

Human Hair Processing Industry as a Household Industry: A Case Study in Purba Medinipur District of West Bengal

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Abstract

In pre-independent India, small and cottage industries held the most important position of providing employment and source of livelihood for the majority of its citizens. In undivided rural Bengal, this was the dominant part of the economic activity. Human hair processing and wig industry hold a special and important place in the socio-economic life of the people of Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. In present paper, an attempt has been made to study the socio-economic life of the people, financial situation and problems faced by the people, those are engaged in hair processing and wig industry. Present study is based on primary data collected from rural families where one or more members are engaged in this work. Simple statistical tools have been used for analyzing the data. Findings of the study shows that most of the workers working in the four stages of production, carried out at the household level of the industry, are women and most of them are educated. The income disparity between men and women workers is significantly high and women earn less compare to men. Though there are some problems, the industry has great potential for employment generation, income creation for low and middle income group and earning foreign currency for the country.

Keywords: Cottage Industry, Household Industry, Stages of Production, Hair Processing, Wig Industry, Income Disparity

1. Introduction

The foundation of the rural economy of any developing country is agriculture. Along with agriculture, small and cottage industries hold an important place in the rural economy. The role of rural small and cottage industries in generating rural employment, using local rural equipment, capital and resources, utilizing local entrepreneurial skills and above all in rural development is undeniable. These types of industries provide income opportunities to the economically backward class people in society. To put it more clearly, these industries help working women from poor families, youth with very few employment opportunities, to move forward in society. Also, in many cases, in remote rural areas located far from the city, these industries are the sole source of income for people. In the industrial landscape of India, rural, small and cottage industries have traditionally held an important place. In agrarian India, for the vast majority of people living in villages, these industries are one of the main means of livelihood. Although villagers engage in these industries to earn a livelihood, they produce these goods with a special imprint of their own skill and expertise.

In undivided India, Bengal's muslin, Dhaka Jamdani, muslin, Murshidabad silk industry, Kashmiri woollen clothing and shawls, Jodhpur and Kishangarh handicrafts and stone work, Banaras sarees, Kanchipuram sarees, Moradabad brass, bronze and other states' gold-silver and metal works etc. became famous through the patronage of kings and emperors and later spread all over the World through British colonial rulers. Although these colonial rulers once pushed India's small and cottage industries to the brink of exploitation and destruction in the name of trade. Since the time of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, India's cottage industries have gradually been driven towards destruction. British colonial trade policy paved the way for the destruction of Indian small and cottage industries.

Even though the lost glory of small and cottage industries of Bengal and India as a whole was not fully restored after independence, it has gradually returned bit by bit. By adopting modern advanced production systems, technology, infrastructure and transport facilities, rural small and cottage industries at present are able to go beyond the boundaries of the local market and capture markets in different parts of the country. Again, by availing government policies and commercial infrastructural facilities, present rural small and cottage industries are going beyond the boundaries of the country and leaving their mark of existence in foreign markets.

2. Role of Household Industry in the Rural Economy

In an agriculture-based rural economy, household industry holds a particularly important place as a complement to agriculture. Such industries play a very significant multi-faceted role in rural economic development. The notable important roles of rural household industries are mentioned below:

- a) **Rural Employment:** Even now, a seasonal agricultural system prevails in most states of India. The seasonality of agriculture creates seasonal unemployment in villages. Rural small and cottage industries play a leading role in reducing seasonal unemployment. The labor-intensive nature of household and cottage industries can play an effective role in solving the unemployment problem in villages.
- b) **Reduction of Dependence on Agriculture:** More than 50% of India's population is directly and indirectly dependent on agriculture. This excessive dependence stands as a barrier to increasing productivity in the agricultural sector. Household industries, as part of small and cottage industries in the rural production system, are able to show rural people the direction of earning income.
- c) **Use of Rural Equipment:** A large portion of the equipment required for household industries is obtained from the agricultural sector. Besides, many cottage industries are indirectly dependent on agricultural equipment. Therefore, these industries help in the development of agriculture by increasing the demand for agricultural equipment in the market.
- d) **Use of Rural Surplus:** If rural surplus savings and surplus funds are collected and invested in small and cottage industries, overall productivity increases through capital formation. Through the effective investment of rural idle savings via small and cottage industries, the rural economy is awakened.
- e) **Use of Local Skills:** There is no alternative to rural small and cottage industries for utilizing the technical skills of rural people. The skills acquired by rural people from generation to generation are developed through these craft productions.
- f) **Women's Participation and Empowerment:** Rural household industries create earning opportunities for the uneducated and less-educated women of families in rural areas. The financial

dependence of rural women on others decreases; their dignity within the family increases (Pandey et. al., 2008).

- g) **Reduction of Poverty and Inequality:** Household industries create avenues for family income for poor and low-income families in villages. Through these industries, when family income increases, poverty and overall rural inequality decrease.
- h) **Increase in Product Diversity:** Along with agriculture in rural areas, the production of small and cottage industries increases the diversity of rural products. Many times, agriculture-based household industries are seen as complementary to agriculture. In these sectors, industries contribute as a market for agricultural raw materials.
- i) **Foreign Exchange Earnings:** Preserving ancient heritage, India's rural cottage industries have maintained dominance in foreign markets. Every year, by exporting huge quantities of products made by these artisans abroad, a significant amount of valuable foreign exchange is earned.
- j) **Rural Development:** Significant changes occur in the rural economy through household and cottage industries. When the market expands through this industrial production, dynamism is created in the rural economy, which removes obstacles that hinder rural development and helps accelerate rural development.

3. Household Industry in West Bengal

Like other states of India, rural small and cottage industries in West Bengal have also been able to highlight Bengal's heritage by following Bengali Culture. Household and cottage industries hold an important place among rural small and cottage industries in West Bengal. As the work of the industry is generally carried out within the household by family labourer, it is called household industry. The main and major household cottage industries of West Bengal among the produced crafts, some notable ones are - pottery, clay crafts, silk crafts, gold crafts, other metal crafts, conch-shell crafts, woodwork, leather work, bamboo and cane work, zari handcraft, bidi making, human hair processing and wig making, incense stick making, candle making, making sports equipment, toy making, jute work, etc.

3.1. Characteristics of Rural Household Industry in West Bengal

Although the production system of household and family cottage industries in West Bengal varies slightly by region, in most cases some specific characteristics of these industries can be observed. Some general characteristics of household industries are presented below:

First, the production system of industries run by family members is mainly contract-based. On the basis of contract or dadan, the raw materials for production are supplied to family members or 'artisans'. The supplier of raw materials is called 'Ostagar'. The finished products must be supplied back to the Ostagar. For collecting production materials and supplying finished products, the 'Ostagar' depends on big businessmen or 'Mahajans' in the city (Mandal, 2011).

Second, to complete the production, 'artisans' are paid wages at a pre-determined rate or based on the amount of work (e.g., per piece, per hundred, or per kg etc.). Sometimes this remuneration is also determined based on working time (e.g., per hour) (Mandal, 2011).

Third, 'Ostagar's are commission agents who act as intermediaries between producers and artisans. They collect raw materials from 'Mahajans' or businessmen and producers, place work orders with artisans, and collect finished products from artisans to deposit with the 'Mahajan'. For this work they earn a commission at a lucrative rate (Mandal, 2011).

Fourth, there is no fixed time for work. Several family members can be continuously engaged in the production work. Again, other family members can engage in this craft work during their spare time after completing household work or other work. Generally, artisans are seen working from 4 to 12 hours daily, and sometimes even more (Pandey et. al., 2008).

Fifth, as there is an opportunity to work within the boundaries of the home, village women can participate more in this kind of work. Among the artisans, 50 to 60 percent or even more are seen to be women artisans. Women from Muslim families who cannot go out to work because of the 'Parda system' can easily get involved in this kind of work (Mandal, 2015).

Sixth, in this kind of production system the use of financial capital and equipment is extremely limited. As production is carried out under the 'dadan' system, the family's financial liability is not very high. The little equipment that is used is very simple and basic in nature. Artisans either prepare these themselves or collect them from the local market.

Seventh, within the artisans' own homes, with the help of family members, along with household production, two other types of production systems are also observed. Apart from family members, with the help of artisans from neighbouring families, the 'family industry' system, and the 'industry' system located in the neighbourhood or mahalla near the artisans' homes (Mandal, 2015).

Eighth, the existence of child labour is observed in the family household production system. Often, apart from school study time, they are engaged in this work at other times of the day. Therefore, it is difficult to identify them as actual child labourers. Although not continuously, they are seen working for about four to six hours every day in several phases (Mandal et. al., 2016).

Ninth, members of low-income poor and lower-middle-class families are seen to be engaged in this kind of production work. Because it is a low-capital and dadan-based production system, this work is more acceptable to financially weak families.

Tenth, if families get involved in production work by collecting materials directly from the market, the possibility of their earnings increases. In that case, the amount of market-related risk also increases. Taking such risk is possible only if there are sufficient financial resources to compete with 'Mahajans' and 'Ostagar's' (Mandal, 2015).

Finally, these kinds of jobs are considered as the only earning opportunity for the less-educated members of poor rural families. Not much skill is required to get involved in the production work. The little training needed to become a skilled artisan can easily be obtained from family members (Mandal, 2011).

3.2. Human Hair Processing and Wig Industry

Indian human hair and wigs made from it have considerable value in the world market. Indian human hair and wigs are soft, smooth and high quality in terms of quality. Indian human hair falls a bit behind Chinese human hair in terms of cosmetic appeal. Due to its low price there is considerable demand for Indian human hair and wigs in European and American markets.

Although there is a market for Indian human hair and wigs almost all over the World, the demand is quite high in various countries of North and South America including Brazil and in countries like Myanmar, Singapore, Hong Kong and other various countries of Asia and Europe and even in China. The main importing country of Indian hair is China. After that, Brazil, America, Italy and Hong Kong rank as other importing countries.

3.3. Human Hair Processing and Wig Industry in Purba Medinipur District

The human hair processing and wig industry in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal holds a special

important place in the economic and social life of the people of this district. People of many villages under Bhagwanpur - I & II, Patashpur - I & II, Khejuri - I & II, Mahishadal, Nandigram - I & II C.D. Blocks of this district are involved with this industry. Mainly very poor and lower-middle-class landless agricultural labourer and marginal farmer families have chosen this industry as an alternative livelihood. In this production system that has grown as a cottage industry, multiple members of the same family are engaged in production work in their own house or in a neighbour's house. Among the workers involved in the production system, the participation of women is particularly significant. After completing household work, women are seen busy in the remaining time with sorting the unused hair 'guli', cleaning, polishing.

By spending a maximum part of the day, women's hard-earned income is spent not only on supporting family members, but also on children's education, treatment of the elderly and other emergency needs.

4. The Field Study

We have already discussed that the human hair processing and wig industry in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal holds a special important place in the economic and social life of the people of this District. To gain an understanding about the human hair processing and wig industry and to get detailed knowledge about the economic and social condition of the workers involved in this industry, this year (2026) a field survey was conducted by the Department of Economics, Yogoda Satsanga Palpara Mahavidyalaya. Data was collected from a total of 51 workers involved in the human hair processing and wig industry. The results of the field survey have been documented through the collected data and our own observations.

4.1. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present field study regarding the human hair processing and wig industry are as follows:

1. To understand the various economic and social aspects of the workers involved in the human hair processing industry.
2. To understand the economic and social condition of the worker families of the human hair processing industry.
3. To analyse in detail the financial condition of the workers involved in the human hair processing industry.
4. To identify the problems of the human hair processing industry.

4.2. Area of Field Survey

The work of human hair processing and wig industry is carried out in many villages under Bhagwanpur I & II, Patashpur - I & II, Mahishadal, Nandigram - I & II C.D. Blocks. Under the present project, data was collected from the workers of several selected villages of these C.D. Blocks. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire from 51 workers.

The main occupation of the residents of these villages is agriculture. Apart from agriculture, some small and cottage industry production systems are also observed. Human hair processing is showing people an easy way of livelihood as one such cottage industry. Mainly very poor and lower-middle-class landless agricultural labours and marginal farmer family members have chosen this industry as a means of livelihood.

4.3. Method of Data Collection

Keeping in line with the main objective of the survey, data collected directly from the workers of the hu-

man hair processing and wig industry through a prepared systematic and organized questionnaire. Therefore, the data collected from the survey is entirely primary data, which we have collected directly from the workers' work field.

For data collection, villages were selected in a purposive way. Human hair processing and wig production work does not take place equally or densely within all villages of the selected blocks. Data was collected directly from the workers of those villages where more work is done.

4.4. Method Used for Data Analysis

To analyse the data collected from the workers of the human hair processing and wig industry through the systematic and organized questionnaire MS EXCEL Work Sheet has been used. For data analysis, various tables, graphs, charts related to statistical analysis were used. Along with this, various tools of statistics, such as Arithmetic Mean (A.M.), Median, Mode, Skewness, Kurtosis, Standard Deviation (S.D.), Coefficient of Variation (C.V.) etc. were used.

5. Results of the Survey

5.1. Nature of Production

In Purba Medinipur, the work done before the final stage of making wigs is predominant in this cottage industry. Members of the household, mainly women, do the work of sorting the 'guli' of human hair bought from the market or given by the producer. 'Guli' that comes in a very messy state, or 'guli' hair thrown away in salons or temples, is collected and sorted. Those 'guli' are sold in the market for Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 8,000 per kg depending on quality.

These hair 'guli' are available in Barabazar, Kolkata and Howrah markets. Big traders bring good quality 'guli' at low prices from various cities of Kolkata, Haryana, Gujarat, Delhi, Ahmedabad etc. and sell them in the local market. Members of financially insolvent families buy 'guli' from traders on a 'dadan' basis and do the work of spreading them out, cleaning and polishing them in a special way. For this they get a wage of Rs. 350 to Rs. 500 per kg of hair. Members of relatively solvent families buy hair 'guli' from the market, complete the whole process and sell the polished hair 'guchi' to traders. Naturally, the profit margin is higher for them. Traders pack the polished hair 'guchi' in attractive rolls or packets and export them to markets in other states of the country or abroad. Wholesale traders in Kolkata or local towns make wigs and export them.

Industrial production is completed mainly by passing through four stages. First, the work of sorting the hair 'guli' bought from the market or received from traders begins. This work takes a lot of time. 250 to 400 grams of 'guli' can be sorted in a day. Income is Rs. 350-500 per kg of sorted 'guli'. This sorting work is mainly conducted by women.

In the second stage, the work of 'kanta deoa' or 'kanchi deoa' is done on the sorted hair. In this stage, the messy hair that has been sorted is separated with the help of metal scissors. For this work, income is Rs. 150-200 per kg. If worked 7-10 hours a day, 'kanta deoa' can be done for 4-5 kg of hair. Participation of women in the household is also observed more in this work.

In the third stage, the hair is washed with detergent or shampoo and It is then dried, and later polished by applying a special kind of gel. This is called 'fancying'. Generally, male workers in the factory do this work and get paid Rs. 100-150 per kg. A worker can 'fancy' 10-15 kg of hair in a day and can earn a maximum of Rs. 1500 or more in a day.

In the fourth and final stage, after doing 'fancying' one more time, hair-tying work is done in a special method. Workers call this stage 'Double Round'. Mainly male workers do the 'Double Round' work, and

they get paid Rs. 100-120 per kg. Depending on working hours, they can process 10-20 kg of hair in a day. The amount of payment is determined based on the length of the hair. Hair work ranges from 4 inches to 20-22 inches. By doing the work of the fourth stage, one can earn Rs. 30 - 60 thousand per month.

5.2. Socio-Economic Aspects of the Workers

A field survey conducted in the months of May-June, 2026 showed that among the 51 workers of the Human Hair Processing and Wig Industry, about 72.55% were women. Most of them are engaged with the first two stages of the production process. In terms of age, the youngest and oldest workers are 23 years and 58 years old respectively.

Table - 1 : Age and Gender-wise Classification of the Workers

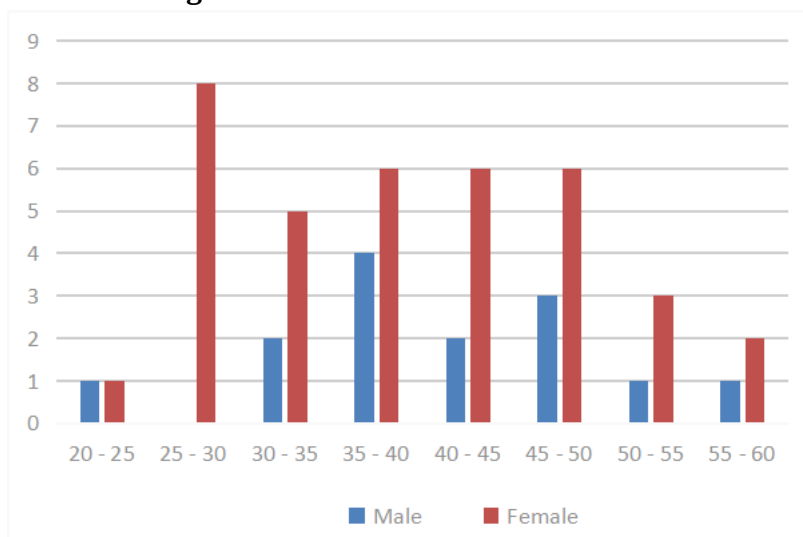
Age	Male	Female	Total
20 - 25	1	1	2
25 - 30	0	8	8
30 - 35	2	5	7
35 - 40	4	6	10
40 - 45	2	6	8
45 - 50	3	6	9
50 - 55	1	3	4
55 - 60	1	2	3
Total	14 (27.45%)	37 (72.55%)	51 (100%)

Source : Primary data collected from field survey

It is seen that 66.67% or two-thirds of the workers are between 30 to 50 years of age. The average age of female and male workers are 38.16 years and 39.79 years respectively. A detailed idea about the age and gender-wise classification of workers can be obtained from Table - 1 and Chart - 1.

From Table - 2 it can be seen that although all male workers are married, among women about 5.41% of unmarried workers are seen to be involved in this work. Although all male workers are literate, some illiteracy (13.51%) is seen among women.

Chart - 1 : Age and Gender-wise Classification of Workers



Although no special difference is noticed between men and women in terms of daily working hours, a significant disparity has been observed between male and female workers regarding average pay per hour of work and average monthly income. Male workers earn an average of Rs. 136.35 per hour, whereas for women it is quite low, only Rs. 50.84.

Table - 2 : Comparison between Male and Female Workers according to their socio-economic Characters

Socio-economic Characters	Different Values	
	Female	Male
Participation Rate (%)	72.55	27.45
Minimum Age (Year)	23	24
Maximum Age (Year)	56	58
Average Age (Year)	38.16	39.79
Marital Ratio (%)	94.59	100.00
Literacy Rate (%)	86.49	100.00
Daily Working Hour (in Hour)	5.03	5.14
Income per Hour (Rs.)	50.48	136.35
Monthly Income (Rs.)	7,132.43	19,721.43

Source : Primary data collected from field survey

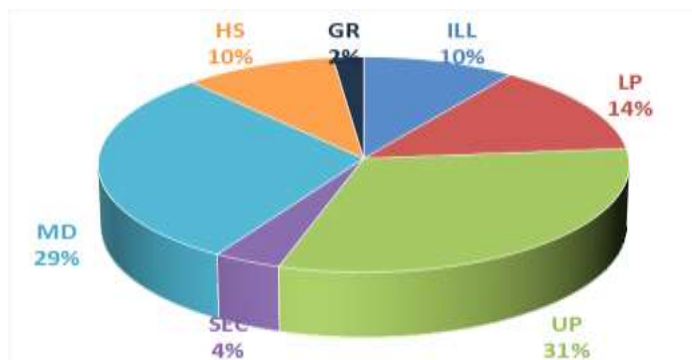
Naturally, a significant difference is also noticed between male and female workers in terms of average monthly income; the average monthly income of male and female workers is Rs. 19,721.43 and Rs. 7,132.43 respectively.

This disparity in monthly income is mainly due to the difference in the type or nature of work. Men workers mainly engaged in the second and subsequent stages of work; in terms of skill and the quantitative aspect of income, men are also quite ahead in this work.

5.2.1. Educational Level of the Workers

Among the workers, about 10% are illiterate (ILL); 14% of workers have studied up to lower primary (LP, below 5th grade) and can somehow sign and do basic calculations. 31% of workers have studied from 5th grade to 8th grade (UP). After that, 4% of workers studied but did not pass secondary (SEC). Only about 29% of workers passed secondary (MD). Among 51 workers, about 12% have higher secondary or above (HS) educational qualification. The proportion of graduate (GR) workers is only 2%.

Chart - 2 : Education Level of the Workers



Therefore, 55 percent of the workers are either illiterate or dropped out of school after studying up to 8th grade. The workers reported that due to family responsibilities they were not able to study; they dropped out of school in an attempt to earn.

5.3. Socio-economic Issues of Workers' Family

From the family socio-economic data of the workers, it is known that the average number of members in worker families is 4.14. On average, about 1.89 members per family are engaged in hair processing work. Among the members of the families, 85.31% are literate. Only 34.93% of members have studied up to secondary or above. Among them, the percentage of graduate members is very low, only 4.98%. About 11.76% of families live in mud houses. 33.33% of families live in houses with tile or asbestos roofs and brick walls. The remaining 54.90% of families live in concrete-roofed permanent houses. 21.57% of families do not have a designated permanent kitchen, and 94.12% of families have their own toilet.

Table - 3 : Different Socio-economic Indicators of the Workers' Family

Socio-economic Indicators of the Workers' Family	Value
No. of Workers	51
Average Family Size	4.14
Percentage of Females in the Family	48.82
General Sex Ratio	953.89
Literacy Rate (%)	85.31
Family Living in Mud House (%)	11.76
Family with Agricultural Land Holding (%)	70.59
Average size of Land Holding (decimal)	19.19
Family with Domestic Animals (%)	41.18
Indebted Family (%)	21.57
Families associated with SHGs (%)	19.61

Source : Primary data collected from field survey

More than 70% of families have their own agricultural land, although among such families the average landholding is only 19.19 decimals. It is also observed that, 41.18% of families have cattle, goats, ducks-chickens and other domesticated animals and poultry. These also serve as alternative sources of income for the families.

From the perspective of indebtedness, it is seen that about 21.57% of families have taken various institutional loans. Among these, only 5.88% of families have taken loans for hair processing work. In about 94% of cases, the main reasons for debt were daughter's/son's marriage, house construction, other businesses, farming work, etc. In all these cases, the role and importance of non-institutional debt is quite high compared to rural institutional debt.

In the families, the percentage of women is 48.82, and the number of females per thousand males (i.e., sex ratio) is about 953.89, which is a little satisfactory compared to the state or national average.

Only 19.61% of families have members associated with self-help groups (SHGs). However, no specific connection or information was found between the activities of these groups and hair processing work.

5.4. Analysis of Income-related Issues of the Workers

Workers are engaged in this work for 6 days a week or more. By spending more than 7 hours on average per day, they are able to earn an average of RS. 10,588.24 per month. Male workers work relatively

more hours, so naturally their average earnings are also higher. Women mainly do the first two stages of work. Although men are involved in all four stages, skilled young men are also engaged in the third and fourth stages of work.

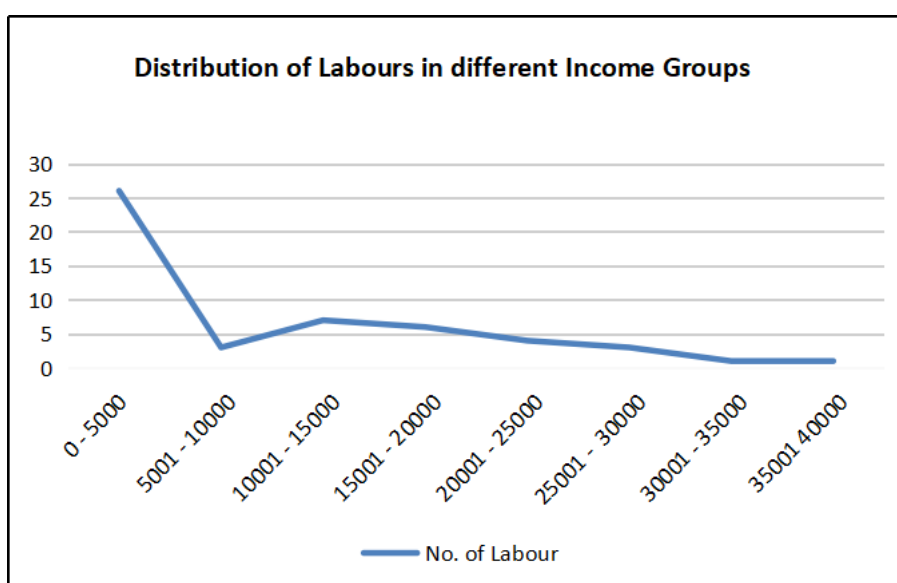
Table - 4 : Classification of Labourers according to their Income

Monthly Income (Rs.)	Male	Female	Total
00 – 5,000	2	24	26 (50.98%)
5,001 – 10,000	1	2	3 (5.88%)
10,001 – 15,000	1	6	7 (13.73%)
15,001 – 20,000	4	2	6 (11.76%)
20,001 – 25,000	2	2	8 (7.84%)
25,001 – 30,000	2	1	3 (5.88%)
30,001 – 35,000	1	0	1 (1.96%)
35,001 – 40,000	1	0	1 (1.96%)
Total	14	37	51 (100.00%)

Source : Primary data collected from field survey

The minimum and maximum income of the workers is Rs. 900 and Rs. 40,000 respectively. It has been observed that in about 50.98% of cases, worker income is less than five thousand rupees. The income of about 51% of workers is five thousand rupees or less, and the income of 56.86% of workers is ten thousand rupees or less. Only 19.61% of workers earn more than Rs. 20,000. Again, in only 3.92% of cases is the income amount more than Rs. 30,000 (Table - 4).

Chart - 3 : Classification of Monthly Income of the Workers



There is a large disparity or inequality in the monthly income of workers in this industry, and this inequality is very high. Although the average monthly income of workers is Rs. 10,588.24, the standard

deviation (SD) and coefficient of variation (CV) are Rs. 10,141.28 and 95.72% respectively, which clearly indicates the inequality.

Although the main reasons for this inequality are differences in daily working hours and skill, the capacity to work with the owner is also not less important. The intensity of inequality in the distribution of workers' monthly income can be understood by analyzing the kurtosis and skewness values of that distribution.

Table - 5 : Different Statistical Measures of Monthly Income of the Workers

Different Statistical of Measures	Value
Minimum Income (Rs.)	900.00
Maximum Income (Rs.)	40,000.00
Average Income (Rs.)	10,588.24
Median (Rs.)	4,000.00
Mode (Rs.)	1,600.00
Standard Deviation (SD) (Rs.)	10,241.28
Coefficient of Variation (CV)	96.72%
Skewness	0.95
Kurtosis	0.01

Source : Primary data collected from field survey

From Table - 5 it can be seen that the skewness value is 0.94, which, although positive, indicates a distribution skewed toward the lower end. This means the distribution is more concentrated toward the lower income side. The kurtosis value, although positive, is very low, 0.01; it represents a mesokurtic, slightly abnormal distribution. The income distribution is somewhat sharp, and also has a normally longer tail on the right side.

6. Problems of the Human Hair Processing and Wig Industry

From the analysis of data obtained from the survey, it is observed that several problems are quite prominent in the human hair processing and wig industry. Important problems related to the industry are discussed below:

First, if instead of working on a 'dadan' basis with the businessman, one buys hair 'guli' from the market and does the work directly, the amount of income or profit becomes much higher. But for this, large capital is needed. Commercial banks or micro-credit institutions reluctantly give loans to poor families. Being forced, young people and workers from poor families are compelled to work at lower wages with the businessman.

Second, hair 'guli' is not regularly supplied in the market throughout the year. Production is disrupted due to such irregular supply of the main raw material. Workers' income also decreases further.

Third, some health-related problems are closely linked with the work of this industry. Specifically, those workers who do the work of separating 'guli' have a very high possibility of being affected by respiratory problems, asthma, digestive issues, skin diseases, eye problems, etc. It is noticed that about 66.67% of workers are affected by some kind of health problem. Among them, 52.94% have received treatment by seeing a doctor.

Fourth, due to the lack of unity among workers in this unorganized industry, considerable disparity is observed in wage rates. Various businessmen take advantage of the opportunity and increase or decrease the wage or contract rate per kg of hair. As a result, ordinary workers suffer losses.

Finally, the lack of high-quality equipment in the local market and the dominance of the market for the produced goods force workers to depend on the businessmen. Naturally, they suffer financially.

7. Limitations of the Survey

Our current study based on data collected from field survey has several limitations. These limitations are as follows:

First, the data collected from only 51 workers is not sufficient to make decisions on any matter. The sample size should have been larger. Due to some genuine constraints, it was not possible to reach more workers.

Second, in the field of data collection, it was not possible to reach all classes and all religious people associated with the human hair processing and wig industry. In Purba Medinipur district, this work is a very easily accessible livelihood option for poor people of the Islamic community. But while collecting samples, workers from the Muslim community were left out completely unintentionally and due to time constraints.

Third, during data collection, workers of the second and third stages were given priority. If workers of the first stage and factory owners had been brought under the scope of the investigation more, some new results might have been obtained from the survey.

Fourth, there is enough scope for doubt regarding the information provided by them about workers' income-related matters. Generally, during data collection in this kind of survey, workers have a tendency to state their income as less.

Fifth, many workers are completely indifferent about their daily working hours, wage rates and several other related matters. They are not sufficiently aware about these issues.

8. Conclusion

Analyzing the socio-economic characteristics of worker families, evidence is found about their belonging within poor and lower middle-class strata. Human hair and wig industry is considered by these families as an easy means of earning to survive. With little capital, families associated with this industry are easily able to manage the task of collecting the necessities for livelihood.

As a rural cottage industry, the human hair and wig industry has considerable potential. By investing little capital and doing work in two stages, members of the extremely poor and lower middle-class families in the village have been successful in supporting themselves and achieving family financial solvency. By doing work in the last two stages, less-educated and educated youth in the village are able to achieve self-reliance. Businessmen engaged in the production work of this industry have not only achieved financial solvency with the help of bank loans, but have also been able to consolidate their position in the high-income group. In the past few years, most of the financially solvent businessmen who have emerged in various villages of Purba Medinipur are involved with this work, which definitely proves their strong financial position in society.

Although there are many problems with the work of the human hair and wig industry, for the sake of survival and livelihood, a section of people have taken up this industry and moved forward. If efforts are made to solve the problems related to this industry in the future, especially if due importance is given to

matters such as provision of loans for hair work, health-related issues, and formation of support groups and associations, then it can be expected that a bright horizon of livelihood will open up for a large section of the rural population through the development of the human hair processing and wig industry. In that case, not only the people in Purba Medinipur district will benefit locally, but since there is considerable potential to earn foreign exchange through the national trade of the human hair processing and wig industry, the country's economy as a whole will benefit through this industry.

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