

A MICRO STUDY

A STUDY OF PRESENT STATUS OF BEEDI INDUSTRY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO EMPLOYMENT OF BEEDI WORKERS

BAGDAH, WEST BENGAL



TRINIKETAN FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT NEW DELHI



**Study conducted by
TRINIKETAN FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT
NEW DELHI**

OUR RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

Dr. Anila Nair
Ms. Karthika Pillai
Dr. MM Rehman

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

Paul George
Dular Bar, Ex. M.L.A.
Samsul Alam
Regina Begum
Prasenjit Roy
M. Roy
Shafique Mallick

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. S.S. Sable, President, All India Bidi Industry Federation, Mr. Arjun Khanna, Mr. Umesh Parekh, Ms. Nita Khanna and Mr. C.S. Rampriyadas for sponsoring the study.

Their comments suggestions and continuous guidance have enriched the study

Table of Content

| | |
|--|-----------|
| PART ONE..... | 10 |
| BAGDAH VILLAGE: AN OVERVIEW..... | 10 |
| Demographic Profile..... | 11 |
| Area of Bagdah..... | 11 |
| Literacy Rate..... | 11 |
| Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe population..... | 12 |
| Workers Population in Bagdah..... | 13 |
| PART TWO..... | 16 |
| SURVEY RESULTS..... | 16 |
| Introduction..... | 17 |
| Gender Profile..... | 17 |
| Age Profile..... | 18 |
| Education-wise Distribution of Respondents..... | 19 |
| Survey Respondent Population Profile..... | 20 |
| Family Size..... | 20 |
| Families with Children/ Ward..... | 21 |
| Education of the Children/ Ward..... | 21 |
| Engagement in occupation other than Beedi rolling..... | 22 |
| Profile of Respondents Children's Education..... | 23 |
| Funding of Education of the Children/ Ward of Respondents..... | 24 |
| Occupation wise distribution of Children/ Ward of Respondents..... | 25 |
| Number of family members engaged in beedi rolling..... | 25 |
| Relatives engaged in Beedi making of the Respondents..... | 26 |
| Respondents who reported health issues..... | 27 |
| Income from beedi and expenditure across different item..... | 27 |
| House ownership of the Respondents..... | 28 |
| Earning from other jobs as stated by Respondents..... | 29 |
| Possession of Beedi Workers Identity Cards..... | 29 |
| Assistance Received from Welfare Organisation..... | 30 |
| Membership to Provident Fund..... | 31 |
| Medical Benefits available in the area..... | 31 |
| Assistance from Government and Local Bodies received by Respondents..... | 32 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Whether respondents are receiving employment..... | 32 |
| Other beedi related activities..... | 33 |
| Family members of respondents engaged in Beedi Rolling..... | 34 |
| Age of the respondent when they starting Beedi Rolling..... | 34 |
| Respondents experience in Beedi Rolling..... | 35 |
| Earning Member in respondents family..... | 36 |
| Duration of Working Hours of the Respondents..... | 36 |
| Earning per day of the Respondent..... | 37 |
| Number of days of engagement in beedi rolling..... | 37 |
| Number of beedis sticks rolled per day by respondents..... | 38 |
| Number of beedis rolled per day by the Respondents..... | 39 |
| Income level of the respondents..... | 39 |
| Importance of beedi rolling occupation for the Respondents..... | 40 |
| Work Opportunity..... | 41 |
| Number of weeks the respondents got work per month..... | 41 |
| More Work as Compared to the Last i.e., in 2022..... | 42 |
| Increase or decrease in work in beedi rolling..... | 42 |
| Total family income of Respondent..... | 43 |
| Saving Profile of the respondent..... | 44 |
| Household Items owned by Respondents..... | 44 |
| Possession of Land by Respondent..... | 45 |
| PART THREE..... | 46 |
| PROFILES OF THE WORKERS / BEEDI ROLLERS / WARDS..... | 46 |
| Concluding Remarks..... | 57 |
| PART FOUR..... | 58 |
| MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS AND CONCLUSION..... | 58 |
| APPENDIX 'A'..... | 61 |
| LIST OF PROGRAMMES AND SCHEMES..... | 61 |

List of Tables

| | |
|------|--|
| | CHAPTER- ONE |
| 1.1 | Literacy Profile of Bagdah village |
| 1.2 | Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in Bagdah |
| 1.3 | Workers Profile of Bagdah Village: 2011 |
| 1.4 | Distribution of Beedi Workers in Selected Villages of Bagdah and Surrounding Areas |
| | CHAPTER- TWO |
| 2.1 | Gender-wise Distribution of Sample Respondents |
| 2.2 | Age-wise Distribution of Respondents |
| 2.3 | Education-wise Distribution of Respondents |
| 2.4 | Population Profile of the Survey Respondent Households |
| 2.5 | Family size of the Respondents |
| 2.6 | Distribution of families with number of Children/ Ward |
| 2.7 | Education Profile of Children/Ward of Respondent |
| 2.8 | Distribution of Respondents Engaged in Occupations Other Than Beedi Rolling |
| 2.9 | Distribution of Respondents Children by Education Level |
| 2.10 | Distribution of Respondents according to the funding of education expenses |

| | |
|------|---|
| 2.11 | Occupation wise distribution of respondents' Children/ Wards |
| 2.12 | Family Distribution Based on Members Involved in Beedi Rolling |
| 2.13 | Distribution of respondents by the relatives engaged in Beedi making |
| 2.14 | Distribution of respondents who reported health problems |
| 2.15 | Distribution of respondents by major items on which beedi income is spent |
| 2.16 | Distribution of Respondents by Type of Accommodation |
| 2.17 | Distribution of Respondents by Earnings from Other Job |
| 2.18 | Distribution of Respondents by having Beedi Workers Identity Cards |
| 2.19 | Distribution of Respondents who Received Assistance |
| 2.20 | Distribution of Respondents by Contributing to Provident Fund |
| 2.21 | Medical Benefits available in the area |
| 2.22 | Whether respondents get any assistance from government or local bodies |
| 2.23 | Whether any Beedi Rollers got Employment elsewhere |
| 2.24 | Whether any family member is engaged in any other Beedi related activity |
| 2.25 | Respondents families members engaged in Beedi Rolling |
| 2.26 | Distribution of Respondents by age at which they started Beedi Rolling |
| 2.27 | Distribution of respondents by years of experience in Beedi Rolling |

| | |
|------|--|
| | |
| 2.28 | Number of earning members in respondents' families |
| 2.29 | Distribution of Respondents by Working Hours Per Day |
| 2.30 | Distribution of Respondents by per day Earning |
| 2.31 | Distribution of Respondents by the Number of Days Worked in Beedi Rolling per Month |
| 2.32 | Distribution of respondents by Beedi Sticks Rolled per day |
| 2.33 | Distribution of Respondents by the Number of Beedis Rolled Per Day with the Involvement of Other Household Members |
| 2.34 | Distribution of Respondents by per month earnings from Beedi Rolling |
| 2.35 | Distribution of Respondents by Importance of Beedi Occupation in their lives |
| 2.36 | Distribution of Respondents by whether they are getting sufficient work from employers |
| 2.37 | If YES, then how many weeks per month |
| 2.38 | Whether Getting More/Less Work related to Beedis as Compared to Last Year |
| 2.39 | How Much More or Less work |
| 2.40 | Distribution of respondents by total income |
| 2.41 | Distribution of Respondents by Savings |
| 2.42 | Distribution of Respondents by Household Items |
| 2.43 | Distribution of Respondents by Possessing Agricultural Land |

PART ONE

BAGDAH VILLAGE: AN OVERVIEW

Bagdah Village: An Overview

Bagdah is a village located in **North 24 Parganas**, West Bengal. It is surrounded by several villages, including **Sagarpur**, **Dihalda**, **Kulberia**, and **Hariharpur**. Half a

century ago, Bagdah was a tiny village, but today it has grown into a thriving marketplace. Hundreds of people now make their livelihood as shopkeepers, hawkers, loaders, furniture makers, repairers, and eatery operators, among other occupations. The village is situated approximately **100 kilometers from Kolkata**.

Demographic Profile

According to Census 2011, the total population of Bagdah was 6422 and of the total population, male population was 3348 and female population was 3074.

Area of Bagdah

The total area of Bagdah village is 218.53 hectares. The village is quite densely populated, as it attracts many families from neighboring areas due to its strategic location and well-established transport network. The village market is crowded with shops selling a wide variety of essential items.

As per the 2011 Census, the population density was **29 persons per hectare**, with a total of **1,495 households**. However, the situation has changed significantly since then. The number of people currently living in the village is likely much higher than the figures reported in the 2011 Census.

Literacy Rate

As per the **2011 Census**, of the total population, **2,437 males** (55.66%) and **1,941 females** (44.34%) were literate. The details are provided in **Table 1.1**

Table 1.1
Literacy Profile of Bagdah village

| | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Total Individuals | 4378 | |
| Male | 2437 | 55.66 |

| | | |
|--------------|------|---------------|
| Female | 1941 | 44.34 |
| Total | | 100.00 |

Source: Census 2011

The literacy rate has significantly increased since then, as nearly all children in the village are now enrolled in schools. Various government educational incentives have played a crucial role in bringing children into the fold of education.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe population

The village has a significant population belonging to the **Scheduled Castes (SC)** and **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** communities. As shown in **Table 1.2**, the percentage of SC population is **42.02%** and the ST population is **13.89%**. The socio-economic conditions of people from both these communities need considerable improvement. Many households in these sections of society are landless, with their primary livelihood depending on agricultural labor. However, with the reduction of agricultural work, many laborers are forced to migrate to different parts of the country and even abroad in search of employment. For numerous households, **beedi rolling** remains a significant source of income and employment.

Table 1.2
Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in Bagdah

| Sl. No. | Category | Number | Percentage |
|---------|-------------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. | Total Individuals | 6425 | |
| 2. | Scheduled Caste | 2700 | 42.02 |
| 3. | Scheduled Tribes | 893 | 13.89 |

Source: Census 2011

Workers Population in Bagdah

Workers in **Bagdah village** and the surrounding villages are primarily engaged in agriculture, working as farmers, agricultural laborers, shopkeepers, construction workers, traders, and more. Some individuals are also employed in the service sector,

as the area is home to several banks, cooperative societies, schools, Community Development Blocks, hospitals, and other institutions. A significant number of workers are involved in **beedi rolling**, construction, and repair activities. The details of the workforce, as per the **2011 Census**, are provided in **Table 1.3**.

Table 1.3
Workers Profile of Bagdah Village: 2011

| Sl. No. | Workers | Total workers | Male Workers | Female Workers |
|---------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. | Total workers | 2325 | 1937 | 388 |
| 2. | Main workers | 2024 | 1780 | 244 |
| 3. | Main workers: cultivators | 195 | 182 | 13 |
| 4. | Agricultural laborer | 494 | 454 | 40 |
| 5. | Household industries | 122 | 75 | 47 |
| 6. | Other workers | 301 | 157 | 144 |
| 7. | Non-working persons | 4099 | 1411 | 2688 |

Source: Census 2011

Bagdah Village and its surrounding areas are prominent hubs for **beedi production**. Recently, as part of the present study, an effort was made to estimate the number of beedi workers across certain villages, as shown in **Table 1.4**. The study reveals that there are **3,848 beedi rollers** in **21 villages**. The distribution of workers, both village-wise and gender-wise, is provided in **Table 1.4**.

Table 1.4
Distribution of Beedi Workers in Selected Villages of Bagdah and Surrounding Areas

| Sl. No. | Name of Village | Gender Based Demography | | | % to Total | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | Total | Female | Male | Male | Female |
| 1. | Bagdah | 2405 | 1698 | 711 | 29.56 | 70.60 |
| 2. | Beara | 98 | 76 | 22 | 22.45 | 77.55 |
| 3. | Pakungachi | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0.00 | 100.0 |
| 4. | Helencha | 101 | 79 | 22 | 21.78 | 78.22 |
| 5. | Choatia | 198 | 150 | 48 | 24.24 | 75.76 |
| 6. | Kuruliya | 100 | 59 | 41 | 41.00 | 59.00 |
| 7. | Charmondal | 250 | 238 | 12 | 4.80 | 95.20 |
| 8. | Ranghat | 100 | 72 | 28 | 28.00 | 72.00 |
| 9. | Kutibari | 100 | 79 | 21 | 21.00 | 79.00 |
| 10. | Baneshwarpur | 150 | 88 | 62 | 41.33 | 58.67 |
| 11. | Teghoria | 105 | 78 | 27 | 25.71 | 74.29 |
| 12. | Kabardanga | 36 | 36 | 0 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| 13. | Asharu | 15 | 15 | 0 | 0.00 | 100.00 |
| 14. | Baksa | 10 | 9 | 1 | 10.00 | 90.00 |
| 15. | Mamabhagina | 5 | 3 | 2 | 40.00 | 60.00 |
| 16. | Gobindapur | 18 | 10 | 8 | 44.44 | 55.56 |
| 17. | Durgapur | 2 | 1 | 1 | 50.00 | 50.00 |
| 18. | Mashyampur | 151 | 104 | 47 | 31.13 | 68.87 |
| 19. | Jitpur | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0.00 | 100.0 |
| 20. | Mahanandapur | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100.00 | 00.00 |
| 21. | Hariharpur | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100.00 | 00.00 |
| | Total | 3848 | 2797 | 1055 | 27.42 | 72.69 |
| Total Female (%) from all villages | | | | 72.60% | | |
| Total Male (%) from all villages | | | | 27.40% | | |

Source: Census 2011

These figures do not represent the complete list of **beedi workers** in the survey area, and the actual number may be higher than what is currently reported. There is another village, **Tangra Colony**, located about 15 km from **Bagdah**, where hundreds of beedi workers reside. During interactions with the beedi workers, it was noted that **beedi rolling** has been a crucial source of livelihood for them for more than half a century.

Despite the significant number of beedi workers in the region, no efforts have yet been made to establish a **dispensary**. In fact, there is a growing demand for such a facility to cater to the health needs of the workers.

In the survey areas, there are several smaller beedi establishments where workers are employed in various roles such as **contractors**, **checkers**, and **suppliers of raw materials**, among others.

From the above, it is evident that **beedi rolling** serves as a significant source of employment for many households across various villages in the region.

As the figures indicate, **female workers** predominantly dominate the beedi rolling workforce. A detailed discussion of the different aspects of **beedi workers** can be found in **Part Two** of the present report.

PART TWO

SURVEY RESULTS

Introduction

The overwhelming majority of **beedi workers** are **beedi rollers**, most of whom work from home. To capture various aspects of their employment, a range of parameters was used, and responses were gathered through the administration of a questionnaire. The findings presented in this section reflect the ground realities and highlight the significance of beedi rolling for the economy in general and for beedi workers in particular. The primary aim is to understand the employment needs and well-being of beedi workers, in relation to the existence of the beedi industry.

In addition to the semi-structured questionnaire used to collect information, **meetings**, **observations**, and their respective findings also contributed to the study. The research was conducted between **September and November 2023**.

Table 2.1
Gender-wise Distribution of Sample Respondents

| Sl. No. | Age Group | Number of Respondents | Percentage from the total |
|---------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Male | 1 | 2.0 |
| 2. | Female | 50 | 98.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Gender Profile

The figures in **Table 2.1** show that, of the total respondents, **98.0 percent** were female, with only one male respondent. Initially, **beedi rolling** was predominantly a male occupation. Around four decades ago, it was common to see male beedi rollers working together in a hut or a shaded area within the village. However, over time, women gradually became the dominant workforce in beedi rolling. This shift can be attributed to two main reasons: first, as new employment opportunities emerged locally—such as in shops, rickshaw pulling, and construction work—as well as in other parts of the country, many men began to migrate seasonally. In this context, women took over the responsibility of beedi rolling in the area.

Table 2.2
Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

| Sl. No. | Age Group | Number of Respondents | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | < - 30 | 9 | 17.6 |
| 2. | 31 - 40 | 22 | 43.1 |
| 3. | 41 - 50 | 13 | 25.5 |
| 4. | 51 - 60 | 7 | 13.7 |
| 5. | 61 - > | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Age Profile

The distribution of respondents by age shows that nearly half (43.1 percent) were in the **31-40 years** age group, followed by **41-50 years**, **under 30 years**, and **51-60 years** (see **Table 2.2**).

These figures clearly indicate that beedi rollers are primarily concentrated in the **31-40 years** and **51-60 years** age groups, with many having started rolling beedis at a younger age, as further illustrated in the table detailing the age at which they began the occupation. **Beedi rolling** is a low-investment occupation, making it an accessible source of livelihood. In a context where employment opportunities are scarce, this occupation provides a crucial means of employment for millions of workers, particularly for women, both in the country at large and in the study area of **Bagdah**.

Table 2.3
Education-wise Distribution of Respondents

| Sl. No. | Age Group | Number of Respondents | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Illiterate | 1 | 2.0 |
| 2. | Primary | 20 | 39.2 |
| 3. | Middle | 25 | 49.0 |
| 4. | Secondary | 2 | 3.9 |
| 5. | Higher Secondary | 2 | 3.9 |
| 6. | Graduate | 1 | 2.0 |
| 7. | PG | 0 | 0.0 |
| 8. | Technical Training | 0 | 0.0 |
| 9. | Others | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Education-wise Distribution of Respondents

An interesting observation from **Table 2.3** is that nearly half (49.0 percent) of the respondents had an education up to the **middle school** level, followed by **39.2 percent** who had completed **primary education**. This is a positive indication of the spread of education in the area. There were two respondents who had completed **secondary education**, and two had reached **higher secondary** level. Notably, even a **graduate** respondent was found working as a beedi roller in the sample. This demonstrates a significant shift in mindset, where manual labor is no longer viewed as undesirable. This is a positive development, and the beedi industry has helped break down such barriers in both rural and urban areas across the country.

Table 2.4
Population Profile of the Survey Respondent Households

| Gender | Number | Percentage from the total |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Male | 102 | 49.5 |
| Female | 104 | 50.5 |
| Total | 206 | 100.0 |
| Average family size | 4.03 | |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Survey Respondent Population Profile

As shown in **Table 2.4**, the average family size among the respondent households was **4.03** members. Of the total population, **49.5 percent** were male, and **50.5 percent** were female. The gender distribution was nearly equal, with a slight majority of females.

Table 2.5
Family size of the Respondents

| Sl. No. | Family Members | Number of Respondents | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | 1 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | 2 | 4 | 7.8 |
| 3. | 3 | 8 | 15.7 |
| 4. | 4 | 24 | 47.1 |
| 5. | 5 | 13 | 25.5 |
| 6. | 6 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 7. | 7 | 1 | 2.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Family Size

Over the past few decades, the birth rate in the country, and specifically in **West Bengal**, has been steadily declining. The figures in **Table 2.5** clearly illustrate this trend. The majority of respondents reported a family size of **4**, followed by families with **3** and **5** members, respectively.

This shift can be attributed to the widespread impact of **education** and **awareness**. Efforts by the **Government**, **civil society organizations**, and the **media** have played a significant and catalytic role in fostering this change.

Table 2.6
Distribution of families with number of Children/ Ward

| Sl. No. | No. of children | Number of respondents | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | 0 | 2 | 3.9 |
| 2. | 1 | 15 | 29.4 |
| 3. | 2 | 27 | 52.9 |
| 4. | 3 | 6 | 11.8 |
| 5. | 4 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 6. | 5 | 1 | 2.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Families with Children/ Ward

The figures in **Table 2.6** highlight an interesting trend. More than half of the respondents' families had **two children**, followed by **29.4 percent** of families with a **single child**. This shows that large families are gradually disappearing, albeit slowly. If **education** had been made compulsory, particularly from the demand side, the situation could have changed much sooner. In that case, the large number of children currently out of school would likely not exist.

Table 2.7
Education Profile of Children/Ward of Respondent

| Sl. No. | Age Group | Are the respondents children educated | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Yes | 48 | 94.1 |
| 2. | No | 3 | 5.9 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Education of the Children/ Ward

The respondents were asked whether their children or wards are educated, and **94.1 percent** responded affirmatively (see **Table 2.7**).

A new phenomenon has emerged in many parts of the country, including the study area of **Bagdah**: a growing interest in **private schools**. There is now a prevailing belief that

government-run schools are unable to provide the same quality of education as private schools. Although government schools are present in nearly every village within the study area, many parents are choosing to send their children to **convent schools** that offer education in English medium. In a focus group discussion, all participants expressed a strong preference for their children to be educated in English medium, with even the most economically disadvantaged parents sharing this sentiment.

Table 2.8
Distribution of Respondents Engaged in Occupations Other Than Beedi Rolling

| Sl. No. | Any other job | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Yes | 0 | 0 |
| 2. | No | 51 | 100 |
| 3. | No reply | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Engagement in occupation other than Beedi rolling

Job opportunities in the studied village and neighboring areas are limited, with agriculture being the primary livelihood. However, employment in agriculture has become irregular due to the increasing use of machinery, which has significantly reduced the need for manual labor. The introduction of biotechnology, such as pesticides and herbicides, has further diminished labor requirements.

Additionally, the per capita availability of land has declined over the years, further limiting employment opportunities in the rural agricultural sector (see Table 2.8).

As a result, for the women in the labor force who seek employment, beedi rolling has become a crucial option, providing them with regular work in the beedi industry.

Table 2.9
Distribution of Respondents Children by Education Level

| Sl. No. | Education level of children | Number of responses | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Illiterate | 4 | 7.8 |
| 2. | Primary | 15 | 29.4 |
| 3. | Middle | 18 | 35.3 |
| 4. | Secondary | 9 | 17.6 |
| 5. | Higher Sec. | 5 | 9.8 |
| 6. | Graduate | 0 | 0.0 |
| 7. | PG | 0 | 0.0 |
| 8. | Tech. Training | 0 | 0.0 |
| 9. | Others | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Profile of Respondents Children's Education

The figures in Table 2.9 show that 29.4 percent of respondent households have children in primary education, 35.3 percent have children in middle-level education, and 17.6 percent and 9.8 percent of households have children in secondary and higher secondary education, respectively.

In the studied village, there is one Government-run primary school and another Government-run higher secondary school. Additionally, there are several private schools. During the survey, it was observed that student enrollment has been gradually declining, likely due to the falling birth rate. This trend suggests that, in the coming decades, some schools may face closure.

Table 2.10
Distribution of Respondents according to the funding of education expenses

| Sl. No. | Educational expenses | | Percentage from the total |
|---------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| | Level | Number of Wards | |
| 1. | Scholarship | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | Government Aid | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3. | Income from Beedi | 51 | 100.0 |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| Total | 51 | 100.0 |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Funding of Education of the Children/ Ward of Respondents

One of the significant aspects of the beedi industry is the establishment of a Welfare Fund under the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976. This Fund was created through the collection of a cess levied on every thousand beedis at varying rates over different periods. Through this Fund, the Government, under the Director General Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment, provides financial assistance to the wards of registered beedi workers who possess an Identity Card issued by the relevant authority.

Over the years, this assistance has benefited a substantial number of wards of beedi workers. Consequently, the respondents were asked whether their children had received any financial assistance. The data indicates that none of the respondents' children had received any scholarship. All the respondents whose children were attending or had attended school funded the educational expenses from their own income derived from beedi rolling, which remains the primary source of income for the surveyed respondents (see Table 2.10).

Table 2.11
Occupation wise distribution of respondents' Children/ Wards

| Sl. No. | Occupation of earning children | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Occupation | Number | |
| 1. | Daily Labour | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | Beedi Making | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3. | Shop | 0 | 0.0 |
| 4. | Others | 0 | 0.0 |
| 5. | No reply | 0 | 0.0 |
| 6. | No occupation | 51 | 100.0 |
| 7. | Private job | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Occupation wise distribution of Children/ Ward of Respondents

Efforts were made to gather information regarding the occupation of the respondents' children/wards. The figures presented in Table 2.11 indicate that none of the 51 children are engaged in any form of employment, with 100% categorized under "No occupation." This complete absence of occupational involvement suggests that these children may be prioritizing their education or may be too young to work. It also reflects the possible emphasis on schooling over labor within these households. Furthermore, the lack of participation in other forms of employment, such as daily labor, beedi making, or private sector jobs, could indicate either limited job opportunities or a socio-cultural environment where child labor is discouraged. The data presents no ambiguity, as all respondents provided clear answers, thereby reinforcing the trend that the children of beedi workers are not contributing to household income through employment at this time.

Table 2.12
Family Distribution Based on Members Involved in Beedi Rolling

| Sl. No. | Members rolling Beedies | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| | No. of members | No of families | |
| 1. | 1 | 49 | 96.1 |
| 2. | 2 | 2 | 3.9 |
| 3. | 3 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 4. | 4 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Number of family members engaged in beedi rolling

The data in Table 2.12 shows that only two families had two members involved in beedi rolling, while the remaining families had just one member engaged in this activity. However, through interactions with numerous beedi workers, it was revealed that in many other families, multiple members participate in beedi rolling. As a home-based occupation, it is common for several family members to work together to produce over 1,000 beedis per day, thereby increasing their income. The more beedis a family rolls, the higher their daily earnings.

Table 2.13
Distribution of respondents by the relatives engaged in Beedi making

| SI. No. | Relation to the respondent | Family members | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Grandmother | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | Grand father | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3. | Father | 0 | 0.0 |
| 4. | Mother | 8 | 15.7 |
| 5. | Others | 0 | 0.0 |
| 6. | No engagement | 43 | 84.3 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Relatives engaged in Beedi making of the Respondents

Table 2.13 shows that 8 respondents (15.7 percent) reported that their mothers were or are involved in beedi rolling. In our discussions with beedi rollers, we found that many learned the craft from their mothers, aunts, or friends in the neighborhood. Initially, they practiced by rolling beedis using leaves meant for packaging tendu leaves, as a learning exercise. After a week or two of practice, they transitioned to rolling beedis for home-based production, which has since become a consistent source of income for their families.

Table 2.14
Distribution of respondents who reported health problems

| SI. No. | Health problems | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Yes | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | No | 51 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Respondents who reported health issues

According to the data in Table 2.14, none of the 51 respondents reported any health problems. This contradicts the common belief that beedi workers are highly susceptible to health issues related to tobacco use. However, it is important to note that many women workers may be vulnerable to malnutrition due to a lack of knowledge about healthcare and access to nutritious food. This issue could be partially addressed through health awareness camps.

Table 2.15
Distribution of respondents by major items on which beedi income is spent

| Sl. No. | Items | Number | Percentage from the total | Total respondents | Percentage from the total |
|---------|-----------------------|--------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Food | 51 | 100.0 | 51 | 100.0 |
| 2. | Clothing | 47 | 92.2 | 51 | 100.0 |
| 3. | Education of Children | 44 | 86.3 | 51 | 100.0 |
| 4. | Medical | 51 | 100.0 | 51 | 100.0 |
| 5. | Festivals/ | 5 | 9.8 | 51 | 100.0 |
| 6. | Others | 0 | 0.0 | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Income from beedi and expenditure across different item

The data presented in Table 2.15 clearly indicates that all respondents allocated their earnings towards essential needs such as food, clothing, and medical care. This highlights the significant role that income from beedi rolling plays in their lives. The figures demonstrate how crucial beedi rolling is for their livelihood, especially given the lack of alternative employment opportunities in the area. For many, beedi rolling provides a steady source of income that helps meet their basic necessities.

Table 2.16
Distribution of Respondents by Type of Accommodation

| Sl. No. | Accommodation | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Own | 51 | 100.0 |
| 2. | Rented | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

House ownership of the Respondents

Table 2.16 shows that all the respondents own their homes. However, it is important to note that the condition of these houses is generally poor. Most are constructed with tin sheets and are often in a dilapidated state. During our visit, nearly all respondents, along with others in the community, expressed a clear need for financial assistance from the government to renovate or rebuild their homes. Many of the respondents' huts were made from bamboo and thatched materials.

Table 2.17
Distribution of Respondents by Earnings from Other Job

| Sl. No. | Earnings from the other job | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Amount in Rs. | Number | |
| 1. | 1000-2500 | 0 | 8.9 |
| 2. | 2501-4000 | 0 | 13.9 |
| 3. | 4001-5500 | 0 | 22.8 |
| 4. | 5501-7000 | 0 | 6.3 |
| 5. | 7001-8500 | 0 | 3.8 |
| 6. | 8501-10000 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. | 10001-11500 | 0 | 0 |
| 8. | No earnings | 51 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Earning from other jobs as stated by Respondents

Table 2.17 reveals that none of the respondents had any other jobs, with beedi rolling being their only source of employment. Due to their landless status and lack of additional skills, they had limited options for alternative work. However, it was noted that some households did own small livestock, such as goats and poultry. The number of animals, however, was minimal, and due to constraints like lack of space and fodder, many households were unable to keep any livestock.

Table 2.18
Distribution of Respondents by having Beedi Workers Identity Cards

| Sl. No. | Having Beedi Identity Cards | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Yes | 51 | 100 |
| 2. | No | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Possession of Beedi Workers Identity Cards

The respondents reported possessing Identity Cards issued by the Director General, Labour Welfare, Kolkata Region. However, it is important to note that many beedi workers in Bagdah village still do not have these Identity Cards (see Table 2.18).

The Bagdah Beedi Majdur Unnayan Samiti, a beedi workers' union, has played a crucial role in assisting beedi workers in obtaining their Identity Cards. Thanks to the union, many workers are now aware of various welfare schemes provided for beedi workers by the Director General, Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment. Additionally, they are informed about other government social security programs.

Table 2.19
Distribution of Respondents who Received Assistance

| Sl. No. | Items | Number | Percentage from the total | Total respondents | Percentage from the total |
|---------|------------------------|--------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Educational assistance | 0 | 0.0 | 51 | 100 |
| 2. | Medical assistance | 0 | 0.0 | 51 | 100 |
| 3. | House building grant | 5 | 9.8 | 51 | 100 |
| 4. | Any other | 0 | 0.0 | 51 | 100 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Assistance Received from Welfare Organisation

The data in Table 2.19 shows that only five respondents received house building grants, while the rest did not benefit from any other assistance through government schemes. However, it is worth noting that, although the surveyed respondents did not receive additional support, many children of beedi workers in Bagdah and nearby villages received educational assistance from the Welfare Fund. This was confirmed during the researcher's interactions with other beedi workers and their unions.

The nearest Mobile-cum-Static dispensary is located in Machlandapur, over 50 kilometers away from Bagdah. Consequently, none of the respondents has received medical assistance. The respondents have requested the establishment of a Mobile-cum-Static dispensary in Bagdah or nearby villages, given the large concentration of beedi workers in the area.

Table 2.20
Distribution of Respondents by Contributing to Provident Fund

| Sl. No. | Contributing to Provident Fund | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Yes | 0 | 0 |
| 2. | No | 51 | 100 |
| Total | | 51 | 100 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Membership to Provident Fund

Table 2.20 shows that none of the respondents contributed to a Provident Fund, and in fact, none were aware of its existence during the survey. The beedi rollers are primarily familiar with contractors or subcontractors, and due to the unregistered nature of their employee-employer relationship, the possibility of enrolling in such schemes remains out of reach.

However, this could change if the beedi industry were formalized through proper regulation and enforcement. As long as the current exemption of Rs. 20 lakhs remains in place, the industry will likely continue to adapt in order to take advantage of this lucrative, tax-exempt opportunity.

Table 2.21
Medical Benefits available in the area

| Sl. No. | Medical benefits | | Percentage from the total |
|---------|------------------|--------|---------------------------|
| | Response | Number | |
| 1. | Yes | 51 | 100 |
| 2. | No | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Medical Benefits available in the area

Bagdah has a hospital that was established in the 1950s, which has been a significant resource for the local community. Additionally, doctors visit from Kolkata, and there are several Registered Medical Practitioners who provide care for minor ailments. According to the data in Table 2.21, all the respondents reported receiving medical assistance from the local hospital.

Table 2.22
Whether respondents get any assistance from government or local bodies

| Sl. No. | Whether respondents are getting assistance from | | | | |
|---------|---|--------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| | Items | Number | Percentage from the total | Total respondents | Percentage from the total |
| 1. | Government | 50 | 98.0 | 51 | 100 |
| 2. | Local Bodies | 51 | 100.0 | 51 | 100 |
| 3. | ESI | 0 | 0.0 | 51 | 100 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Assistance from Government and Local Bodies received by Respondents

The data in Table 2.22 shows that all the respondents are receiving some form of assistance from both the Government and Local Bodies to meet various needs. The Central and State Governments have been actively implementing numerous social security schemes and development programs aimed at improving the welfare of different segments of society. These programs have benefited a large number of households in Bagdah village. A detailed list of some key programs currently being implemented by the Government of West Bengal is provided in Appendix 'A'.

Table 2.23
Whether any Beedi Rollers got Employment elsewhere

| Sl. No. | Whether getting any other employment | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Yes | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | No | 51 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Whether respondents are receiving employment

The data in Table 2.23 shows that none of the respondents have had any employment outside of beedi rolling. Many of them work as casual laborers in the local areas.

Table 2.24
Whether any family member is engaged in any other Beedi related activity

| Sl. No. | Whether any family member is engaged in any other activity | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|--|-------------------|---------------------------|
| | Response | Number of members | |
| 1. | Yes | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | No other activity | 51 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Other beedi related activities

Table 2.24 indicates that none of the respondents' family members were involved in any other beedi-related activities besides beedi rolling. Since beedi making is a home-based activity, employment within beedi establishments is limited, and the size of the establishments in the survey area is also small. The beedi making process is primarily managed by contractors, who play a central role in the beedi industry.

In the surveyed area, there are several beedi brands, but the establishments for these brands are small. Typically, there may be a clerk, a baker, or a sorter/checker who oversees the distribution of tobacco, tendu leaves, and the regular collection of beedis.

Table 2.25
Respondents' families' members engaged in Beedi Rolling

| Sl. No. | Responses | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Relation to the respondent | Number | |
| 1. | Grandmother | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | Grand father | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3. | Father | 0 | 0.0 |
| 4. | Mother | 8 | 15.7 |
| 5. | Others | 0 | 0.0 |
| 6. | No engagement | 43 | 84.3 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Family members of respondents engaged in Beedi Rolling

The data in Table 2.25 shows that 8 respondents (15.7 percent) reported that their mothers were or are engaged in beedi rolling. Historically, beedi rolling was primarily carried out by male members of the family. However, this trend has changed significantly, with the majority of beedi rollers now being female.

During Focus Group Discussions, participants shared that the increasing domestic needs have led female family members to enter beedi rolling, while male members have shifted to other jobs, such as working in the construction sector, running petty shops, or migrating to different parts of the country for work.

Table 2.26
Distribution of Respondents by age at which they started Beedi Rolling

| Sl. No. | Age of the members when they started beedi rolling | | Percentage from the total |
|---------|--|--------|---------------------------|
| | Age | Number | |
| 1. | < - 17 | 6 | 11.8 |
| 2. | 18 - 20 | 21 | 41.2 |
| 3. | 21 - 25 | 11 | 21.6 |
| 4. | 26 - 30 | 7 | 13.7 |
| 5. | 31 - 40 | 5 | 9.8 |
| 6. | 41-> | 1 | 2.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Age of the respondent when they starting Beedi Rolling

As shown in Table 2.26, among the 51 beedi rollers, 41.2 percent began rolling beedis between the ages of 18 and 20, followed by 21.6 percent who started between the ages of 21 and 25. Another 13.7 percent began at ages 26 to 30, and 11.8 percent started before the age of 17. Additionally, 9.8 percent began between the ages of 31 and 40, while 2.0 percent started after the age of 41.

Being a home-based occupation, women often take up beedi rolling when they choose, driven by personal circumstances. Additionally, the increasing cost of living and the

growing financial needs of families encourage more people to engage in beedi rolling, as it provides a source of income when prices for essential commodities continue to rise.

Table 2.27
Distribution of respondents by years of experience in Beedi Rolling

| Sl. No. | Engaged in beedi rolling for how many years | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|---|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Number of years | Responses | |
| 1. | 1-3 | 3 | 5.9 |
| 2. | 4-6 | 12 | 23.5 |
| 3. | 7-12 | 11 | 21.6 |
| 4. | 13-18 | 25 | 49.0 |
| 5. | 19 and above | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Respondents experience in Beedi Rolling

The data in Table 2.27 shows that nearly half of the surveyed respondents (49.0 percent) have been involved in beedi rolling for 13-18 years, followed by 23.5 percent with 4-6 years of experience, and 5.9 percent with 1-3 years of experience. This indicates that beedi rolling continues to attract women workers, as the occupation does not involve any significant job-related expenses. Additionally, the adverse impact of Covid-19 on employment opportunities in other sectors has made beedi rolling an even more important employment option for women seeking work in rural areas like Bagdah.

Table 2.28
Number of earning members in respondents' families

| Sl. No. | Earning members in respondents' families | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|--|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Members | Number | |
| 1. | One | 4 | 7.8 |
| 2. | Two | 42 | 82.4 |
| 3. | Three | 5 | 9.8 |
| 4. | Four | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Earning Member in respondents family

As shown in Table 2.28, 84.4 percent of the respondents reported having two earning members in their respective households. In most cases, both the husband and wife contributed to the household income, with husbands typically engaged in various activities, mostly as casual laborers. However, as reported by the respondents, the spouses did not have regular employment. Consequently, the income from beedi rolling became the primary source of income for these households.

Table 2.29
Distribution of Respondents by Working Hours Per Day

| Sl. No. | Hours per day | | Hours per day |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| | Hours | Number | |
| 1. | 2-3 | 8 | 15.7 |
| 2. | 3-4 | 42 | 82.4 |
| 3. | No Response | 1 | 2.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Duration of Working Hours of the Respondents

As shown in Table 2.29, on average, the respondents reported working more than three to four hours per day, in addition to performing domestic chores. Only 8 percent of respondents mentioned working between two to three hours. Since beedi rolling is a home-based activity, other family members also contributed to the process. Some of the tasks performed by family members included cutting leaves, making bundles, soaking tendu leaves, and bringing materials for beedi making from the market.

Table 2.30
Distribution of Respondents by per day Earning

| Sl. No. | Earnings per day | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Earnings | Responses | |
| 1. | 100 | 10 | 19.6 |
| 2. | 120 | 35 | 68.6 |
| 3. | 130 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 4. | 140 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 5. | 150 | 5 | 9.8 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Earning per day of the Respondent

Earning levels are a crucial indicator of a household's well-being. As shown in Table 2.30, out of the 51 respondents, 68.6 percent reported earning Rs. 120/- per day, while 19.6 percent earned Rs. 100/- per day. One respondent reported earning Rs. 140/- per day, and five respondents reported earning Rs. 150/- per day. It was generally noted by the respondents and others that the rate for rolling 1,000 beedis in Bagdah and the surrounding villages was relatively low. When asked about the reasons, they explained that the lower rate was due to the lack of expertise and the lower quality of beedis, which resulted in a reduced rate per thousand beedis rolled compared to other areas.

Table 2.31
Distribution of Respondents by the Number of Days Worked in Beedi Rolling per Month

| Sl. No. | Working days per month | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Days | Responses | |
| 1. | 15 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 2. | 24 | 2 | 3.9 |
| 3. | 25 | 26 | 51.0 |
| 4. | 26 | 21 | 41.2 |
| 5. | 30 | 1 | 2.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Number of days of engagement in beedi rolling

The respondents were asked how many days they were engaged in beedi rolling each month. The figures in Table 2.31 show that 51.0 percent reported being engaged in beedi rolling for 26 days, while 41.2 percent reported working for 21 days, and so on. Being flexible and home-based, the beedi making process can be undertaken on any day and at any time, depending on the convenience of the rollers. However, the goal is always to roll at least a thousand beedis per day, and many respondents strive to meet this target.

Table 2.32
Distribution of respondents by Beedi Sticks Rolled per day

| Sl. No. | Number of Beedies rolled per day | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Beedies rolled | Frequency | |
| 1. | 5<-200 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | 201-500 | 4 | 7.8 |
| 3. | 501-1000 | 44 | 86.3 |
| 4. | 1001-1500 | 3 | 5.9 |
| 5. | 1500-> | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Number of beedis sticks rolled per day by respondents

The figures in Table 2.32 show that the majority of respondents (86.3 percent) rolled between 501 and 1000 beedis per day. Some respondents rolled between 201 and 500 beedis, while a few rolled between 1001 and 1500. Those who are more skilled at rolling often strive to roll at least 1000 beedis to earn the minimum income prevalent in the area.

Table 2.33
Distribution of Respondents by the Number of Beedis Rolled Per Day with the Involvement of Other Household Members

| Sl. No. | Number of Beedies rolled per day | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Beedis rolled | Frequency | |
| 1. | 500-900 | 7 | 13.7 |
| 2. | 1000 | 40 | 78.4 |
| 3. | 1100 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 4. | 1200 | 2 | 3.9 |
| 5. | 1500-> | 1 | 2.0 |
| 6. | No reply | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Number of beedis rolled per day by the Respondents

The figures in Table 2.33 show that 78.4 percent of the respondents reported rolling an average of one thousand beedis per day, while 13.7 percent reported rolling between 500 and 900 beedis daily. One respondent mentioned rolling more than a thousand beedis each day.

As noted earlier, households solely dependent on beedi rolling tend to roll more beedis compared to those with other sources of income. In the studied village, some women had also taken up jute fiber weaving, earning additional income from these activities.

Table 2.34
Distribution of Respondents by per month earnings from Beedi Rolling

| Sl. No. | Earning from Beedies Per Month | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Amount in Rs. | Frequency | |
| 1. | < - Rs. 500 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | 501 - 1000 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3. | 1001 - 1500 | 6 | 11.8 |
| 4. | 1501 - 2000 | 5 | 9.8 |
| 5. | 2001 - 2500 | 27 | 52.9 |
| 6. | 2501 - 3000 | 12 | 23.5 |
| 7. | 3001 - 4000 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 8. | 4001 - 5000 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 9. | 5001 - 6000 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 10. | 6001 - 7000 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 11. | 7001 - > | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Income level of the respondents

Income is the most important indicator for measuring a household's status, both socially and economically. To examine the income level of the surveyed households, the respondents were asked to specify their income from beedi rolling. The figures in Table 2.34 show that, of the total respondents, 52.9 percent reported that on average, they earned Rs. 2001/- - Rs. 2500/- per month. 23.5 percent of respondents reported their income from beedi rolling was between Rs. 2501/- - Rs. 3000/- per month. 11.8 percent

of respondents earned between Rs. 1001/- - Rs. 1500/- per month. One respondent mentioned her income was between Rs. 4001/- - Rs. 5000/- per month.

Table 2.35
Distribution of Respondents by Importance of Beedi Occupation in their lives

| Sl. No. | Importance of beedi in respondents' families Importance | | Percentage from the total | Total |
|---------|---|-----------|---------------------------|-------|
| | Head | Frequency | | |
| 1. | It is important for survival | 51 | 100.0 | 51 |
| 2. | It is important for well-being of the children and family members | 50 | 98.3 | 51 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Importance of beedi rolling occupation for the Respondents

Efforts were made to elicit the perceived importance of beedi rolling in the lives of the respondent beedi rollers. The perceptions as presented in Table 2.35 shows that the rolling of beedis was very important in their lives, as it provided them with an income which was necessary for their survival. With regard to “important for the well-being of the children and family members, 98.3 percent reported it was important”. What it means is that for over a century, this occupation has become an important means for the earning and survival for a large number of households in both rural and urban areas. The different dimensions of the study clearly underscore this importance in terms of various parameters, like education, social security, and other needs.

Table 2.36
Distribution of Respondents by whether they are getting sufficient work from employers

| Sl. No. | Getting sufficient work | | Percentage from the total |
|---------|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Yes | 46 | 90.2 |
| 2. | No | 5 | 9.8 |
| | Total | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Work Opportunity

Despite the fact that there is a gradual fall in the consumption of beedi smoking, the beedi rolling activity in the survey area has not been impacted much. The response from the sample respondents provides enough indication, as they mentioned that they were getting enough beedi rolling opportunities. The respondents were asked whether they were getting sufficient work or not. The figures in Table 2.36 show that 90.2 percent reported that they were getting sufficient work, while 9.8 percent reported otherwise. Of course, smokeless tobacco consumption has made inroads into smoking as a form of tobacco to some extent. Nevertheless, beedi is still dominant in the world of tobacco consumption in India.

Table 2.37
If YES, then how many weeks per month

| Sl. No. | If YES then how many | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Weeks | Responses | |
| 1. | One week | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | Two weeks | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3. | Three weeks | 5 | 9.8 |
| 4. | Four weeks | 46 | 90.2 |
| 5. | No reply | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Number of weeks the respondents got work per month

The figures in Table 2.37 show that the majority of respondents (90.2 percent) reported that they received work for four weeks every month, while 9.8 percent reported receiving work for three weeks.

Beedi rolling is a piece-rate activity, and being home-based, beedi rollers generally work throughout the month.

Table 2.38
Whether Getting More/Less Work related to Beedis as Compared to Last Year

| Sl. No. | More or less | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | More | 51 | 100.0 |
| 2. | Less | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3. | No reply | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

More Work as Compared to the Last i.e., in 2022

The figures in Table 2.38 show that the respondents received more work in 2023. In many neighboring villages of Bagdah, as well as in Bagdah itself, many female workers have been engaged in beedi rolling and making a livelihood for many years. They reported that the amount of work they received in 2023 had increased compared to 2022.

Table 2.39
How Much More or Less work

| Sl. No. | How much more or less | | Percentage from the totals |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Up to 10% more | 43 | 84.3 |
| 2. | Up to 20% more | 8 | 15.7 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Increase or decrease in work in beedi rolling

The respondents were asked whether there has been any increase or decrease in beedi rolling activity. As seen in Table 2.39, 84.3 percent reported an increase of up to 10 percent, while 15.7 percent reported an increase of up to 26 percent. This indicates that employment in the beedi sector is still viable. During COVID-19, this source of employment was particularly helpful to people, as it was allowed to continue functioning. Additionally, many beedi-producing establishments extended their cooperation, both in cash and kind, to the beedi workers. This information was provided by the beedi workers during the survey.

Table 2.40
Distribution of respondents by total income

| Sl. No. | If YES then how many | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Weeks | Responses | |
| 1. | < - 2000 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | 2001 - 3000 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 3. | 3001 - 4000 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 4. | 4001 - 5000 | 15 | 29.4 |
| 5. | 5001 - 6000 | 30 | 58.8 |
| 6. | 6001 - 7000 | 5 | 9.8 |
| 7. | 7001 - 8000 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 8. | 8001 - 9000 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 9. | No reply | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Total family income of Respondent

The figures in Table 2.40 show that, of the total respondents, the analysis of income distribution from beedi rolling and making reveals that the majority of respondents (58.8%) earn between ₹5,001 and ₹6,000/- from this work, making it the most common income bracket. Following this, 29.4% of respondents report earning between ₹4,001 and ₹5,000/-, while a smaller percentage (9.8%) earns between ₹6,001 and ₹7,000/-. Only 2.0% of respondents earn between ₹3,001 and ₹4,000/-, with no respondents earning below ₹3,000/- or above ₹7,000/-. This suggests that most respondents involved in beedi rolling and making fall within a mid-range income level, with no significant income disparities observed within this group.

Table 2.41
Distribution of Respondents by Savings

| Sl. No. | Savings | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|---------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Yes | 0 | 0.0 |
| 2. | No | 51 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Saving Profile of the respondent

All the respondents reported that they were unable to save any amount. This was further confirmed by the participants in the meetings and Focus Group Discussions. They often cited the increasing household needs and the rising prices of essential commodities as the reasons for not being in a position to save (see Table 2.41).

Table 2.42
Distribution of Respondents by Household Items

| Sl. No. | Items | Number | Percentage from the total | Total respondents |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Television | 11 | 21.6 | 51 |
| 2. | Battery Inverter | 0 | 0.0 | 51 |
| 3. | Android Phone | 8 | 15.7 | 51 |
| 4. | Motor bike | 9 | 17.6 | 51 |
| 5. | Chair | 47 | 92.2 | 51 |
| 6. | Palank | 9 | 17.6 | 51 |
| 7. | Cots | 44 | 86.3 | 51 |
| 8. | Power Generator | 2 | 3.9 | 51 |
| 9. | Cell phone | 40 | 78.4 | 51 |
| 10. | Bicycle | 46 | 90.2 | 51 |
| 11. | Fan | 46 | 90.2 | 51 |
| 12. | Table | 32 | 62.7 | 51 |
| 13. | Almirah | 14 | 27.5 | 51 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Household Items owned by Respondents

Another important indicator for measuring a household's condition is the pattern of possession of household items. The figures presented in Table 2.42 show that 21.6 percent of households possessed a television set, 15.7 percent an Android phone, 78.4 percent a cellphone, 90.2 percent a bicycle, and another 90.2 percent an electric fan. Some households also owned motorbikes (17.6 percent). Many of these household durables are essential today, and income from beedi rolling has indeed helped the sample households acquire them.

Table 2.43
Distribution of Respondents by Possessing Agricultural Land

| Sl. No. | Possessed Agricultural Land | | Percentage from the total |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Head | Number | |
| 1. | Yes | 3 | 5.9 |
| 2. | No | 48 | 94.1 |
| Total | | 51 | 100.0 |

Source: Survey by the Researchers

Possession of Land by Respondent

Since Bagdah village has a sizable population of small and marginal farmers, the respondents were asked whether they possessed any agricultural land. The figures in Table 2.43 reveal that out of the total sample of 51 respondents, only three reported owning agricultural land. Therefore, beedi rolling serves as their primary regular source of income. The respondents also mentioned in various meetings that their husbands or fathers are mostly casual laborers, and their employment is irregular.

PART THREE

PROFILES OF THE WORKERS / BEEDI ROLLERS / WARDS



Ms. Unnati Biswas, aged 42 years, has been rolling beedi for the last twenty years. She is educated upto standard eight. Her husband is a goods van driver who gets employment not very regularly. Her income is regular, from beedi rolling that supports her family of four – wife, husband and two children.

Though she did not get much education, she is well-aware of the value of education and has been trying her best to educate her children. Her daughter is studying in 12th standard and son is in 8th standard.

“Without regular income from beedi rolling it would have been difficult to educate my children and to fulfill other needs of my family”, she said. Today she earns Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 4000/- per month on an average, and the income is regular. She received Rs. 180/- per thousand beedies.

When asked to give any suggestions, she said that ‘owners’ should be persuaded to increase the rate which would help meet the rising prices of essential goods.

Another demand she made was that beedi workers should be provided financial assistance for building their houses as most of them live in tin-shed huts.



Mr. Badhu Sardar, aged 52 years, has been rolling beedis for the last twenty years. He is educated upto standard four, though he wanted to pursue a higher level of education, but could not because of poverty. But he has made his best effort to educate his children from the sole income from beedi rolling. And he says: “without rolling beedi, he and his family would have perished”. As he does not possess any other skills, the opportunity to roll beedis has been providing much needed employment and income on a regular basis.

He has four children, three daughters and one son. His three daughters are studying in 10, 11 and 12 standards respectively, while his son is studying in 12th standards. His wife is a homemaker, and his only source of income is beedi rolling. “Jadi beedi bada bandho hoye jai, tahole amra bachboo no”, he said with a sigh. *(If beedi rolling is stopped, then we all will die).*

He said that the whole colony in Bagdah where he is living, depends solely on beedi rolling. He mentioned that though he has an identity card issued by the ‘Government’ he has not received any assistance in any form. While interacting with him, it was found that many of them were not aware about the Welfare Schemes Like others, he also needs a house. Currently he is living in a tin-shed hut in a congested area.

Ms. Sadha Sardar, aged 60 years, has been rolling beedis from the age 12 years. She is deprived of formal education in literacy, but she is articulate and well-aware about some issues related beedi industry, like lack of provident fund, low wage, etc. she said that on an average she rolls beedi 20 days per month and rolls around 1000 beedis per day, in between performing her domestic chores. She has two sons, both of them are daily wage labour, working in brick kilns, any other works, whichever is available.

She lives in a comparatively better house, as she got financial assistance from the Government housing scheme. But her regular income is from beedi. “I have no problem in life”, she said very stoically like a philosopher with a most amiable expression. “*khati aur khai (work and eat)*” is her life *mantra*. She exudes such confidence that is rarely found among many of us today.

“I started rolling beedis when the rate per thousand beedis was only 20 paise”, she said while narrating her journey in life from childhood to till date. She also said that she came to India from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) when she was only a nine years old child. And beedi rolling gave her a permanent source of survival. “I married, gave birth to two children and achieved whatever I have today, all because of my income from beedi making”, she said in a very dignified manner.



Ms. Kajol Sardar, aged 55 years, has been rolling beedis since her childhood. She was married when she was just an adolescent girl. But a few years after her marriage, she lost her husband, 35 years ago. And then she was mother of four children – two sons and two daughters. It is because of beedi rolling she survived and brought up her children. Her income was not enough to provide education to her children.

Now, her daughters are married. Both her sons work as daily wage labour. Though she and her children survived, she could not build a proper house. Like many in the area of her habitation she lives in a tin-shed tenement. Her shriveled and wizened face illustrate her struggle in life, and she says very simply: “beedi baniye amra bechhe achi” (*we are alive because of beedi making*).

Because of her health reasons, she is able to roll about 500 beedies per day and earns about Rs. 80/- per day.

In addition, she receives Rs. 1000/- as pension from the recently introduced pension scheme by the Government of West Bengal.



Ms. Suniti Das, is a daughter of a beedi roller, studying in B.A. 2nd year. Suniti's mother is illiterate but she has been making her best effort to educate her children.

Suniti helps her mother in the beedi rolling activity by dipping tendu leaves in water, cutting leaves for rolling beedis, sometimes also by rolling beedis.

In addition to beedi rolling activities, she also takes tuition and earns some money to meet her petty expenses.

Sunita's dream is to become a nurse and her mother has been a source of strength. "Beedi rolling activity is the main source of our income and survival. Without this work, we would not survive", says Sunita.

Beedi rolling being the regular activity, many girls like her are now getting education in schools and colleges, despite the fact that many in the area are not getting any assistance from Beedi Workers Welfare Fund.



Mr. Tushar Mondal, aged 38 years, is son of a mother who rolls beedis. Tushar did not roll beedis. Because of her mother's regular income from beedis, he could get education upto graduation level. He says that his mother's income from beedi rolling has helped them to live a decent life. They live in a decent house and his siblings are all educated.

Today Tusher is working in a Non-Government Organisation and earning a salary which is helping his family.



Ms. Bindu Bachar, aged 48 years, has been rolling beedis for the last 30 years. She is educated upto Class 5th. Her husband is a casual agricultural laborer, his work is not regular.

It is Bindu's beedi rolling which is regular. The thirty years have been a roller coaster experience in her life, a life without much support. Her beedi rolling work has only been the main source of her livelihood. It not only provided the much-needed support to her financially, but helped her to construct her tin-shed house but also helped educate her two children.

Today her elder son is working in the Railways and the son is educated upto graduation level.

Her younger son is also an atomic energy scientist. The achievement of her children epitomizes her long struggle in overcoming economic hardship; and beedi rolling provided her the important source of income.

Even today, she gets up early in the morning and after finishing her morning domestic chores, she sits on a plastic mat, and rolls beedis for a few hours. After preparing lunch for the family, she again sits with her neighbors, who themselves are beedi rollers and again rolls beedis.

In the evening, she takes an hour's rest and again, after finishing her dinner, she rolls beedis for sometime and goes to bed.

On an average she rolls 800 to 1000 beedis per day and earns on an average a sum of Rs. 180/- per 1000 beedis. During this long period of three decades, beedi making has been her main source of income. Like her, there are hundreds of her counterparts, who have struggled to survive and beedi making as an important source of livelihood has helped them build the structure of life which presently they are enjoying.

A woman who received education upto 5th standard, is now mother of two sons, who are graduates and found employment in Government service. And in this continuum, the regular employment in beedi rolling has indeed been a great assistance, and she is indeed an epitome of a successful mother.

She also reported that her sons received scholarships from the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund.



Ms. Menoka Bachar, aged 50 years, has been rolling beedis since her childhood. She recalled that from the age 11, she has been in the occupation, and the remuneration for 1000 beedis was Rs. 3/- only.

For the last 39 years of her life, she has been absolutely dependent on beedi rolling. The income has helped her educate her only son who is now educated upto graduate level, and serving in the Border Security Force (BSF).

She became a widow eighteen years ago, and since then she has been supporting her family alone. Today her son is married and living with his mother. But she has not left beedi rolling. It is now part of her life. Everyday she, with her other neighbors some time alone, keeps on rolling beedis.

While asked what she needs, she said that in old age, they require some social security coverage and medical assistance so that they can sail through their life without much hurdle.

Being a widow without any support, to educate her only son is not a mean feat. And beedi rolling has given her that strength.

Though she never got an opportunity to attend school, and remained unacquainted with letters, she is however a person with courage and confidence. Apart from income from beedi rolling, son also got some financial support from the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund.

Ms. Jharna Hire, is 60 year old beedi roller. She is not literate but her desire to educate her sons and daughters has been fulfilled. She is mother of four children – three sons and one daughter. All the three sons are educated – one is working in Saudi Arabia another two are in business and the daughter is married.

She recalled that she started beedi rolling when the rate per thousand beedis was Rs. 2/- only.

When asked about the contribution of beedi rolling, she said that without this work they would have starved. It provided them the much-needed livelihood opportunity at their doorstep without any investment.

She looked after her children and earned an income that helped her meet their financial needs. She still rolls 500-600 beedis per day.

The above profiles of the beedi workers and their children are an important example of the impact of employment of the beedi industry. Today several million workers in different parts of the country are dependent on various areas of employment generated by the beedi industry.

Concluding Remarks

The profile of the respondents presented in this section clearly highlights that Beedi Industry has not only been providing employment to the marginal section of the society but also providing a livelihood which is helping them to educate their children, also giving them opportunities for availing healthcare facilities etc.

In fact, the industry is still a lifeline for the survival of the overwhelming majority of workers in the unorganized sector of the country.

Keeping this in view, we suggest that the industry should be protected so that the workers who are dependent on it continue to live a dignified life. We further suggest that adequate safety measures should be adopted through awareness and provision of facilities which can help the worker protect their health from any adverse effect of tobacco use.

PART FOUR

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS AND CONCLUSION

- Beedi rolling is an important source of livelihood for many people in rural areas of West Bengal. Started in 1902 in Murshidabad district in West Bengal, the industry has spread footprints in all the districts of the state and its villages.
- Because of employment in the beedi industry, which is of regular nature, many households are in a position to meet their household needs, like, education of their children, building houses, meeting medical needs, etc.
- Many respondents also received some financial assistance for their children's education though their numbers are not very high.
- In a situation when the labour force is increasing very rapidly and employment opportunities are increasing slowly, the employment provided by the beedi industry is very important for any poor households in the country in general and West Bengal in particular.
- Keeping the importance of the industry in view, the following steps were to be taken for its sustainability.
- The industry should be converted from unorganized to organized and regulated.
- The high rate of Goods and Services Tax should be reconsidered, as it is impacting the industry adversely.
- The stipulated minimum wages should be paid to the workers.
- Different labour laws applicable to beedi workers should be complied with.
- Social welfare security measures provided by the Director General, Labour Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Employment; Government of India should be continued.
- More Static-cum-Mobile dispensaries should be opened in the areas of concentration of beedi workers.
- Other programmes and schemes announced by the Government should be accessible to the beedi workers.

- The beedi workers should be given skill training.
- Awareness programmes focusing on health issues and ‘money management’ should be conducted.
- Organizations, like Trade Unions, Non-Government Organisations, Dattopant Thengadi National Board for Workers Education and Development (formerly Central Board for Workers Education) and other institutions should be involved for uplifting life of Beedi workers
- A survey should be conducted to identify the correct number of beedi workers.
- Effort should be made to acquaint the beedi workers with following programmes and schemes of the West Bengal Government.

The Beedi Workers of West Bengal including Beedi Workers of Bagdah, should be fully acquainted with the social welfare schemes being run by the Government of West Bengal. We are providing here a list of important programmes/Schemes for the welfare of Beedi Workers as well as other workers.

LIST OF PROGRAMMES AND SCHEMES

| Name of the Programmes | Information about Scheme |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swasthya Sathi | This is a comprehensive health insurance scheme launched by the West Bengal government, providing cashless secondary and tertiary care up to ₹5 lakh per annum to eligible families. It covers all pre-existing diseases and requires no premium payment from beneficiaries. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old Age and Widow Pension Scheme | This scheme offers financial assistance to elderly and widowed women in West Bengal. It aims to provide them with a stable income source, ensuring their social security and well-being. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Khadya Sathi | A food security scheme aimed at ensuring affordable access to essential food grains for the economically disadvantaged sections of West Bengal, providing subsidized rice and wheat to eligible families. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kanyashree Prakalpa | A conditional cash transfer scheme by the West Bengal government to improve the status and well-being of girls. It encourages school attendance and prevents child marriage by providing financial incentives to girls aged 13-18. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sikshashree | This scholarship scheme is designed for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students from Class V to VIII in West Bengal. It offers financial assistance to help reduce dropout rates and promote educational opportunities among these communities. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rupashree Praakalpa | A financial assistance scheme for the marriage of economically disadvantaged girls in West Bengal. Under this scheme, a one-time grant is provided to the bride's family to alleviate the financial burden of marriage. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bina Milya Samajik Suraksha Yojana (BMSSY) | This scheme offers social security benefits to unorganized workers in West Bengal, providing them with access to health insurance, pension, and other welfare measures without the need for any financial contribution from the beneficiaries. |