

**ECONOMIC STATUS OF VICIOUS CIRCLE OF BONDAGE OF BRICK KILN WORKERS IN
VILLUPURAM TALUK, TAMILNADU**

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ABSTRACT

An economic analysis of brick kiln workers includes the components of socio-economic status of the migrated brick kiln workers, work pattern and wage structure, health issues, debt bondage and examination of corollary among the variables through the ideology of vicious circle of debt bondage. The present work needs to conduct special examination on linkages between low-wage, health status, and indebtedness of the brick kiln workers. More specifically, there is a need to study the vicious circle of debt bondage of the brick kiln workers in the study area. The fresh study on economic analysis of brick kiln workers. With this background, the present study analyze the brick kiln workers under the preview of economic dimensions in terms of migration and selection of brick kiln industry, wage and work structure, health issues and their impact on economic outcomes, debt bondage and vicious circle of debt bondage.

Key Note: Brick kiln, Migration, working Condition, Debt Bondage and Vicious Circle of Debt Bondage

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

An economic analysis of brick kiln workers includes the components of socio-economic status of the migrated brick kiln workers, work pattern and wage structure, health issues, debt bondage and examination of corollary among the variables through the ideology of vicious circle of debt bondage. The present work needs to conduct special examination on linkages between low-wage, health status, and indebtedness of the brick kiln workers. More specifically, there is a need to study the vicious circle of debt bondage of the brick kiln workers in the study area. With this background, the research question emerges: "In what ways wage, health and indebtedness of

the brick kiln workers trap them under the vicious circle of bondage?" Further, there is a need to understand the fundamental problems of the brick kiln workers and provision of suitable guidelines to solve the same is necessary.

Above mentioned problems confirm the requirement of fresh study on economic analysis of brick kiln workers. With this background, the present study analyzes the brick kiln workers under the preview of economic dimensions in terms of migration and selection of brick kiln industry, wage and work structure, health issues and their impact on economic outcomes, debt bondage and the vicious circle of debt bondage.

Theoretical Background

Entitlements Approach

In order to examine the vicious circle of debt bondage among brick kiln workers, the ideology of Sen's entitlements approach to famine and deprivation has been taken as a theoretical backdrop. The conception of entitlements has an extensive history in the subjects of social sciences and humanities. It has started from Libertarian philosopher John Locke in the 17th century, Robert Nozick in the beginning of 20th century and advancements were done by the Sen in the area of famine and starvation during the end of the same 20th century. However, the use and application of the terminology differed among the social scientists according to the time period, discipline and area of research.

Objective

1. To provide policy suggestions to regulate the brick kiln industry and improve the brick kiln worker's welfare.

Hypothesis

1. The brick kiln workers are trapped in the brick kiln industry for long tenure due to the vicious circle of bondage viz., low-wage, health status, and indebtedness.

Methodology

In Villupuram district, the number of brick kilns is high in Villupuram taluk as compared to other taluks and it represents the whole brick kiln industry of Villupuram district. Hence, the Villupuram taluk is selected at the third level to study economic conditions of brick kiln workers. In Villupuram taluk, 240 brick kiln workers (Male: 120 and Female: 120) are randomly surveyed in different brick kilns with the assistance of pre-tested structured interview schedule.

VICIOUS CIRCLE OF BONDAGE OF BRICK KILN WORKERS

This study examines the main theme of the study by analyzing the vicious circle of the bondage of the brick kiln workers in the study area. The hypothesis reads as “The brick kiln workers are trapped in the brick kiln industry for long tenure due to a vicious circle of bondage viz., low-wage, health status, and indebtedness.”

The hypothesis is to examine the vicious circle of debt bondage of brick kiln workers and identify the causes which keep the surveyed respondents under the debt bondage that is to keep the respondents for long period in brick kiln industry. For the purpose of testing of hypothesis and identify the reasons and factors responsible for debt bondage of brick kiln workers, low wage rate, types of health problems faced by the workers, number of days of sickness, net income and debt from brick kiln are selected as factors responsible for the vicious circle of debt bondage of brick kiln workers. The researcher assumes that the existence of a provision of advance payment and debt leads to brick kiln owner’s advantage over the workers in terms of low-wage and other forms of exploitation. In the next level, repayment of debt and advance received from brick kiln owner, cheating in accounts and low net income force the worker to do hard work and relieve from clutches of debt bondage and the vicious circle of debt bondage of brick kiln industry. But unfortunately, the majority of the brick kiln workers are addicted to tobacco and alcohol consumption.

At this juncture, hard work in brick kiln industry, skipping food during working hours and tobacco and alcohol addiction adversely affect the health status of the workers through normal, severe and serious health issues. This phenomenon adversely affects the productivity and earning capacity of the workers and forced these to obtain another package of advance or loan from the brick kiln owner. Under these circumstances, brick kiln workers are in a position to face the unexpected and unavailable expenditures such as marriage, death, and others. So brick kiln workers depend on the brick kiln owner for loan and advance. Finally, the brick kiln workers have to be in the vicious circle of debt bondage.

In Multiple Linear Regression Model, the β coefficient provides a marginal effect of the respective independent variable on factor on a number of years working in a brick kiln. Adjusted coefficient of this model (Adjusted R square - \bar{R}^2) analyses the part of independent variables on endogenous factor on number of years working in brick kiln. The comprehensiveness of the Multiple Linear Regression Model is verified with the help of ‘F’ test. Further, relationship of each independent variable on endogenous factor on number of years working in brick kiln is tested by students’ ‘t’ test. Results and their explanations are discussed based on the finalization of the suitability of the model.

No. of Years Working in Brik Kiln = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \mu$

Dependent Variable = No. of Years Working in Brick Kiln (No. of Years)

X_1 = Low Wage (Yes = 1; No = 0)

X_2 = Type of Health Problem (Normal = 1; Severe = 2; Serious = 3)

X_3 = No. of Days of Sickness (Actual Value)

X_4 = Net Income (Actual Value)

X_5 = Debt from Brick Kiln (Actual Value)

μ = random error, which are normal, independent with the mean '0' and variance ' σ^2 '.

Table 5.6

Determinants of Vicious Circle of Bondage of Brick Kiln Workers: Multiple Linear Regression Model

S.No.	Variables	Sample		
		Male (n = 120)	Female (n = 120)	All (N = 240)
1.	Low Wage	0.09 (0.22)	0.05 (0.64)	0.04 (0.82)
2.	Type of Health Problem	0.40 * (3.88)	0.18 * (1.84)	0.19 * (3.36)
3.	No. of Days of Sickness	0.20 * (2.05)	0.37 * (3.68)	0.55 * (9.34)
4.	Net Income	- 0.092 (- 1.24)	- 0.005 (- 0.06)	- 0.09 (- 1.70)
5.	Debt from Brick Kiln	0.16 * (2.19)	0.8 (0.99)	0.12 * (2.17)
No. of cases		120	120	240
Adjusted R ²		0.38 *	0.24 *	0.30 *
F – Statistics		16.04 *	8.83 *	21.65 *

Source: Calculated

Note: Figures in parentheses are t values, * represent significance at 5 percent level

According to the results of the analysis, types of health problem (3.36), number of days of sickness (9.34) and debt from brick kiln industry (2.17) are found statistically significant in the

study regions. It is similar to both male and female respondents of the surveyed region. Results of the MLRM prove the hypothesis and confirm the vicious circle of debt bondage in brick kiln industry.

At this juncture, hard work in brick kiln industry, skipping food during working hours and tobacco and alcohol addiction adversely affect the health status of the workers through normal, severe and serious health issues. This phenomenon adversely affects the productivity and earning capacity of the workers and forced them to obtain another package of advance or loan from the brick kiln owner. Under these circumstances, brick kiln workers are in a position to face the unexpected and unavailable expenditures such as marriage, death, and others. For these purposes, brick kiln workers depend on the brick kiln owner for loan and advance. Finally, the brick kiln workers have to be in the vicious circle of debt bondage. The same trend could be noticed for male workers also. However, types of health problem (1.84) and a number of days of sickness (1.84) are the major factors responsible to keep the female workers in the vicious circle of debt bondage.

In this context, due to hard work in the brick kiln and insufficient nutrition female workers suffered different types of health issues and it adversely affects the loan repayment capacity. The connectivity between the above-mentioned parameters keeps the female workers in the vicious circle of bondage. As a whole, the framed hypothesis is proved that both male and female workers of brick kiln workers are facing the problem of the vicious circle of debt bondage of the brick kiln industry.

Estimated 'F' values (Male: 16.04, Female: 8.83, All: 21.65) and adjusted R-square values (Male: 0.38, Female: 0.24, All: 0.30) are significant at 5 percent level for the years of experience in brick kiln work.

The results and inference of the hypothesis strongly support the Sen's ideology of "*Entitlements Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*" (Sen, 1981). His ideology explains that exchange entitlements failure leads to poverty and deprivation. In order to explain the connectivity between the factors, Sen has used concepts of endowments and entitlements and exchange of entitlements. The term endowment refers to the tangible and intangible resources owned by the worker and entitlements refers to the social reorganization and legal approval for the ownership of different sorts of endowments. Exchange of entitlements refers to the exchange of the legally entitled endowments in the market and obtains the wage or necessary items. Whenever the exchange of entitlements has failed, the immediate outcome is poverty and famine.

In case of migrated workers who are all working in brick kiln industry, the major reason for the migration and selection of brick kiln industry is an exchange of entitlements failure. In their

village, the workers were ready to work and they were ready to exchange their legally entitled endowments and there was no person to the agent to accept their endowment and give a wage or other sort of income to the workers. This exchange entitlements failure badly affects their saving capacity and forces them to obtain a loan from their neighbors and relatives to meet out the daily needs. Finally, non-availability of employment and debt burden force them to search for a new job which can solve their immediate economic problems.

Conclusion

At this juncture, brick kiln industry offers the attractive job package which includes advance payment and loan. It is well appreciated and wholeheartedly invited and accepted by the brick kiln workers and finally trapped too in the vicious circle of debt bondage of brick kiln industry. Of the surveyed respondents, near to 60 percent of the respondents are second generation workers of the brick kiln industry. It confirms the existence of vicious circle of debt bondage in the brick kiln industry in the study region.

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