CHAPTER VII

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter provides the summary and findings of the study and policy implications to develop the potential of the rural non-farm sector for employment and income generation of women labourers in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. The main objective of this study is to analyse the determinants of women employment in the non-farm sector. Further, it highlights different types of non-farm employment opportunities and magnitude of women labourers in non-farm sector of this district. The study also examines the problems of women labourers in the non-farm sector.

Kanyakumari District and various Records of District Industrial Centre, Nagercoil for the profile of non-farm sector in Kanyakumari district. Primary source of data are collected from women through interview schedules in the eight revenue villages of Kanyakumari district namely, Neendakarai (B), Thenkamputhoor, Azhakiapandipuram, Chenpakaramanputhoor, Thuckalay, Valvachagoastam, Killiyoor and Kollemcode. Among the various types of non-farm women labourers, 539 respondents have been selected and interviewed for the necessary information who are engaged in any one of the five non-farm activities such as manufacturing, food processing, business and services, construction activities and domestic service. Chi Square values are calculated to test the hypotheses.

The study consists of seven chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter which includes statement of the problem, need and importance of the study, its objectives and hypotheses, scope and limitations of the study. The second chapter reviews the previous studies related to non-farm sector and women employment. The third chapter presents the profile of Kanyakumari district and the profile of non-farm sector in this district. The fourth chapter deals with the methodology and application of research tools. The fifth chapter analyses factors determining the employment of women in non-farm sector in this district. Sixth chapter examines the problems of women labourers in both organised
and unorganised sectors. The last chapter reveals the findings, conclusions and suggestions.

The existing various types of employment opportunities in the non-farm sector in Kanyakumari district are grouped into agro-based industries and non-agro based industries. The agro-based employment generating industry are food processing units, arecanut seeval units, banana chips units, beekeeping, beverages units based on honey, condiments units (pickle), coconut based units, fruit preservation units, herbal medicines, lemon and ginger grass oils, tamarind seed starch units, cashew nut industry, tapioca starch units, palm leaf and fibre product units, rubber based industries, basket making units, korai mat units and handlooms. The non-agro based employment generating industries are mini paper mills, garment units, wood product units, leather product units, plastic product units, chemical and chemical product units, metal product units, transport equipment parts units, business services units, repairing services, construction units, quarry units, communication units, storage units, backsmith units and jewellery units. Looking at the activity-wise employment situation, it is found that the manufacturing units in the non-farm sector continue to absorb the highest number of women labourers. These units absorb most of the manpower in the non-farm sector.

To identify the influencing factors which are responsible for the participation of women labourers in the non-farm sector, the Non
Parametric Test “Chi Square” has been applied. For the analysis of the study, the various activities in the non-farm sector has been categorised into five major segments namely, manufacturing, food processing, business and services, construction activities and domestic service.

Age is a genuine factor in everyone’s life. Age factor not only gives experience but also determines the different needs and status of labourers. The study indicates that the number of women participation is high in the age group of 31 to 40, 41 to 50 and 51 to 60 in order to increase the family income, saving and maintain their standard of living. It is noted that after the age of 61, participation of women decreases due to their physical feebleness and increase in the number of new earning members in their own family. The study shows that there is a positive relationship between the age and the number of women participation in non-farm sector. The study also observes that women’s participation in piece work, casual work, and self-employment in the age group of 21 to 60 years is higher than in the age group of below 20 and above 60 years. This is due to the fact that women in these ages are physically and mentally unprepared for any kind of work. Thus age is one of the determining factors in influencing the participation of women labourers in non-farm sector.

The study shows that the caste of women plays an important role in choosing employment in the non-farm sector. The community
classification is decided by the caste system which prevails in the society. For the purpose of the analysis, women labourers have been classified into Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes, Most Backward Castes, Backward Castes and Forward Castes. It is vivid from the study that the number of women belonging to Backward Castes and Forward Castes participate in non-farm employment is higher than those belonging to Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes and Most Backward Castes. This is because, among the selected eight villages, majority of the respondents belong to Backward Castes. The study also reveals that most of the women participation in regular employment belong to Backward and Forward Castes. This is due to the fact that regular employment assures incentives, increment, bonus and other monetary benefits. These benefits are higher in regular employment than in piece work, casual and self employment. Hence, the variable caste is considered as an influencing factor in determining women participation in non-farm sector.

The study examines whether religion determines the participation of women labourers in non-farm employment. In Kanyakumari district all religious people like Christians, Hindus and Muslims participate in non-farm sector. They may choose any job according to their religious faith and opportunities available within their religious circle. The study shows that majority of the women labourers are Christian and Muslims constitute a mere minority. This is because the
ratio of Muslim respondents to respondents from other religion is low which reflects the demographic character of the study area. Moreover, the study observes that most of the Christian and Hindu women prefer regular employment and no Muslim works as casual labourer in the study area. It is concluded that religion has no influence on the participation of women labourers in the non-farm sector.

The study proves that education of women labourers plays a vital role in determining their participation in non-farm sector. Majority of the respondents are illiterates. It is noted that no graduate and technically qualified labourers participate in construction activities and domestic services whereas they are engaged both in other regular and self-employment activities. Regarding the nature of employment, the study observes that more illiterate and middle school level educated labourers are engaged in piece work. It is inferred that piece work is seasonal during festivals, school opening times and social functions. Therefore, these labourers are highly required as piece workers. At the same time, secondary level educated women prefer regular work while graduate labourers prefer both regular and self-employed work. Hence, it is concluded that higher the level of women education, lower the level of their participation in non-farm sector. The variable education and women participation have negative correlation. There is significant relationship between education and women participation in non-farm employment.
The study displays the relationship between marital status and women participation. Usually married women’s attitude, wants, desires and habits are different from those of unmarried women. The employment pattern differs from married to unmarried labourers. The married women have vital importance in the non-farm activities compared to those of other categories of unmarried, divorced and abandoned. Married women are with the desire to increase their family income and to work together with their husbands. It is noted that most heads of the families are tosspots and a part of their income is spent on drinking and smoking. Hence, the married women are pushed to engage in income generating activities. Moreover, widows are forced to seek employment in the non-farm sector because of loneliness. It is observed that both married and unmarried women prefer regular employment and piecework because economic benefit is high in both the options. Hence, it is concluded that significant relationship exists between marital status and women participation in non-farm sector. The variable marital status has been considered as an influencing factor which determines the employment in the non-farm activities.

The study examines the importance of the size of family in the determination on women employment in non-farm sector. Usually, when the size of family is large, their option for seeking employment in the non-farm sector will also be high. Logically, a person with a small family
is easier to take good care of the family. The study reveals that higher proportion of women participation is found in large family groups.

The chi-square test accepts the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the family size and the employment in the non-farm sector. Hence it is concluded that the family size is not a significantly influencing factor for the employment in the non-farm sector.

The size of land holding is the explanatory variable which influences the decision of women labourers to enter into different non-farm employment. The participation of women in non-farm sector varies with the size of land holding. It is observed from the study that the family holding small size of land does not depend on its land for income and employment while large land holders depend on their land for food, fuel, income and employment. It is noted that large land holdings encourage the family to work in their own land rather than seek employment in others land or non-farm sector. Moreover, women who have large size of land do not like to go for non-farm employment due to their family prestige and income. Besides, landless women and small landholders seek employment opportunities in the non-farm sector. The study proves that large land holding lowers the participation of labourers in the non-farm sector and vice versa. There exists inverse relationship between size of land holding and women participation. It is concluded that the variable size of land
holding has significant relationship with women participation in the non-farm employment.

There is a relationship between the income of family and women participation in non-farm activities. Income is a basic parameter for measuring economic phenomena. It determines one’s economic activity and it has a direct impact on the employment and so income is considered to be one of the factors. The study reveals that the participation of women from low income families is higher than women from high income families. It is because, women in low income families need more financial resources to meet the growing expenditure. At the same time, women in high income families are not willing to go to work and also their husbands do not allow them to take any economic activity. But a few of the high income groups are engaged in non-farm activities to spend their leisure time productively. It is seen that no woman of high income group is engaged as piece worker and casual labourer in the study area. They prefer regular and self-employment as skilled labourer, manager or supervisor. But low income labourers prefer regular employment due to job security and economic benefits. The study proves that the size of family income and participation of women in non-farm employment are negatively correlated. The study also reveals that there is a high degree of significance between family income and non-farm employment. It is stated
that the variable income has the influence over the employment in the non-farm sector.

Though, debt is a common phenomenon in human life, it will affect the employment pattern and the attitude towards employment also. Family debt is another important factor which influences the participation of women in non-farm sector. When debt is high, the urge for employment will be more. On the other hand, when the debt is low, the urge for employment option will be low. In fact, debt of a family induces the women to engage any type of economic activities in accordance with their academic qualification experience and availability of non-farm employment. The study observes that, the nature of employment has less importance in the women’s participation. The study reveals that there is no significant difference between the debt burden and the employment option in the non-farm sector. Hence, it is understood from the analysis that the variable debt has no significant influence over the participation of labourers in the non-farm sector.

Proximity to the work place is of great concern in both organised and unorganised employment. Distance of working unit influences the participation of women labourers. The selection of working unit by the employees mainly depends upon the nearness of the working place as they find it easy to reach and access after the completion of their family chores. The firms located far away from the home do not attract the
women labourers. Moreover, labourers can save both money and time when they work in nearby units. The study reveals that women give more preference to work in the nearby units. The nature of employment is a matter to be considered while studying the women’s participation in the non-farm sector. It is found that no self-employed woman works at a far away distance because most of them carried out their work within their own residential places. The study proves that there is a negative relationship existing between distance of non-farm unit and women participation. The study reveals that the variable distance has the significant influence over the women’s participation in the non-farm sector.

Generally, employment in the non-farm sector depends on the seasons which prevail in the district. Seasonal unemployment is one of the characteristics of agricultural sector which plays a vital role in influencing the participation of women labourers in the non-farm sector. The labourers can find employment opportunities when the season is favourable and they couldn’t get when the season is unfavourable. Whenever there is unemployment arising in the farm sector, the labourers search for employment opportunities in the non-farm sector. Most of the non-farm sectors generate regular income and employment to the labourers. Moreover, in the case of non-farm sectors, employment opportunities are also seasonal in character especially, in the case of construction industries and food processing industries. This will generate
more employment opportunities to the piece and casual labourers. The study reveals that the seasonal unemployment in agriculture has no significant influence on the participation of labourers in the non-farm sector.

The utilization of agricultural lands for non-agricultural purposes pushed them into non-farm employment. The labourers surrender their cultivable land for non-agricultural uses. Due to the surrender of their existing cultivable land, they are forced to seek employment in the non-farm sector. The study shows that there is a relationship between the utilization of agricultural land for non-agricultural purpose and participation of labourers in the non-farm sector. A few labourers have sold their existing cultivable land for non-agricultural purposes. The landless labourers seek employment opportunities in the non-farm sector. However, the study reveals that there is no significant difference between land utilization and women participation. It is concluded that the variable land utilisation has no impact on the employment in the non-farm sector.

Migration of respondent’s family from either rural to urban or urban to rural place, makes a person go in search of an employment. The study reveals that migration of labourers has no significant influence on their participation in non-farm sector.

The study observes that women participation in non-farm sector is due to their unwillingness to work in agricultural sector, higher
wage rate in non-farm sector compared to farm sector, regular employment opportunities and non-availability of farm employment which are also considered as subsidiary causes for the women’s participation.

As per the Contingency Test, the results of influencing variables are ranked under three heads namely, personal variables, job related variables and economic variables. Under personal variables, age factor dominates other variables which is followed by education, marital status, caste, size of family, migration and religion. Under job related variables, distance factor ranks first which is followed by size of land holding, seasonal employment and land utilization, and under economic variables, income factor ranks first and the burden of debt ranks second. Hence, it can be concluded that income and age factor determines participation of women in non-farm sector.

The study has examined and identified the problems of women labourers in the unorganised non-farm sector of Kanyakumari district as compared to organised sector. Women are engaged in traditional occupation and activities which mostly get intermingled with economic activities, which leave them out of enumeration. The sex role based stereotyping and gender division of labour is prevalent in all categories of non-farm employment, irrespective of their education experience and skill development. It affects the participation of women in non-farm sector. The issues of women labourers are linked with their participation in
unorganized nature of employment. They are found in both organised and unorganised sectors. Women in unorganised sector face crucial problems compared to organised sector, such as low wage, long working hours, absence of annual increment, incentives. The casual working day of the labourer shall have at least an half hour break. However at the spread over the work shall not exceed ten hours. The study confirms that the provisions of normal hours of work, work break and one paid day of rest are not strictly maintained in the unorganised non-farm sector by the employers.

The Social Security Act, 2007 of the Government of India recommends that the wage period of non-agricultural workers can on no account exceed one month; any delay in payment beyond this period will require the employer to pay penal rates of interest for the period of delay to the labourers. The study shows that the problem of irregular and delayed wage payment is common in unorganised sector than in organised sector.

Job satisfaction and cooperation of labourers are essential for the smooth functioning of an establishment. The study observes that percentage of respondents considering unorganised sector as very good and satisfactory regarding job satisfaction is less than that considering organised sector. It is noted that lack of cooperation between employer and employee is found in both the sectors.
Women’s working conditions are not favourable in terms of their social security and welfare facilities. It includes the programmes of protection provided by government or employers against the contingencies of modern life-sickness, unemployment, old age, dependency, industrial accidents and invalidism against which the individual cannot be expected to protect himself and his family by his own ability or foresight.

It is observed that women workers in the organized sector have some social security provisions such as medical and maternity benefits. Most of the labourers who are in the unorganised sector do not have this benefits. They are denied to have maternity cash benefits. Regarding accident, cash benefit shall be paid for accident to the labourers at work. This may be in the form of temporary disablement benefit or it may be in the form of pension for life. Accident benefit in the case of unorganised sector is very low compared to that of organised sector. Provision of job security is a basic condition for working labourers. It assures and guarantees the employees to continue their present employment until their retirement. The study reveals that possibility of job security is higher in organised sector than in unorganised sector. Lack of job security is found in the unorganised sector which creates the problem of labour turnover in the non-farm sector.

Payment of bonus has been a regular feature in case of organised non-farm sector. Moreover, some employers follow the scheme
of profit sharing to get the full and whole-hearted cooperation of workers. It is discerned that all organised sector employers provide bonus to their employees, while in unorganised sector, majority of the employers do not provide such benefits and a few of them provide bonus benefit. Old age benefit is considered as an important social security measure to the labourers. The state government recommends the implementation of Provident Fund Scheme for unorganised non-farm workers as additional social security scheme. The study has noticed that old age benefit is not given due importance in organised and unorganized sectors. These women have no old age benefit and have no permanancy of service.

The provision of labour welfare facilities to women labourers in both these sectors is meager. Labour welfare activities are on the part of employers or government to improve the intellectual, physical, moral and economic betterment of the workers. It is observed that many employers in unorganised sector, cannot by reason of their limited means satisfy the minimum condition regarding welfare activity whereas, in organised sector the standard of these facilities are rather poor. It is clear from the study that only less percentage of labourers working in both these sectors has very poor sanitary and hygienic conditions. At the same time, it is noted that only less percentage of labourers enjoy good sanitary and hygienic conditions in these sectors. However, these conditions are low among unorganised labourers in comparison to organised labourers.
Provision of rest room and safe drinking water facilities have become the statutory obligation on the part of the employers within the precincts of the non-farm sectors. These facilities are satisfactorily provided in organised sector while it is, obvious that the arrangement for rest rooms and safety drinking water facility are very poor in unorganised sector. The problem of lack of rest rooms in the working units affects the women labourers. It is also noted that provision of urinals and toilet facilities in the working places are neglected in the unorganised sector. At the same time majority of the employers provide such facilities in their own organised establishments.

The problem of labour turnover is found common in non-farm sector. Labour turnover is a measure of the rate of change in the working staff of the non-farm sector during a definite period in which old employees leave and new employees enter into the service. This situation emerges due to lack of employer employee relationship, job dissatisfaction, low wage rate and unhealthy working environment on either sides. It is high in the unorganised sector and less in the organised sector. The women labourers in these sectors especially leave their jobs during pregnancy and join in other establishment after the period is over. Thus, these women have no permanency of service and often hired on daily wage basis.

Sexual harassment is considered as one of a problems faced by women in the non-farm sector. Sexual harassment is such unwelcome
sexually determined behavior such as physical contact, advances, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography or making sexual demands, whether verbal, textual, graphic or electronic or by any other actions which may contain implied or overt promise of preferential treatment in that wage worker’s employment. The study reveals that only a less percentage of the respondents consent the existence of the problem of sexual harassment in the non-farm sector.

Health hazards are also found in the non-farm sectors due the nature of activity they undertake and the extent of health problem due to the nature of work is less. The study observes the diseases like asthma, giddiness and skin allergy which affect the beedi workers, match workers, cashew nut processors and brick makers.

To conclude, the analysis strengthens one significant fact that non-farm activities are carried out predominantly in the unorganised sector. Coming to the participation of women in non-farm activities, the analysis supports the theoretical perception that the participation of women in the non-farm sector is determined by age, marital status, education, caste, size of land holding, family income of respondents and the distance of non-farm working units. High educational levels and large sized land holdings restrict their access of attractive non-farm occupations in this district.
Suggestions

The present study is confined to the determinants of women employment in the non-farm sector in Kanyakumari district. The following prospects and problems have been identified for further research.

1. A study on determinants of farm and non-farm workers in Kanyakumari district.

2. Contribution of non-farm women workers in rural development of Tamil Nadu.

3. Prospects and problems of women labourers in non-farm sector in Tamil Nadu.

4. A study on determinants of employment of women labourers in formal and informal non-farm sector in Kanyakumari district.

5. A comparative study of inter district variations in the determinants of women employment in non-farm sector of Tamil Nadu.

If this study, in any case, helps further research in future, the researcher would be happy about his contribution. It might add further to the existing knowledge on the socio-economic conditions of women in the country and subsequent redressal of their problems.

Policy Implications

The study highlights the factors which are responsible in determining the participation of women in non-farm sector, and the problems faced by them in the working environment. The study suggests
certain measures to be undertaken or implemented for the welfare of women labourers.

1. High educational levels restrict the participation of labourers in the non-farm sector due to the low wage and poor working environment. There are higher scope for skill upgradation in both organised and unorganised sectors. Information technology should be essentially created in the work places, governed by new paradigms of production and business organisation. This paves the way for higher participation of educated and technically trained labourers in these sectors. Nevertheless, this leads to empowerment of women labourers from the clutches of traditionally rooted social norms.

2. The employers are required to make provision for labourers’ education and technical training opportunities, at least to address the skill shortage within the industrial establishment. This will ease the discriminative wage problems of the labourers.

3. The workers in the unorganised sectors are severely exploited in terms of wages paid and poor working condition. Hence, the government should fix a minimum wage for all categories of non-farm employment.

4. The Unorganised Non-agricultural Workers’ Conditions of Work and Social Security Act 2007 recommends that every
non-agricultural worker shall be eligible for registration subject to the terms and condition initiated by the State Boards. The registered labourers are eligible for getting minimum social security and welfare benefits. So, awareness regarding registration should be created between employer and employees in the unorganised non-farm sector.

5. The government should take steps to introduce separate restroom, lunch room and safe drinking water facilities in the working place by the employer.

6. Minimum wage policy of the government should be maintained. It should be further ensured that the increase in wages in the non-farm sector must be realistic.