respondents spend Rs.501 to Rs.1000 per month for clothes.

AMOUNT SPENT ON RENT PER MONTH

The workers of fireworks units reside in different places in and around Virudhunagar district. Some workers have their own houses and others reside in rented houses. In order to find the amount spent on rent, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 14: Amount Spent on Rent Per Month

S. No	Amount spent on rent per month	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Own house	263	52.60
2.	Less than Rs.500	128	25.60
3.	Between Rs.501 and Rs.1000	60	12.00
4.	Between Rs.1001 and Rs.1500	49	09.80
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is evident from table 14 that 263 (52.60%) respondents live in their own houses, 128 (25.60%) respondents spend below Rs. 500 on rent, 60 (12.00%) respondents spend Rs.501 to Rs.1000 for renting a house, and the remaining 49 (9.80%) respondents spend between Rs.1001 and Rs.1500 per month on rent.

AMOUNT SPENT ON MEDICAL TREATMENT PER MONTH

Some of the large organizations provide medical benefits to their employees and their family members. This benefit creates a feeling of permanent attachment with the organization to the employees even while they are in

service. The following table shows the details of the amount spent on medical treatment.

Table 15: Amount Spent on Medical Treatment Per Month

S. No	Amount spent on medical treatment	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than Rs.200	131	26.20
2.	Amount between Rs.201 and Rs.400	209	41.80
3.	Amount between Rs.401 and Rs.600	160	32.00
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It could be seen from table 15 that 209 (41.80%) respondents spend Rs. 201 to Rs.400, 160 (32.00%) respondents spend between Rs.401 and Rs.600, and the rest 131 (26.20%) respondents spend below Rs.200 per month for their medical treatment.

AMOUNT SPENT ON EDUCATION PER MONTH

Organisations provide educational facilities not only to the employees but also to their family members. With a view to providing a quality education, workers admit their children to private owned schools, for which the fee is reimbursed to them by the owners. In order to find the amount spent on education, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 16: Amount Spent on Education Per Month

S. No	Amount spent on education	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than Rs.500	434	86.80
2.	Between Rs.501 and Rs.1000	44	8.80
3.	Between Rs.1001 and Rs.1500	22	04.40
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is inferred from table 16 that 434 (86.80%) respondents spend below Rs. 500, 44 (8.80%) respondents spend between Rs.501 and Rs. 1000, and the rest 22 (4.40%) respondents spend between Rs.1001 and Rs.1500 per month for educating their children.

HABIT OF SAVINGS

The saving capacity of the employees is very low due to lower wages, high living cost and increasing aspirations of the employees and their family members. The amount of savings is based on the earning capacity of the workers. The following table presents the details of the habit of savings of the respondents.

Table 17: Habit of Savings

S. No	Habit of savings	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	No Savings	330	66.00
2.	Save Below Rs.500	165	33.00
3.	Save between Rs.501 and Rs.1000	5	01.00
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is inferred from table 17 that 330 (66%) respondents do not have savings at all, 165 (33%) respondents save below Rs.500 per month, and the rest 5 (1%) respondents save between Rs.501 and Rs.1000 per month.

RESPONDENTS' IN DEBT

In the socio-economic analysis, the case of the respondents in debt is an important factor. In order to analyse the amount of debt, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 18: Respondents' in Debt

S. No	Respondents' in debt	Number of respondents	Percentage
1.	No debt	344	68.80
2.	Debt owe to Employer	28	05.60
3.	Debt owe to Money lender	128	25.60
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is deduced from table 18 that 344 (68.80%) respondents are not in any debts, 128 (25.60%) respondents have borrowed from the moneylenders and the rest 28 (5.60%) respondents have borrowed from their employers.

THE MODE OF PAYMENT GIVEN TO THE EMPLOYEES

Different methods of wage payment are prevalent in different industries and in various countries. In order to analyse the mode of payment of wages, data were collected and tabulated as below.

It is deduced from table 19 that 306 (61.20%) respondents are paid in accordance with the number of piece they

Table 19: The mode of payment given to the employees

S. No	Mode of payment	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Piece Rate	306	61.20
2.	Time Rate	194	38.80
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

have finished, and the rest 194 (38.80%) respondents are paid in accordance with the total number of hours they have worked.

PERIODICITY OF PAYMENT GIVEN TO THE EMPLOYEES

In the socio-economic analysis, the periodicity of payment given to the respondents is an important factor. In order to analyse the periodicity of payment, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 20: Periodicity of payment given to the employees

S. No	Periodicity of payment	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Weekly	463	92.60
2.	Fortnightly	27	05.40
3.	Monthly	10	02.00
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It is inferred from table 20 that 463 (92.60%) respondents are paid wages weekly once, 27 (5.40%) respondents are paid wages once in fifteen days, and the remaining 10 (2.00%) respondents are paid wages once in a month.

NUMBER OF BONUS PAYMENTS MADE IN A YEAR

Managements are accepting the idea that groups as well as individuals can be motivated to work more effectively by means of variable compensation programs. In order to find the number of bonus payments made, data were collected and tabulated as below.

Table 21: Number of Bonus Payments Made In A Year

S. No	Number of bonus payments	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Twice a Year (Deepavali and Pongal)	500	100.00
2.	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It could be seen from table 21 that 500 (100%) respondents are given bonus two times a year.

CHOICE OF RESPONDENTS IN GETTING MEDICAL TREATMENT

In line with both an economic motivation and a social responsibility, the larger companies are undertaking a broader "whole person" approach towards industrial health. The following table shows the details of the choice of respondents in getting medical treatment.

Table 22: Choice of Respondents in Getting Medical Treatment

S. No	Medical treatment	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Government Hospital	51	10.20
2.	Private Hospital	43	08.60
3.	ESI Hospital	406	81.20
	Total	500	100.00

(Source: Primary data)

It could be seen from table 22 that 406 (81.20%) respondents get medical treatment in ESI hospital, 51(10.20%) respondents get medical treatment in government hospital and the 43 (8.60%) respondents get medical treatment in private hospitals.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis testing begins with an assumption, called a hypothesis that we make about a population parameter. The difference between the hypothesized population parameter and the actual sample statistic is more often neither so large that we automatically reject our hypothesis nor so small that we just as quickly accept it. So in hypothesis testing as in most significant real-life decisions, clear-cut solutions are the exception not the rule.

Chi-square analysis can be used to test for the statistical significance of differences observed between two equivalents sets of categories, which result from field surveys or experiments. The numbers that appear in the categories are actual counts of the number of responses received. They are not percentages.

TABLE 23: Chi-square test for Experience and Income per month of the respondents

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	156.840	20	.000
Likelihood Ratio	142.613	20	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	31.168	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 6 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.42.

Since the Chi-Square value of significance is found at 0.000, the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Result: There is a significant relationship between experience and income of the respondents.

TABLE 24: Chi-square test for Sex and Wages per month of the respondents

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.519	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	28.976	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.215	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.40.

Since the Chi-Square value of significance is found at 0.000, the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Result: There is a significant relationship between sex and wages of the respondents.

TABLE 25: Chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.530	12	.043
Likelihood Ratio	23.711	12	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	.106	1	.745
N of Valid Cases	749		

a. 4 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .91.

Since the Chi-Square value of significance is found at 0.043, the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Result: Wage forms a major share in the annual income of the sample respondents.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

An analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the sample respondents reveals the following:

The majority of the respondents are in the age group between 36 and 45 years (40.20%). The genders wise analysis of the sample respondents shows that majority of the respondents are female (60%). The classification of the sample respondents on the basis of social group shows that 33.40% belong to scheduled community. While studying the literacy level, it is observed that only 6.60% of the sample respondents have finished up to higher secondary education, the percentage of employees who have completed primary education is 15.80%. 24.80% of the respondents have finished secondary education, majority of the respondents are illiterate. They form 52.80% of the total respondents. The study of the marital status of the sample respondents illustrates that the majority of the employees are married, that is 88%

61.80% of the sample respondents have less than four members in their family. A study is also made to know the monthly income of the sample respondents. It reveals that 39.20% of the respondents earn monthly income between Rs.1501 and Rs.2000. The total monthly income of 59.20% of the respondents was below Rs.2500. It is found that only 263 respondents seem to possess own houses while others are found to be living in rented houses. Regarding their housing facilities; it is found that 43.60% of the respondents seem to live in roof concrete house. Only 89.40% of the respondents alone have electricity power supply in their house.

The monthly average expenditure of the sample respondents is also studied. And it is found that, the average monthly expenditure of 45.26% of the sample respondents is between Rs.1001 and Rs.2000 only; the average amount spent on food for 265 respondents' ranges between Rs.1001 and Rs.2000; the average amount spent on clothes in case of 71.60% of the respondents is less than Rs.500; the average amount spent on medical treatment for 209 respondents' is between Rs.201 and Rs.400; 434 respondents spend nearly Rs.500 per month for providing education to their children. These details clearly point out that a major portion of the workers' income is used to meet the basic necessities.

Savings is an important indicator of economic status, which is very low among the respondents. Out of 500 sample respondents, 330 have not saved anything. 165 respondents are saving less than Rs.500 per month. These savings represent their voluntary savings. The existence of indebtedness among sample working employees also

reveals their economic backwardness. 128 respondents have borrowed in order to meet their day-to-day expenses. Fair wages is the wages, which is above the minimum wages but below the living wages. 306 respondents are paid wages on piece rate basis that too payments are made on weekly basis to 92.60% of the respondents. All the fireworks factories in the study area pay bonus to their workers twice a year, and 406 sample respondents get medical treatment in ESI hospital; it is also observed that respondents are provided with some social security benefits like P.F, E.S.I and medical benefits.

SUGGESTIONS

From the above findings of the study, the following constructive and practicable suggestions have been recommended for improving the socio-economic conditions of the workers of fireworks units in Virudhunagar district.

- As majority of the workers are illiterate, it is suggested that a primary education centre may be established in each fireworks unit of the study area.
- To set up sanitation facilities in their residence, the employer may arrange housing loan facility on simple terms.
- Employee Co-operative stores may be established in each unit to provide grocery and other food ingredients at subsidized rate.
- Employee Co-operative stores must also be supported by the management properly.
- Subsistence level of wage may be provided to each employee in a unit.
- Since the saving habits of the workers are found to be very poor, it is suggested that a deposit mobiliser may be deputed by the Nationalised banks to each unit on payment days so that it could encourage the saving habits among the workers.

If the above suggestions are duly implemented by the concerned authorities, the socio-economic conditions of the workers shall receive a fillip in their trust towards further improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

1. The present study was carried out in an unorganised sector; in the future, there is prospect to conduct the same type of research in organised sectors.
2. Further, the present study was carried out in fireworks industry, (an unorganised sector). The same type of research may also be carried out in some other unorganised sectors in order to find out similarities and dissimilarities.
3. The present study of the socio-economic conditions of the workers was carried out in Virudhunagar district only and in future, this type of research may be conducted either at State or National level.

CONCLUSION

The socio-economic status of the workers of fireworks units has been analysed. It is understood that maximum number of workers belong to weaker section, and the majority of them are illiterate. The maximum number of workers do not have sanitation facilities in their houses. It is also noted that the wages paid to them are comparatively low and their total expenditure is more than their earnings. In order to make good the deficit, majority of the workers borrow money from others. With regard to savings of the workers, out of 500 respondents selected for this study, 165 (33%) have saved less than Rs.500 per month for their future. After considering the above factors, the socio-economic conditions of the workers of fireworks are not encouraging and favourable. Every organisation must evaluate the prevailing human resources thoroughly, especially the matters pertaining to employees' welfare like working condition and their socio-economic status.

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