

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CASHEW INDUSTRIES

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Cashew was introduced into India four centuries ago by the Portuguese who came to the sunny sands of the West Coast of India bringing with them Cashew. A recent statistics shows that in India Cashew is cultivated in 7.2 lakh hectares of land with an annual production of 45 lakh metric tonnes, exported 89155 MT of cashew kernels valued at Rs. 2.49.60 crores and 2246 MT of Cashew nut shell liquid valued at Rs. 3.89 crores. Among the agricultural commodities exported from India, cashew held the third position contributing 0.93% to the total earnings of the country. India is the largest producer, processor and exporter of cashew nut in the world.

According to Kamala Nath, Economic development in any underdeveloped country will always remain a far cry from reality as long as women are not allowed to play an active role in the task of nation building. She adds that it is absolutely essential to allow the women folk to take up innovative and administrative jobs in industries and business undertakings. They are enterprising and dynamic as their male counterparts.

The cashew nut industry in India has opened up vast employment opportunities for women to the extent of 90%. In Kanyakumari district there are about 900 cashew industries are functioning by providing employment opportunities to nearly 75000 people. Industrial backwardness, thick population and unemployment problems are the major reasons for the development cashew industries in the district. Before being got ready for export or market, it has to undergo many processes both by manual and through machines. Cashew Kernel which is obtained from cashew nut, a popular dry fruit is sweet and delightful in taste. It is a valuable food both for physical and mental health. It is a complete nourishing diet and a suitable food medicine for several ailments. It is also a good source of riboflavin which keeps the body active, gay and energetic. It is being rich in iron is good for anemia. The survey among hundred women workers working in cashew industries in Kanyakumari District reveals the following.

Out of the total sample respondents, 94% belong to the age group of below 50, the literacy rate is very low to the maximum of 11th standard, 54% are unmarried, and 97% are able to earn an income below Rs. 3000. The family background of the sample respondents reveal that 55% are depending only on the wages earned by them through this job but for 45%, there are some other sources also like property income, business and interest from investment. Out of them 83% have the experiences of less than 10 years and 17% have the same above 10 years.

Job Satisfaction

The survey shows that 28% of the sample respondents feel that their superiors are caring, for 41%, they are rough and for 31% they are neutral. The opinion in connection with the satisfaction in their working place reveals that for 34%, it is excellent, 54% just satisfied and for the rest 12% their satisfaction level is neutral which means they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Hence, the satisfaction level is good as 88% got satisfaction. A comparative analysis has been attempted to find the factors which influence the satisfaction of the women workers in their working place with the help of Yule's coefficient of association test. The formula used in this purpose is

$$Q = \frac{(AB)(\alpha\beta) - (A\beta)(\alpha B)}{(AB)(\alpha\beta) + (A\beta)(\alpha B)}$$

Table 1
Association of Factors influencing Job Satisfaction

No.	Factors	Q Value	Rank
1.	Age	0.48	IV
2.	Qualification	-0.09	X
3.	Family Size	0.09	IX
4.	Income	0.80	I
5.	Number of Earning Members	0.59	III
6.	Experience	0.43	V
7.	Source of income	0.12	VIII
8.	Nature of Payment	0.22	VII
9.	Marital Status	0.40	VI
10.	Attitude of Superious	0.68	II

Source : Primary Survey

As per the result of the test undertaken, it is known that their satisfaction is high due to income (.80), which is followed by attitude of the superiors (.68), age (.48), experience in the job (.43), marital status (.40), nature of payment (.022), other source of income (.12), family size (.09) and then by qualification (-.09) which has a negative effect.

Impact of Employment

The true effectiveness of any activity can be measured with help of its impact on the lives of the people. The impact may be monetary or non monetary. Monetary benefits are otherwise known as economic impact. It means the improvement of income, expenditure, savings, personal investment and business investment which paves the way to improve their standard of living. The overall impact is measured with the help of paired sign test through the formula:

$$Z = \frac{X - np}{\sqrt{npq}}$$

Table 2 :
Overall Impact through Employment

Factors	Number of Persons improved	Calculated value of Z
Income	100	10
Expenditure	58	3.36
Loan repayment	52	3.35
Savings	45	2.12
Assets	41	2.9
Livestock	39	2.03

Source : Primary Survey

Table value of Z at 5% 1.96

From the ongoing analysis, it is apparent that the sample respondents are able to improve in all the selected aspects. The hypotheses taken in this regard are significant in the chosen factors like income, expenditure, repayment of loan, savings, procurement of assets and livestock.

Whatever may be the problems they encountered in the working place like health hazards, long hours of work, denial of basic facilities, low wages, uncertainty of job and the like factors, they do have some positive aspects without them they may not be able run their family and can lead a peaceful life. Their opinion regarding the benefits they derived from the job is given below after assigning proper weights.

Table 3 :
Benefits derived from the job

Reasons	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	Total	Rank
Weights	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1		
Time utilization	40	252	64	140	66	60	16	15	10	3	666	I
Able to save	60	63	40	63	102	65	88	21	16	6	524	VIII
Independent	20	135	88	105	126	45	56	15	6	5	601	III
Economic freedom	90	63	96	105	24	65	20	36	28	9	536	VII
Recognition	210	36	104	21	30	90	12	54	12	9	578	V
Self confident	190	63	104	77	90	50	36	27	10	2	649	II
Able to run the famoly	190	27	16	91	42	25	72	57	18	5	543	VI
Educate the children	80	297	128	63	18	10	12	36	44	2	600	IV
Easy Decisions	40	18	96	14	66	30	36	30	48	20	398	X
Good fellowship	80	36	64	21	36	60	52	9	8	39	405	IX
Total	1000	900	800	700	600	500	400	300	200	100	5500	

Source : Primary Survey

It is clear that the benefits derived out of their employment are proper utilization of time, self confident independency, able to educate the children, recognition in the society, able to run the family well, economic freedom, able to save, good fellowship and then able to take decision.

Conclusion

The importance of cashew industry in the economic development of India economy lies on the fact that it is a winner of foreign exchange. In Kanyakumari District the Cashew industries give employment opportunities to nearly 75000 of the women folk with different age groups and backgrounds. It provides greater opportunities for the women to get empowered through their gainful employment. The sample workers are satisfied with their work and none is reported negatively. Their satisfaction level are influenced by various factors mostly by monetary factors. Regarding the problems faced by them, they do have certain minor problems but when compared to the benefits derived by them out of the job they are being very less. If the problems are properly rectified, their lives can be enriched some more and can bring more satisfaction in their work and thus result in more profitable business to the employers and also can contribute a lot to the nations' economy as a whole.

Suggestions

- Labourers who handle kernels should be provided with adequate facilities like gloves, masks, adequate number of cloths, washing allowances etc.
- The primitive methods of cashew processing methods can be replaced by modern methods so that the work can be made easier and also helps a lot for the women folk to get rid of various diseases.
- Since there is good scope for production and marketability of cashew in Kanyakumari District, due care can be taken by the agricultural department to improve the crop pattern and productivity.
- Special subsidy measures can be imparted to induce and to increase the cultivation of cashew throughout the district to get the full benefits out of them.
- The study shows that only women with low literacy level prefer this job. More awareness can be imparted among the educated unemployed women to get involved in this most productive and profitable venture so that their lives can be more enriched.
- Good roofing facilities can be provided with strong buildings in the working place so that the workers can be protected from accidents due to natural calamities.

References

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