

## **An In-depth Exploration of Working Conditions and Educational Challenges Faced by Female Beedi Workers in Murshidabad District of West Bengal, India**

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***ABSTRACT:** This research paper explores into the work environment and educational challenges confronted by female beedi workers in Murshidabad District, West Bengal, India. Through a qualitative research approach, this study aimed to uncover the hidden realities experienced by this marginalized group and propose some strategies that can enhance their work environment and educational conditions. The primary data for this study were collected from 187 participants selected through homogenous purposive sampling from the Suti-II block and Samserganj block of Murshidabad district, West Bengal, India. Semi-structured interviews and semi-structured questionnaires were utilized by the researcher to gather the relevant data. Qualitative data analysis techniques, including thematic analysis, sentiment analysis using Python programming language, and descriptive statistical treatment were employed to analyze the collected data by the researcher. Ethical considerations were strictly followed, ensuring informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants. The findings of this study will shed light on the specific challenges faced by female beedi workers and offer recommendations that can bring about positive changes in their work environment and educational challenges.*

***Keyword:** Beedi workers, Marginalized Group, India, Work environment, Educational Challenges.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The work environment and educational conditions of female beedi workers have long been subject to various challenges and adversities. Beedi workers, predominantly women from marginalized communities, face multiple hardships that impact their well-being, productivity, and overall quality of life (Mathew, 2015). These challenges include exploitative labour practices, inadequate access to education and training opportunities, health risks associated with beedi rolling, and social and economic disparities.

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According to recent data, the beedi industry employs over two million workers in India alone, with approximately 80% of them being women (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2021). These female beedi workers are often trapped in a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities, making it crucial to address their unique challenges. Studies indicate that nearly 90% of beedi workers earn less than the minimum wage, perpetuating their socio-economic disadvantages. Moreover, educational conditions among female beedi workers are highly inadequate. The National Sample Survey reports that only 24% of female beedi workers have received any formal education, significantly lower than the national average of 65% for women in India (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2017). This lack of educational opportunities further perpetuates their socio-economic disadvantages and restricts their ability to escape the cycle of adversity. In light of these alarming statistics, it is imperative to explore innovative approaches to improve the work environment and educational conditions of female beedi workers.

The consequences of the adverse work environment and inadequate educational conditions for female beedi workers are far-reaching. They experience adverse health effects due to prolonged exposure to tobacco, with studies linking beedi rolling to a higher prevalence of respiratory ailments, musculoskeletal disorders, and eye-related issues (Singh et al., 2019). Furthermore, the lack of access to education limits their potential for skill development, financial independence, and upward mobility. Improving the work environment and educational conditions of female beedi workers has wide-ranging implications. Not only does it directly impact the lives of these workers, but it also contributes to larger societal goals such as gender equality, poverty alleviation, and inclusive economic development (Bapat et. al., 2022). Enhancing the conditions and prospects of female beedi workers can lead to improved health outcomes, increased income opportunities, and greater social mobility for them and their families. Related to all this, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the challenges faced by female Beedi workers and provide insights into innovative approaches to addressing these challenges. The results of this research could have important implications for improving the working conditions and educational opportunities of female beedi workers in Murshidabad district of West Bengal, India.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES**

The mentioned research studies collectively provide valuable insights into different aspects of the beedi industry in India, particularly concerning the

socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by beedi workers. Murugan and other coresearchers (Murugan et al., 2014) specifically focused on the socio-economic conditions of female beedi workers in Karugamputhur Village, Vellore District, aiming to understand their working conditions and shed light on the challenges faced by vulnerable segments of the labor force, particularly women and children. Ananya Chakraborty's study (Chakraborty, 2013) further contributes to the understanding of the beedi industry, emphasizing the significance of beedi bundling as a primary source of employment for rural communities, particularly in the Char areas of Bhagawangola-II Block, Murshidabad District, West Bengal. This study highlights the dual role of women as both household caretakers and beedi bundlers, enabling them to support their families. Anant Hudengaje's comprehensive study (Hudengaje, 2006) adds to the body of knowledge by examining the broader landscape of beedi laborers in India. Findings of this study reveal that 14 major states have a considerable number of beedi workers, while the availability of alternative products like Gutkha impacts beedi manufacturing activity. This study also identifies regional variations in payment rates, inadequate basic infrastructure, and inconsistent wages, which contribute to the challenges faced by beedi workers and often lead to worker migration. Kuruvila and other coresearchers (Kuruvila et al., 2002) explore into the occupational hazards faced by beedi workers, particularly in Karnataka. This research highlights dermatological observations such as callosities, nail changes, fungal infections, and localized nail changes, which are attributed to the use of scissors for cutting leaves and the use of gum and artificial metallic nails in the beedi rolling process. On the other side, Waman and other coresearchers (Waman et al., 2001) bring attention to the beedi manufacturing sector in Maharashtra, addressing various issues arising from the exploitation of women workers in the industry. This study sheds light on economic, familial, health, and social concerns, along with problems related to amenities and benefits.

Collectively, these studies contribute to understanding of the several issues faced by beedi workers, encompassing socio-economic conditions, occupational hazards, exploitation, and the broader implications for their well-being. But one of the most significant findings of these research is that the majority of them have focused on male employees in the beedi industry, with just a few studies attempting to examine both male and female workers together. And after reviewing these studies researcher unable to locate research which will tell the working conditions and educational conditions of female beedi workers in Suti II block and Samsanganj block of Murshidabad district in qualitative nature.

### **3. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Building upon the comprehensive analysis of previous research studies, this study aims to further investigate the work environment and educational challenges encountered by female beedi workers in Murshidabad District, West Bengal, India. The research title, “An In-depth Exploration of Work Environment and Educational Challenges Faced by Female Beedi Workers in Murshidabad District, West Bengal, India,” underscores the researcher’s dedication to thoroughly examining and analyzing a wide range of factors pertaining to the educational opportunities and working conditions experienced by these workers.

### **4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Based on the research paper title “An In-depth Exploration of Work Environment and Educational Challenges Faced by Female Beedi Workers in Murshidabad District, West Bengal, India,” some potential research objectives are included and followed by the researcher;

1. To explore the current demographic status of the female beedi workers in the study area.
2. To identify the current challenges and adversities faced by female beedi workers in their work environment and educational conditions.
3. To suggest the potential solutions to improving the work environment and educational conditions of female beedi workers.

### **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

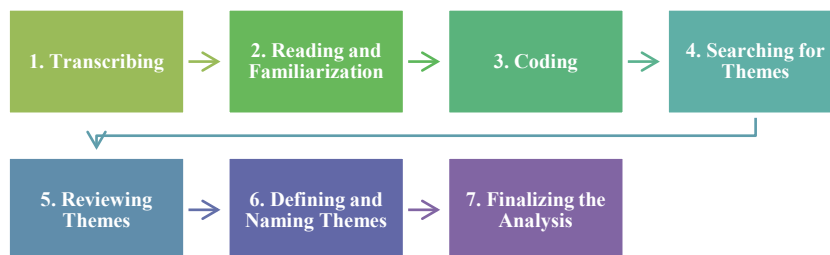
This study employed a qualitative research approach (Sandelowski, 2000) to explore the work-oriented challenges and educational conditions, and suggest a creative approach to improving the work environment and educational conditions of female Beedi workers. Here researcher focused on female Beedi workers for the primary data. Primary data collection was conducted through semi-structured interview sessions and semi-structured interview questionnaires. The researcher also collected secondary data from various sources, such as government reports and academic publications, to provide context and background information for the study.

**Table 1:** Location-wise participants’ number

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Study Area</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Total number of participants (n = 187)	Suti-II block	103	55.09 %
	Samsrganj block	84	44.91 %

In this research study, a total of 187 participants were involved selected through homogenous purposive sampling (Etikan et. al., 2016). The participants were divided into two groups based on their geographical location: Suti-II block and Samsorganj block. Suti-II block and Samsorganj block, situated within the Murshidabad district of West Bengal, have been specifically chosen by the researcher as the study areas. The Suti-II block consisted of 103 participants, on the other hand, the Samsorganj block included 84 participants.

The collected data was then analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods, including thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012), python programming language for sentiment analysis (Shah, 2020), and descriptive statistical treatment (Chan et. al., 2016). For this qualitative research, researcher followed the ‘Braun and Clarke; 2013’ Guidelines for Thematic Data Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) where researcher follows the Seven-Steps Approach to generating the Themes which is mentioned below with a workflow chart:



**Figure 1:** Braun and Clarke; 2013 Steps for Thematic Data Analysis

Beside these; here in this research, researcher used Python 3.9 Programming Language with TextBlob Python Library for Sentiment Analysis to measure the sentiment level of the female beedi workers. Here researcher employed the following commands from the Python TextBlob Library to conduct Sentiment Analysis in this study:

**Table 2:** TextBlob library coding commands for sentiment analysis

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In [1] : from textblob import TextBlob
>>>Participant Name= TextBlob("Statement/Response/Answer of the Participant")
>>> ParticipantName.sentiment
  
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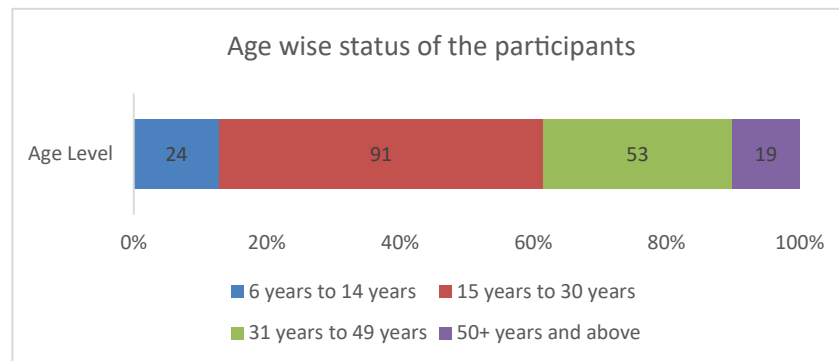
Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Data Analysis Pertaining to the Research Objective 1

**Table 3:** Age wise status of the participants

Age level	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )	Percentage
6 years to 14 years	24	12.8 %
15 years to 30 years	91	48.7 %
31 years to 49 years	53	28.3 %
50+ years and above	19	10.2 %

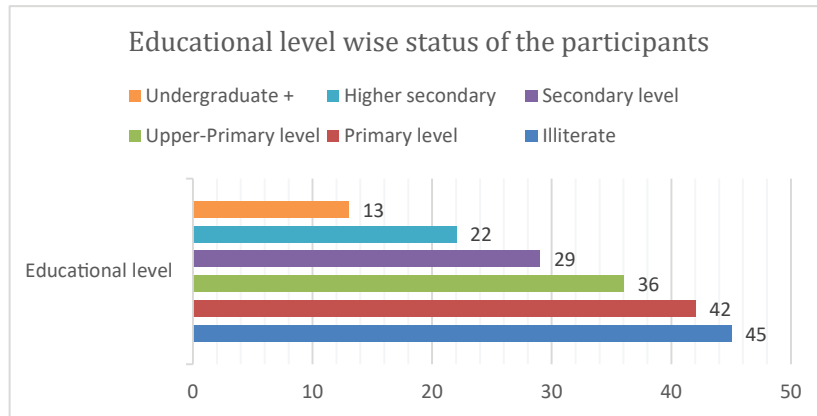


**Figure 2:** Age wise status of the participants

Among the 187 participants, the age distribution revealed that 24 individuals fell into the 6 to 14 years age group, accounting for approximately 12.8% of the total sample. The age group of 15 to 30 years had the highest representation, with 91 participants, making up around 48.7% of the sample. The 31 to 49 years age group comprised 53 participants, representing 28.3% of the sample, while individuals aged 50 years and above constituted 19 participants, amounting to roughly 10.2% of the total sample.

**Table 4:** Educational level wise status of the participants

Educational level	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )	Percentage
Illiterate	45	24 %
Primary level	42	22.5 %
Upper-Primary level	36	19.3 %
Secondary level	29	15.5 %
Higher secondary	22	11.8 %
Undergraduate +	13	7 %

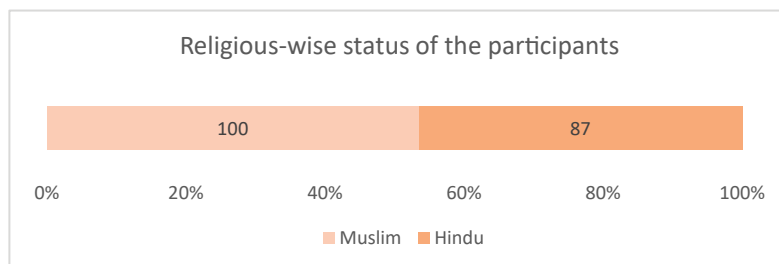


**Figure 3:** Educational level wise status of the participants

Considering the educational levels of the participants, the frequency distribution indicated that a significant portion of the sample consisted of illiterate individuals, with 45 participants, representing approximately 24% of the total. Participants with a primary level of education numbered 42, accounting for around 22.5% of the sample. The upper-primary level group comprised 36 participants, representing 19.3% of the sample. Those with a secondary level of education accounted for 29 participants, making up approximately 15.5% of the sample. Participants who had completed higher secondary education amounted to 22 individuals, representing 11.8% of the sample. Finally, individuals with an undergraduate level of education or beyond totaled 13, accounting for around 7% of the sample.

**Table 5:** Religious-wise status of the participants

Religion	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )	Percentage
Muslim	100	53.5%
Hindu	87	46.5%



**Figure 4:** Religious-wise status of the participants

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Table 5 demonstrates that the majority of participants, comprising 100 individuals or 53.5% of the total, belong to the Muslim community. Hindus represent the second-largest group, with 87 participants or 46.5% of the total.

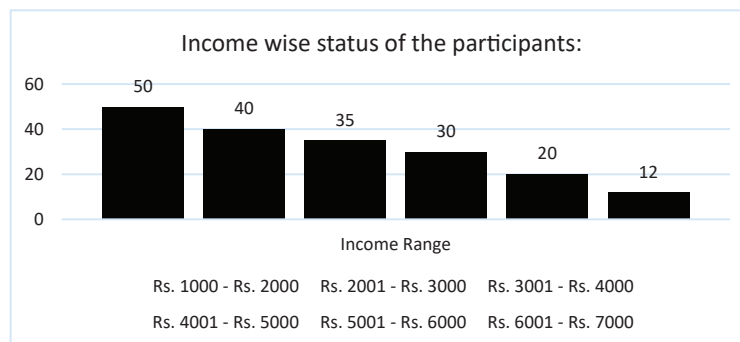
**Table 6:** Caste category wise status of the participants

<b>Caste Category</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
General	75	40.1%
OBC-A	55	29.41%
OBC-B	30	16.04%
SC	25	13.37%
ST	2	1.07%

Among the 187 participants, the distribution based on category revealed that the majority of participants belonged to the General category with 75 participants, accounting for 40.1% of the total. Following that, the OBC-A category had 55 participants (29.41%), the OBC-B category had 30 participants (16.04%), the SC category had 25 participants (13.37%), and the ST category had 2 participants (1.07%). This breakdown provides insights into the representation of different categories within the participant pool.

**Table 7:** Income wise status of the participants

<b>Income Range</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Rs. 1000 - Rs. 2000	50	26.7%
Rs. 2001 - Rs. 3000	40	21.4%
Rs. 3001 - Rs. 4000	35	18.7%
Rs. 4001 - Rs. 5000	30	16.0%
Rs. 5001 - Rs. 6000	20	10.7%
Rs. 6001 - Rs. 7000	12	6.4%



**Figure 6:** Income wise status of the participants

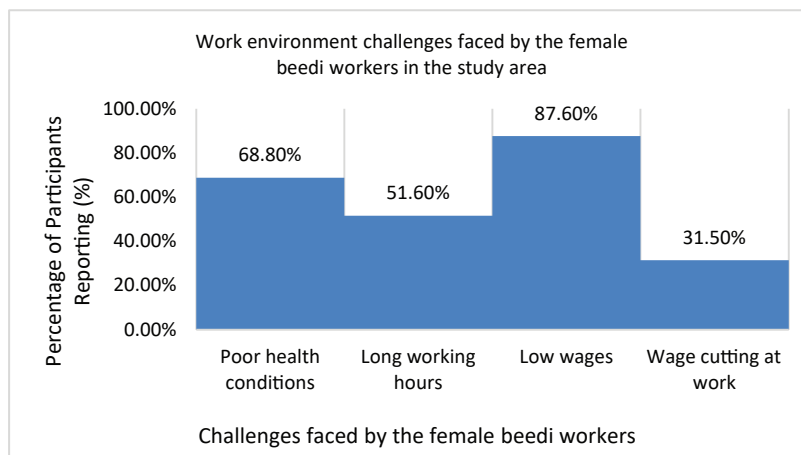
Regarding the income distribution among the participants, the majority fell within the income range of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 2000, with 50 participants, making up 26.7% of the total. The next highest income range was Rs. 2001 to Rs. 3000, which had 40 participants (21.4%). The Rs. 3001 to Rs. 4000 income range had 35 participants (18.7%), while Rs. 4001 to Rs. 5000 had 30 participants (16.0%). Participants in the income ranges of Rs. 5001 to Rs. 6000 and Rs. 6001 to Rs. 7000 accounted for 10.7% (20 participants) and 6.4% (12 participants) respectively.

**6.2. Data Analysis Pertaining to the Research Objective 2**

The study aimed to identify the challenges and adversities faced by female Beedi workers in their work environment and educational conditions. The study involved a total of 187 female Beedi workers. The findings of the study showed that a significant percentage of the participants reported facing challenges in their work environment and educational conditions.

**Table 8:** Work environment challenges faced by the female beedi workers

Challenges	Percentage of Participants Reporting	Frequency (f)
Poor health conditions	68.8%	128
Long working hours	51.6%	96
Low wages	87.6%	162
Wage cutting at work	31.5%	58



**Figure 7:** Work environment challenges faced by the female beedi workers in the study area

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In the context of work environment challenges, a substantial majority of the participants, comprising 82.3%, reported encountering various obstacles in their work settings. Among the range of challenges expressed, poor health conditions emerged as the most frequently cited concern, with a significant proportion of respondents, specifically 68.8%, highlighting this issue. This finding underscores the pressing need to address the prevalent health risks faced by female beedi workers.

In addition to health-related difficulties, a considerable number of participants indicated the presence of other formidable challenges within their work environment. Long working hours were identified as a significant concern, with 51.6% of respondents reporting this as a hindrance to their well-being. This aspect highlights the strenuous nature of their work and the potential adverse impact on their overall work-life balance.

Furthermore, a strikingly high percentage of respondents, reaching 87.6%, expressed dissatisfaction with their wages, emphasizing the prevailing issue of inadequate compensation within the beedi industry. The disparity between the effort invested and the remuneration received is a critical factor that perpetuates the cycle of adversity for female beedi workers.

Another noteworthy challenge identified by a considerable portion of participants, accounting for 31.5%, was the occurrence of wage cutting at work. This practice further exacerbates the financial strain experienced by these workers, compounding the existing difficulties they face.

**Table 9:** Educational challenges faced by the female beedi workers

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants Reporting</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Lack of access to education	76.3%	142
Financial constraints	81.3%	151
Lack of support from family	32.5%	59

In the field of educational challenges faced by female Beedi workers, a significant proportion of participants, precisely 64.6%, reported encountering various obstacles hindering their educational pursuits. Among these challenges, the most commonly cited concern was the lack of access to education, which was reported by a substantial 76.3% of the participants. This finding underscores the critical issue of restricted educational opportunities faced by female beedi workers, which acts as a major deterrent to their personal and professional development.

Furthermore, financial constraints emerged as a pervasive challenge, affecting a staggering 81.3% of the participants. The economic hardships faced by these workers significantly impede their ability to invest in their education, further exacerbating the cycle of adversity they experience. It is important to acknowledge the adverse impact of financial limitations on the educational aspirations of female beedi workers and the subsequent implications for their overall well-being and prospects for upward mobility.

Another notable challenge mentioned by a notable 32.5% of the participants was the lack of support from their families. This lack of familial support not only adds to the existing burdens faced by female beedi workers but also underscores the societal barriers and gendered norms that contribute to the perpetuation of their disadvantaged status. The absence of familial encouragement and assistance poses significant hurdles for these workers in their pursuit of education, reinforcing the urgency to address the multifaceted challenges they encounter.

**Table 10:** Health related problems faced by the female beedi workers

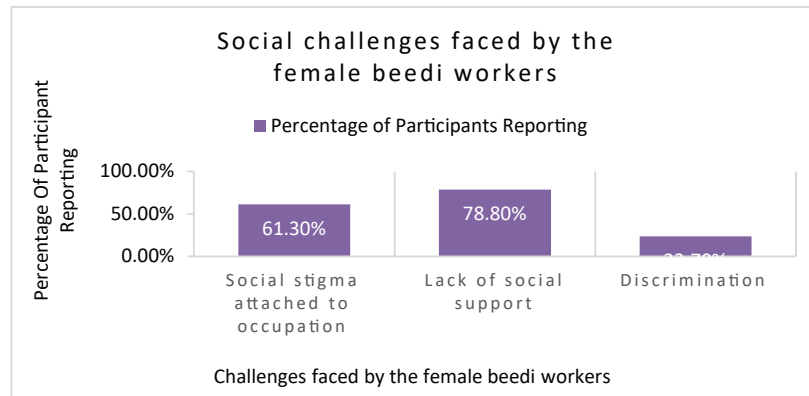
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants Reporting</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Respiratory problems	41.9%	76
Eye problems	24.5%	44
Back pain	67.7%	125

In the field of health challenges, a significant proportion of the participants, accounting for 56.8%, candidly acknowledged encountering various health issues directly attributed to their work environment. The prevalence of respiratory problems stood out prominently as the most frequently reported health challenge, with a substantial 41.9% of participants confirming its presence. Eye problems emerged as the subsequent concern, accounting for 24.5% of the reported challenges, while a considerable 67.7% of participants experienced the discomfort of back pain. These findings underscore the pressing necessity to enhance the health and safety measures within the work environment, as they expose the detrimental consequences of substandard conditions on the well-being of female beedi workers.

**Table 11:** Social challenges faced by the female beedi workers

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants Reporting</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>
Social stigma attached to occupation	61.3%	114
Lack of social support	78.8%	145
Discrimination	23.7%	43

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**Figure 10:** Social challenges faced by the female beedi workers

In the field of social challenges, a significant proportion of the participants (48.7%) in this study reported encountering various obstacles stemming from their work environment. Notably, the most prevalent social challenge was the social stigma attached to their occupation, as reported by 61.3% of the participants.

This finding shed light on the prevailing negative societal perceptions and stereotypes that contribute to the marginalization and discrimination faced by female beedi workers. Additionally, a substantial majority of participants (78.8%) expressed a dearth of social support, indicating a lack of networks and resources available to them for assistance and guidance. Furthermore, a noteworthy 23.7% of participants reported instances of discrimination, further highlighting the presence of biased treatment and prejudice experienced by these women within their social and professional spheres.

The manifestation of these social challenges underscores the imperative to address and rectify the prevailing social attitudes and biases towards female beedi workers. By dismantling the stereotypes, fostering inclusive social support systems, and advocating for equal treatment and opportunities, we can strive towards creating a more equitable and empowering environment for these women.

**Table 12:** Female beedi workers' sentiment towards their profession

Block (Unit)	Sentiment towards the job satisfaction		
	Polarity (Average)	Subjective (Average)	Sentiment Level
Suti II	- 0.193	0.66	Negative (-)
Samserganj	- 0.247	0.411	Negative (-)

The data presented in the table 12 demonstrate that participants involved in the occupation of beedi rolling exhibit a lack of positive sentiment and a diminished inclination to continue working in this profession.

Notably, the level of negative sentiment expressed by female beedi workers towards beedi rolling surpasses the level of positive sentiment observed in the Samsanganj block and Suti-II block. Specifically, the average polarity scores in these blocks indicate values of -0.193 and -0.247, respectively, revealing a prevalent negative sentiment among the participants towards their profession. This noteworthy finding is further supported by the total subjective average scores of 0.66 and 0.411 for the Samsanganj block and Suti-II block, respectively.

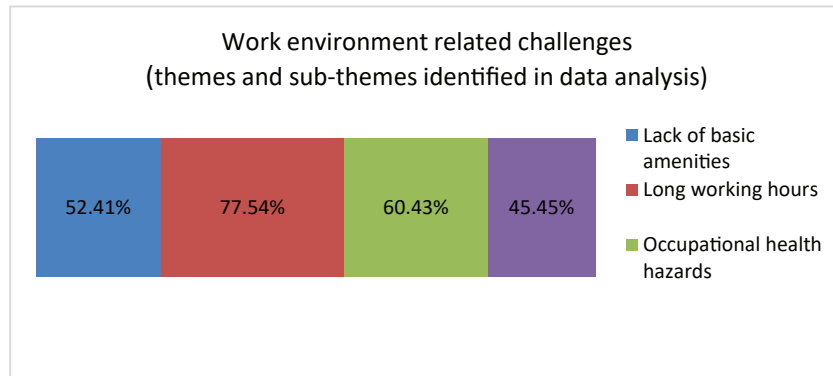
**Table 13:** Work and education related challenges  
(in the form of themes and sub-themes)

Themes	Sub-themes	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Work Environment Challenges</b>	Lack of basic amenities	98	52.41%
	Long working hours	145	77.54%
	Occupational health hazards	113	60.43%
	Lack of safety measures	85	45.45%
<b>Educational Conditions Challenges</b>	Lack of access to formal education	120	64.17%
	Limited educational opportunities	82	43.85%
	Financial constraints	95	50.80%
	Illiteracy and lack of awareness	65	34.76%
	Discrimination and gender biases	112	59.89%
2 Themes	10 Sub-Themes	n = 187	

Descriptive statistics were calculated to provide an overview of the frequencies and percentages of themes and sub-themes identified in the data analysis. The analysis of table 13 focused on identifying the themes and sub-themes related to the current challenges and adversities faced by female Beedi workers in their work environment and educational conditions.

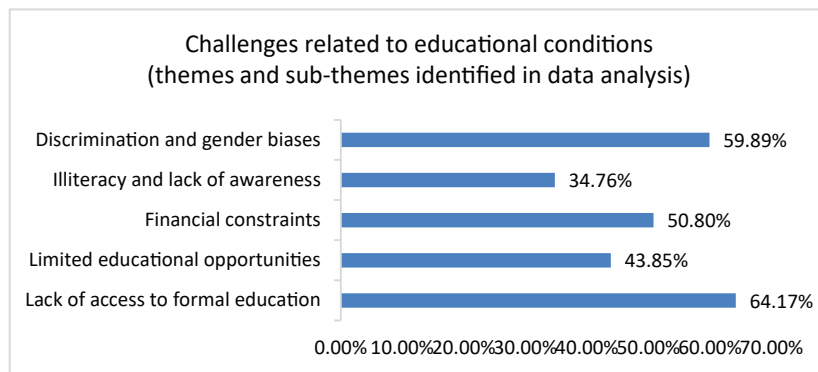
Table 13 presents the themes and sub-themes along with the descriptive statistics. In the work environment challenges, the sub-theme “*Lack of basic amenities*” was reported by 52.41% (98 participants) of the sample. On the other side “*Long working hours*” were mentioned by 77.54% (145 participants). “*Occupational health hazards*” were reported by 60.43% (113 participants), and “*Lack of safety measures*” were identified by 45.45% (85 participants).

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**Figure 12:** Work environment related challenges (themes and sub-themes identified in data analysis)

For educational conditions challenges, “*Lack of access to formal education*” was mentioned by 64.17% (120 participants). “*Limited educational opportunities*” were reported by 43.85% (82 participants), while “*Financial constraints*” were highlighted by 50.80% (95 participants). “*Illiteracy and lack of awareness*” were identified by 34.76% (65 participants), and “*Discrimination and gender biases*” were reported by 59.89% (112 participants).



**Figure 13:** Challenges related to educational conditions (themes and sub-themes identified in data analysis)

These thematic findings and outputs provide a qualitative summary of the prevalence of various challenges and adversities faced by female beedi workers in their work environment and educational conditions, offering valuable insights into the data analysis results.

## 7. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this section, researchers discuss the research findings in two parts. ‘Section – A’ focuses on the findings of first research objective, while ‘Section B’ focuses on the findings of second research objective.

### (Section – A)

When examining the age distribution, it is evident that the majority of participants fall within the age group of 15 to 30 years, comprising nearly half of the participants. This finding suggests that the study primarily attracted young adults, possibly indicating a higher level of interest or availability within this age range.

Regarding educational levels, the data reveals a diverse representation among the participants. Notably, a substantial proportion of the sample consisted of individuals with limited or no formal education, such as illiterate and primary-educated participants. This observation raises questions about the accessibility of education and potential disparities in educational opportunities within the studied population.

Religious affiliation is another important aspect highlighted in the data analysis. The Muslim community comprises the largest group among the participants, with more than half of the total sample. This finding suggests that the study attracted a higher proportion of individuals from the Muslim community compared to other religious groups, and it may be indicative of the demographic composition of the region or target population under investigation. On the other side, when try to understand the breakdown based on category provides insights into the representation of different social categories within the participant pool. The General category holds the highest representation, accounting for more than two-fifths of the total participants. This suggests that individuals from the General category are more likely to participate in the study, potentially reflecting their greater presence in the overall population.

Examining the income distribution among the participants reveals that a significant proportion falls within the lower income ranges, particularly the range of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 3000. This implies that the study attracted a substantial number of individuals from lower-income backgrounds.

### (Section – B)

A substantial majority of participants reported encountering obstacles in their work settings, highlighting the pervasive nature of these challenges.

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Poor health conditions emerged as a prominent concern, reflecting the adverse impact on the well-being of female beedi workers. The mention of long working hours points to the strenuous nature of their work and its potential impact on work-life balance. The dissatisfaction with wages highlights the discrepancy between effort invested and compensation received. The occurrence of wage cutting further exacerbates the financial strain experienced by these workers.

Participants faced various obstacles in their educational pursuits, indicating the presence of barriers that hinder their personal and professional development. Lack of access to education emerged as a critical concern, limiting their opportunities for learning and growth. Financial constraints significantly impede their ability to invest in education, perpetuating the cycle of adversity. The lack of support from families adds to their burdens and underscores societal barriers and gendered norms that contribute to their disadvantaged status.

Participants reported encountering various health issues directly attributed to their work environments, highlighting the adverse consequences of substandard conditions. Respiratory problems, eye problems, and back pain were prevalent, indicating the need for improved health and safety measures. These health challenges affect the well-being and quality of life of female beedi workers.

Participants faced obstacles rooted in social dynamics, revealing the complex societal landscape within which they operate. Social stigma attached to their occupation and a lack of social support contribute to their marginalization and discrimination. Instances of discrimination further underscore biased treatment and prejudice within their social and professional spheres.

The sentiment expressed by female beedi workers towards beedi rolling was predominantly negative. This finding suggests a prevailing dissatisfaction or negative perception associated with their work. Understanding these sentiments can provide insights into the underlying issues that contribute to their experiences and shape their perspectives.

## **8. SOLUTIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS**

In the areas of Suti-II block and Samsrganj block in Murshidabad district, there are significant concerns about the education and working conditions of female beedi workers. These challenges call for practical and effective solutions to improve their working and educational situation. To address these issues, researchers suggest several interventions, which are potential solutions and strategies that can be implemented:

- i. *Educational Outreach Programs:* Develop and implement educational outreach programs specifically tailored to the needs of female beedi workers. These programs should focus on basic literacy, numeracy, and vocational training to enhance their employability and income-generating opportunities.
- ii. *Skill Development Initiatives:* Collaborate with local NGOs and educational institutions to provide skill development training in various trades and industries. By acquiring new skills, female beedi workers can explore alternative job opportunities beyond beedi-making, leading to better working conditions and higher incomes.
- iii. *Awareness Campaigns:* Conduct awareness campaigns to educate female beedi workers about their rights, workplace safety, and health measures. Empowering them with knowledge will enable them to demand fair wages and improved working conditions.
- iv. *Access to Healthcare:* Ensure access to healthcare facilities for female beedi workers, as they often face health challenges due to the nature of their work. Providing regular health check-ups and medical support will enhance their overall well-being and productivity.
- v. *Microfinance and Self-Help Groups:* Establish microfinance initiatives and self-help groups to assist female beedi workers in saving money and accessing credit for small-scale entrepreneurial ventures. This will enable them to become economically independent and less reliant on exploitative labor practices.
- vi. *Collaborative Partnerships:* Foster partnerships between local cooperative banks, governmental bodies, and NGOs to create financial support systems for female beedi workers. Such partnerships can lead to better access to credit and resources for addressing educational and working challenges.
- vii. *Advocacy for Policy Reforms:* Engage in advocacy efforts at the regional and national level to push for policy reforms that protect the rights and welfare of female beedi workers. This includes advocating for fair wages, improved working conditions, and access to education for their children.
- viii. *Advocacy for increased wages:* Initiatives should be undertaken to advocate for fair and livable wages for female Beedi workers, ensuring that their remuneration aligns with the value of their labor and allows for dignified livelihoods.

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- ix. *Implementation of reasonable working hours:* Measures should be taken to establish and enforce regulations that limit working hours to reasonable levels, providing female Beedi workers with sufficient time for rest, leisure, and personal well-being.
- x. *Access to social security benefits:* Efforts should be made to extend social security benefits to female Beedi workers, including provisions for health insurance, retirement benefits, and other forms of financial protection, offering them a safety net in times of need.  
*Mitigation of workplace discrimination:* Robust policies and mechanisms must be established to combat gender-based discrimination within the workplace, ensuring equal opportunities for female Beedi workers in terms of remuneration, promotions, and career advancement.
- xi.

By combining these strategies and solutions, a comprehensive approach can be developed to empower female beedi workers, improve their working conditions, and enhance educational opportunities for themselves and their families in the Murshidabad District. This will ultimately lead to the upliftment of their socio-economic status and a brighter future for the community as a whole.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS**

“ What determines whether a society is strong and harmonious, or otherwise, is the role of women in it.” — Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (Shankar, n.d.)

The findings of this study shed light on the numerous challenges and adversities faced by female Beedi workers in their work environment and educational conditions. These challenges require collective action from various stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and private sectors, to create a supportive environment for female Beedi workers. By addressing the underlying issues, such as improving working conditions, access to education, health and safety measures, and social attitudes, we can empower and uplift female Beedi workers, contributing to their overall well-being and enabling them to overcome the barriers they face. . In this context, the implementation of the several solution-oriented initiatives at a local level, in collaboration with social, financial, and educational institutions, holds promise for female beedi workers. These collaborative initiatives-based approach, through coordinated efforts, can lead to increased motivation, improved job satisfaction, enhanced professional and educational opportunities, positive attitudes towards work and education, and greater educational engagement. Such initiatives can contribute to the

empowerment of female beedi workers and their advancement in society. The quote by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar emphasizes the pivotal role of women in determining the strength and harmony of a society (Shankar, n.d.). By recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by female Beedi workers, we can strive towards creating a society that values and supports women, thereby fostering strength and harmony in the broader social fabric.

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