

Addressing the Plight of Beauty Parlor Workers through Social Security Measures

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Abstract

Social security is bare necessity. While people working in organized sector are secured in many fronts, people working in unorganized sector lag behind the former. Federal and state governments in India have, however, created a variety of specialized initiatives, both protective and promotional in nature, to assist unorganized workers. The unorganized sector receives social security through publicly funded Social Assistance Programs, the Social Insurance Scheme, welfare monies from the federal and state governments, and other programs. In India, there are plenty of people employed in beauty salons. While some beauty parlours are organized and provide all sorts of security to their workers, some other parlours are purely unorganized and they don't give priority on the security measures for their employees. Considering this, it is pertinent to ascertain the conditions of such workers and examine whether social security measures can help them fight out their plight. The study is based on qualitative primary data collected through in-depth interviews with some selected beauty parlor workers of Cuttack, Odisha. It is found that their lives are miserable without any social security measures. Thus, the social security measures extended to workers in organized sectors are needed to such beauty parlor workers who are there in an unorganized set up.

Keywords: Unorganized Sector, Beauty Parlor Workers, Social Security, Plight, Exploitation, Uncertainties, Government Schemes

INTRODUCTION

A large network of women in the unorganized sector is dedicated to providing secure means of subsistence for underprivileged women. We think that every worker should have the same rights and economic opportunity. Social security is the name of the employee protection program. Only workers in India's organized sector, which accounts for just 17.26% of the labor force, are eligible for social security programs. Social Security is not available to the remaining 82.74% of workers in the unorganized sector. Ensuring social security for the whole labor force is a significant concern for the nation. Covering the unorganized sector is a difficulty (Agrawal, 2012). The unorganized sector is complicated by nature, making it challenging to pinpoint the target demographic. In order to develop contributory social security plans that are appropriate for this group, we must first investigate the various occupational and income groups in this sector to determine their needs and ability to contribute. The study's goal is to address the fact that employees at beauty parlors are classified as unorganized sector workers and do not have access to social security programs. In this regard, the government offers programs and policies based on an understanding of their top priorities and makes several recommendations for addressing those needs, allowing for the creation of appropriate social security plans that are widely and consistently available to them (Kagzi, 2010). Employees in unorganized beauty parlors were chosen for the study because they are marginalized and without legal protection, which puts them in a poverty trap with poor earning potential.

The phrase "social security" has been interpreted variously by various authorities; there is no widely recognized definition of the concept. A set of policies and initiatives put in place by the government to offer financial assistance and social protection to its people or residents are referred to as social security measures. The aforementioned strategies aim to enhance financial stability, mitigate destitution, and guarantee a requisite standard of living for people and households throughout diverse life situations. Social security measures can

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take different forms and may vary from one country to another, but they generally aim to address key aspects of a person's life. It plays a crucial role in promoting social cohesion reducing inequality and ensuring the overall well-being of nations population. They are often funded through various means, such as taxation social security contributions from employers and employees, and sometimes supplemented by government budgets and other sources of funding. The specific design and implementation of social security measures can vary widely between countries, taking into account the country's economic situation, political priorities and societal needs. Nonetheless, a few elements appear in every definition. The international labor organization (ILO) states that while the term has taken on a broader meaning in some countries than in others, in general, it can be understood to refer to the protection that society offers its citizens through a range of public measures against the economic and social distress that would otherwise be brought about by stoppage or significant reductions in earnings as a result of illness, pregnancy, employment injury, unemployment, old age, and death; the provision of medical care and the provision of subsidies for families with children.

Social Security Measures

The common elements of social security measures include for survival of needy people are:

Retirement Benefits- providing pensions or retirement benefits to elderly or disabled individuals who have reached a certain age or meet specific eligibility criteria. This ensures that they can maintain a basic standard of living during their retirement years.

Benefits for Unemployment: Assisting people who have lost their jobs due to no fault of their own by providing them with a means of subsistence while they look for new work.

Health care Coverage : Ensuring access to affordable healthcare services, either through government-funded health care systems, health insurance schemes, or a combination of both.

Disability Benefits : Providing financial assistance to individuals who have disability that prevents them from working or participating fully in the labour market.

Family and Child care Benefits : Offering support to families with children, such as child allowances, subsidies for child care, or maternity/paternity leave to help parents balance work and family responsibilities.

Social Assistance : Providing temporary or ongoing financial aid to individuals or families facing financial hardship, including those without sufficient income or who are otherwise vulnerable.

Housing Support: Assisting low-income individuals or families in securing affordable housing or providing housing subsidies to reduce the burden of housing costs .

Education Support : Offering financial aid or Scholarship to help individuals access education and improve their skills, thus enhancing their employability.

Benefits of Social Security Measures

Social security measures can bring several significant benefits to women worker's both organized and unorganized sectors as well as to wider community (Sarma, 2008). Here are some ways these measures can positively impact women.

Economic Security: Social security measures provide a safety net for women workers, ensuring they access to financial support during times of unemployment, illness, or disability. This economic security can help prevent women from falling into poverty and protect them from the risk of destitution.

Retirement Benefits : Many social security systems include pension schemes that provide financial support to retired individuals. Women, especially those in Informal or unorganized Sector often face challenges in building their retirement savings. Social security pension can help alleviate this issues and offer financial stability in their later years.

Protection against Gender-based violence : Some social security systems may include provisions for survivors of domestic violence, Offering support for women escaping abusive situations. These measures can provide access to safe housing, counselling, and financial assistance during challenging times.

Empowerment and Economic Independence : Social security measures can contribute to women's empowerment by reducing their economic dependence on others. This can lead to greater decisions - making power within household and communities, fostering gender equality.

Training and skill Development programs : Some social security programs may include training and skill development opportunities for women workers. This can enhance their employability and open doors to better job prospects.

Access to Education : Social security measures that include education support, such as scholarships or stipends, can help girls and women pursue education, narrowing the gender gap in educational levels and providing them with better long term opportunities.

For example, the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) was implemented by the Indian government to promote pregnant women's health and nutrition both during and after childbirth. The program offers monetary incentives to eligible women. This program gives mothers financial support at a crucial time in their lives while also assisting in the improvement of mother and child health outcomes.

Overall, Social security measures that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women workers can have a transformative impact on their lives and contribute to the social and economic development of entire community. By promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, these measures foster more inclusive and sustainable societies.

Social security measures available to different women working group (SHGs ,Agriculture Worker, Handloom Weavers, Plantation Workers, Beedi Worker, Fishermen and fisher women, Gig economy Workers, Forest Workers

Social security measures availed by different women working group like Self help groups (SHG),Weavers, Hand-loom Workers, Fishermen and Fisher women, Plantation labors, Beedi Worker, Agriculture Workers ,Workers under Gig economy etc.

- Self Help Group (SHG): SHGs consist of group of 10-20 people who come together in order to play a role in the economy. Odisha government launched Mission Shakti in the year 2001. It revolutionized the SHG movement in Odisha and brought a positive impact in the lives of Women. Six lakh such groups have been formed to accommodate about 70 lakh Women. Mission Shakti provide interest free loans up to 3 lakh to women in SHGs. By providing credit and market linkage Mission Shakti has transformed the Women Self help group (WSHGs).

- Domestic worker: Any individual who is employed directly or indirectly who performs domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, watching after children, caring for the elderly or sick, driving, doing laundry, and keeping an eye on things, is considered a domestic worker. Domestic employment does not impose situational constraints; rather, it just qualifies the nature of work. To empower women and give them opportunities for growth and safety, the government has introduced a number of programs. These include the Employment State Insurance Act for Domestic Workers, which includes medical benefits, disability benefits, maternity benefits, and other need-based benefits outside of their reach, and the Act to Protect Women from Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and to Protect Women from Domestic Violence. Additionally, there is a minimum wage act that does not differentiate between wage disparities. These programs were developed in order to give these independent contractors some small relief.

- Agriculture workers: The government has started a number of initiatives to help farmers increase their output through reduced cultivation expenses, higher productivity, and more affordable prices. With the goal of giving social security to small and marginal farmers in their later years, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana, Soil Health Schemes, PM Kisan Sanman Nidhi, PM Krishi Yojana, Crop Loan, Agri Clinic, and Agri Business

Center offer concessional loans to women who are SC/ST and beneficiaries of the Northeastern state's hill areas.

- **Hand-loom weavers:** Weavers and artisans who are above 60 are eligible for a pension of Rs 8,000 per month from the ministry. Through different programs, such as the WEAVER MUDRA SCHEMES, handloom weavers receive finance at a discounted interest rate of 6% for a three-year credit guarantee. Every year, all active hand-loom and affiliated weavers would receive financial support of up to Rs 5k and margin money aid of up to Rs 10k per worker through an Aadhar-based DBT payment method.

- **Plantation Workers:** The Plantation Labor Act has been included by the government into the Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions labor code. According to the 2020 Social Security Code, plantation workers will be covered by ESIC (Employees State Insurance Company). The ESIC offers a variety of benefits to its members, including medical coverage, maternity benefits, unemployment benefits, and illness benefits.

- **Beedi Worker:** In India, the production of beedis is a long-standing agro-forest enterprise. It is a very labor-intensive, mostly unorganized industry that employs mostly women as home-based beedi rollers, farmers who grow tobacco, and tribal workers who gather tendu leaves from forests. They fall under the Act on Minimum Wage. The Beedi and Cigarettes Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act of 1966 was designed to govern the terms under which Beedi workers are employed. The Beedi Worker Welfare Fund Act of 1976 established a welfare program for beedi workers and their families that included health, education, group insurance, maternity benefits, recreation, and housing support. Additionally, there are programs designed specifically to support the education of Beedi worker children, particularly female youngsters.

- **Fishermen and fisher women:** The government of India provide initiative to help the Fishermen and improve their life by giving insurance in case of accidents, ensuring financial security for economic stability. Social security for getting health care benefits, pension and welfare support providing advanced technical education and training to teach scientific fishing techniques for better productivity and sustainability. Government also provides equipment's training for proper equipment handling and maintenance, and environment awareness programs to promote responsible fishing practices and environmental conservation.

Through Blue Revolution Schemes the financial assistance is being provided for women beneficiaries to 60% of the unit cost in respect to all the women involved in this profession.

- **Gig economy workers:** Gig economy refers to market where temporary, short term, freelancer, job are norm instead of traditional 9 to 5 office job. It includes sharing services, painting, some one house work, coaching, fitness training and tutoring. It creates job opportunities, often involving connecting clients and customer through online platforms, such as Uber, Ola, Swiggy and Zomato. Gig work enables women to earn a decent income, improving their standard of living and financial independence. It also provide women to access job opportunities.

The 2020 Social Security Code outlines the creation of appropriate social security programs for things like accident insurance, maternity and health benefits, old age protection act, life and disability coverage, etc.

No Social Security for Beauty Parlour Workers

Even though the Beauty parlour industry is highly profitable business, the profit is enjoyed only by the owner. Owner of Beauty parlour in the twin city are well to do in the first place. They are able to afford the cost of being trained as a beautician. The cost of completing a course range from 60k to 75k in reputed registered Beauty parlour. Since they are highly privileged persons had access to credit facilities, they are able to establish a parlour of their own. But the workers who is the pillar of their parlour are highly under-privileged. As per government guidelines an enterprise which hires more than 10 staff is bound to provide Social security benefits to its employees, but this is hardly followed.

- The staffs in Beauty parlour are marginalized. They don't enjoy social security benefits and treated as unorganized labour forced.

- They enjoy any benefits rather they face the problems like;

- Long and inflexible working hours
- Pay -cuts, if one is absent
- Low and irregular wages than minimal level
- Faces high level of exploitation, due to their ignorance
- No sustainability or job insecurity
- Have no right to speak up or interfere when family members make financial decisions.
- Getting used and harassed in their office compartment
- Exempted from maternity and childcare facilities
- No employment injury benefits, educational facilities, skill degradation programs
- Insufficient labour law and absence of social security benefits

Working in a ladies beauty parlor can be both rewarding and demanding. While these establishments provide essential services to clients, the employees themselves encounter several challenges. Let's delve into some of the key difficulties faced by beauty parlour workers:

Lack of Credit Facilities-

Beauty parlor employees often struggle with financial constraints due to the absence of credit facilities. Unlike formal employment sectors, where employees receive regular salaries, many beauty parlor workers are paid on a commission basis or receive irregular income. This lack of financial stability can make it challenging for them to manage their daily expenses, especially during lean business periods. Unavailability of credit facilities from bank and other financial institutions, consequently they are devoid of opportunities for re-skilling and up-skilling. Also they cannot upgrade their establishments, in better tools and equipment due to unavailability of credit facilities.

Accommodation Struggles in Urban Areas-

Urban areas attract Beauty parlor due to higher client demand. However, finding affordable and suitable accommodations near the workplace can be a significant challenge for employees. Factors contributing to this difficulty include:

High Rent Cost: Urban rents are often steep, making it tough for employees to secure affordable housing close to their work place

Limited Housing Options: The availability of rental properties may be limited, and competition among rental properties may be limited, and competition among renters can be fierce.

Social Stigma: Some landlords may be hesitant to rent to beauty parlor employees due to stereotypes or misconceptions about the profession.

Training Accessibility-

Continuous learning and skill development are crucial for Beauty parlor employees to stay updated with the latest trends and techniques. However, accessing quality training can be problematic for several reasons.

Cost: Enrolling in professional courses or attending workshops can be expensive, especially for employees with limited financial resources.

Lack of Training Center: In some regions, there may be a scarcity of reputable training centers that offer specialized courses for Beauty professionals.

Mobility Constraints-

Beauty parlor employees particularly, those working in smaller establishments may face mobility issues. These challenges can arise from various factors like;

Long Working Hours : The employees often work extended hours in parlor which can affect their physical well being. Standing for a prolonged periods can lead to fatigue and discomfort.

Commute Challenges : Many beauty parlor are located in urban areas , and employees may need to commute long distances to reach their workplace. Inadequate public transportation or personal mobility options can exacerbate this issue.

Health and Safety Concerns : Some employees may need to travel late at night after closing hours , which can pose safety risks especially for women are vulnerable in cities crept to violence , exploitation, and harassment.

Problem Owing to Improper Education-

In the same way ,some Beauty parlor employees need to be handheld to guide them to light. In the absence of education these employees are devoid of;

Never advancements in this field

Better communication facilities

Lack of self confidence and self esteem.

Low Risk taking Ability-

These employees remain in their comfort zone and do not take risks , for instance investing in modern equipment or increasing the no of staff . Just like in any business risk taking ability is essential , the same hold true in this Sector as well.

Poor Networking Skill-

We live in age of industrial revolution i.e in the DIGITAL AGE. Beauty parlor employees don't fully exploit the potential that technology can offer. They are unable to use social media to enhance their networking and marketing strategies. However there is still significant challenges that women face in digital industry. Women may struggle with self doubt and fake identity, leading them to hesitate to taking risk in their carrier.

Marketing Challenges-

Due to mushroom of small scale and home based Beauty parlors many of times people are not aware of them. Only high-end and bigger marketing strategy to reach out to the customer. Small scale Beauty parlour need better marketing strategies to reach out the common people .The marketing and advertisement especially for brands that communicate to the women as their target audience

Absence of Social security benefits makes them vulnerable to unforeseen events like accidents and death tragedy.

Gender Gap :

Claudia Goldin won the 2023 Nobel Prize in Economics for her study on the unpaid household labor of women. Every woman works, but not every effort is recognized. A considerable portion of home work is carried out by women. Employees at beauty parlors are under pressure in both their personal and professional life. In addition to their poor social position, lack of social protection, and inability to find alternative sources of income, they lack the ability to bargain for better terms or working conditions.

Financial dependency on husband, if the husband is alcoholic, the women faces domestic violence. National crime record bureau (NCRB) recorded a spike in domestic violence cases during lockdown. United Nations called it SHADOW PANDEMIC. In order to add to the family income, Beauty parlour workers try to find work as house helps, cleaners, baby-sitter, working in hotels and road side catteries and also involves some

illegal activities for earning purposes. Long working hours and very low wages, job risks, inadequate training facilities, lack of Barber union or Beauty parlour association regarding (collective bargaining power)etc. make the lives of these women very challenging.

Need for Empowering a Beauty Parlor Worker

Traditionally women have been dependent on their spouses for financial security. This has hampered women empowerment and financial inclusion Beauty parlour worker need social security benefits the most. They not only face financial hardship but also discrimination in other front like harassment, trauma etc. (Kumar, 2009).

A Beauty parlour worker is part of poverty trap and hence it is essential that measures should be taken to take women out of poverty trap. Children of beauty parlor workers grow up in poverty leading to significantly disadvantages in health , education and skills. There has been tussle for job which leads to low level of human capital. It forces the community fail to escape the poverty trap which ultimately insists there families to be in poverty.

In order to empower a Beauty parlour worker the very first step is providing access to credit, so that they can started small venture of her own . For example, Jan Dhan Yojana to open bank account with zero balance to aide Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT). Other measures to be undertaken to lift the beauty parlour workers out of economic evils like poverty and unemployment are;

Programs for Skill Development: Introducing a Range of Initiatives for Women's Skill Development. This raises living standards while simultaneously improving service quality and capacity. It is important to take extra precautions to make sure they can conveniently access the training.

Providing work opportunities for the women in MSME, NGOs, Girl School, Women's College and also in Home-Based enterprises. This can shift Women from primary activities to secondary and tertiary activities. This will also help address the issue of feminisation in industrial development.

Soft Financing: The community of beauty parlor employees is comprised of the underprivileged and impoverished segments of society. Their income is insufficient to maintain a respectable quality of living. The loans obtained through unofficial channels are often predatory. Thus, a loan at a favorable rate becomes necessary.

Modernized Equipment or Apparatus- Equipments like steamer, electric massage bed, facial machine trolley beauty salon chairs and other advanced equipment's used in luxury parlour these equipment's are costly and small parlour can't afford them. These equipment's should be made cheaply and easily available them.

Housing Facility- Most of Beauty parlour are situated in cities. Twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar is home to many such establishments. Due to rapid urbanization, cost of living is rising. High rent prices compel them to stay in cheaper localities, which includes in slum. Thus, housing facilities should be provided by the government in accordance with INDIRA AWAS YOJNA.

Children's Education: Since the majority of the personnel lacks a degree, their kids are also denied access to a quality education and are likely to follow in their parents' footsteps. The children from this neighborhood should have their education funded by the government.

Licensing: Many tiny beauty salons operate without a license. As a result, they may experience intimidation and extortion from neighborhood mafias. The workers in the beauty parlor occupation need to have registered on the government portal; doing so would have made it easier to find any programs or policies aimed at improving their lot in life.

Beauty Parlor Association- Women worker employed in Beauty parlour industry are not united under any UNIONS. As a result there is absence of strong voice in this Sector. Due to their unorganized and scattered nature, they are unable to represent and bargain for their RIGHTS. For the sake of collective bargaining and benefiting from government programs, these unions ought to exist.

Identity of Castes- In past decades the persons were from particular caste groups like Barik, and Brahmins, only the persons from these specific caste groups were employed as Barber and Brahmins as worshippers of God. In modern times, this profession has become universal and people from all caste group are opting it. The government has to be identify vulnerable caste groups amongst to this section and provide benefits to them.

Minimum Wage- Professionals employed in Beauty parlour industry should be covered under the minimum wage Act, so that they are adequately paid.

Social Security Net Include Health and Pension Schemes- Social Security Benefits include Pension and Health Plans. People in this field deal with declining health issues as they get older. The most common health complaints from them are of weakening eyesight, body aches, sprained spines, and other nerve diseases. They should have sufficient health insurance coverage in light of this circumstance. When they retire, they ought to be eligible for pension plans.

Shop for Beautician- The cost of renting a room is very high for poor beauty parlor employees. The government ought to implement measures to furnish retail stores and functional workspaces in business spaces at acceptable and cost-effective rates.

Water and Power Supplies- In addition to expensive commercial rent, power and water rates are rising. Establishments spend a significant amount of their revenue on these amenities, leaving little for the staff. These amenities ought to be offered at a lower cost to under-served professional groups.

Maternity Benefits- The 2020 Social Security Code echoed this act. Maternity benefits range from six to 24 weeks, and workplace crèches are available for new mothers. It should be provided for every woman to receive maternity benefits at the rate of average daily income for the duration of her real absence, with her employer bearing the financial burden. It preserves the dignity of motherhood and the dignity of the newlywed by offering the woman and her kid complete and healthy maintenance during this crucial period when she is not employed.

Respect and Recognition- Beautician don't get their due respect and recognition in the society. There should be behavioral change among all of us and their work should be treated with respect. These professional work hard. As of yet, this work is not acknowledged as a profession. It ought to be recognized for a number of government programs.

CONCLUSION

Half of all people on Earth are women, and they work for over two thirds of the time, earn 10% of global revenue, and possess one hundredth of all property worldwide (UN women report). Employees in the beauty industry should receive all benefits and be protected by social security rules, just like any other workers. These workers ought to have access to every possible social and economic opportunity. If any worker in the beauty sector is given economic and social security, then they should also be entitled to a decent lifestyle, financial support, health care facilities, social and educational support, and so forth. She might emerge as the leader in economic development and is undoubtedly capable of altering the social fabric.

But from the discussion as above, it becomes clear that they are not deprived of all such facilities but also forced to face some evil consequences including, exploitation, harassment, Access to education is day dream for some of such workers. Because of the lack of social security benefits and changing needs of society these workers lots of difficulties. The difficulties they faces include a lots of aspects starting from minimum wages, low income, lack of awareness to mental suffering, exploitation both economic and sexually, in adequate healthcare facilities and the list goes on, instead of contributing to the growth and development, they work for others and suffers a lot and become marginalized in almost all fields.

Therefore, taking into consideration, the plight of such workers, the government and all other stakeholders involved in the process should come forward and see that there worker become a part of the mainstream of the society and enjoy their life like others who are in similar placed. That's why Beauty parlour worker need

to be integrated in to the mainstream of society. So that they become effective contributors to the economy. This will transform the lives of these women and change the destiny of this nation.

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