CHAPTER -FIVE

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Social security measures have two-fold significance for a developing country like India. They constitute steps towards the goal of a welfare state by improving the living and working conditions and guarding people against the uncertainties of the future. These measures are also important for every industrialization plan, because not only do they enable workers to become more efficient, but they also reduce wastage arising from industrial disputes. The man-days lost on account of sickness and disability also constitute a heavy drain on the slender resources of the workers as well as on the industrial output of the country. Lack of social security hinders production and prevents the formation of a stable and efficient labour force. Social security is, therefore, not a liability, but a wise investment, which yields good dividends in the long run. The promulgation of ESI Act, 1948 by the Parliament was the major legislation on social security for workers in independent India. The ESI Act encompasses certain health related eventualities that the workers are generally exposed to, such as sickness, maternity, temporary or permanent disablement, occupational disease or death due to employment injury, resulting in loss of wages or earning capacity—total or partial. Social security provisions made in the Act to counterbalance or alleviate the resulting physical or financial distress in such contingencies are, thus, aimed at upholding human dignity in times of crisis through protection from deprivation, destitution and social degradation while enabling the society the retention and continuity of a socially useful and productive manpower. The Employees’ State Insurance Scheme of India, operated by the Corporation, is an integrated social security Scheme engineered to provide social protection to employees in the organized sector and their dependents in contingencies.
The Employees’ State Insurance Corporation is a statutory body established as per the provisions of the ESI Act to administer and execute the ESI Scheme in the country. The ESI Scheme in India is a major multi-dimensional social insurance programme that has over the last six decades emerged as the largest social security set up in India with its phenomenal growth in terms of geographical reach, demographic coverage, and multifaceted services. Despite all the endeavors made by the Corporation for the effective functioning of the ESI Scheme in the country, public discernment of the Corporation has not been positive. The Corporation has not given any regard for the quality of services and benefits provided to the insured persons and their dependents. Further, no adequate steps are being taken to improve the awareness of the Scheme among the insured persons and employers.

The present study has been undertaken to examine the working of Employees’ State Insurance Corporation in Odisha with special reference to Choudwar Zone. An attempt has been made to examine the following aspects:

- The effectiveness of the benefits provided to the insured persons under the Employees State Insurance Scheme.
- To study the awareness levels of the people so that they can benefit from the scheme
- To study the quality of service given to the insured persons
- Proposals for improvement on the basis of the findings of the study

Keeping in view the objectives, the following variables were identified:

- Awareness of ESI benefits provided by the ESI;
- Sources of the awareness of the ESI benefits;
- Satisfaction with measures taken by the corporation for providing information on ESI Scheme.
✓ Awareness about formalities for claiming various benefits provided by the ESI Corporation;

✓ Preference to visit various ESI sponsored hospitals during the sick;

✓ Continuation after retirement in medical benefits scheme of the Corporation;

✓ Availing sickness benefit provided by the Corporation under ESI Scheme;

✓ Availing maternity benefit provided by ESI;

✓ Availing disablement benefit;

✓ Satisfaction with the services of administrative staff for claiming benefit;

✓ Satisfaction with services of the employer for claiming benefits;

✓ Availing any other benefits and

✓ Satisfaction with the amount of cash benefit

**Findings of the study**

The major findings of the study on the basis of analysis of the data are summarized below:

- For the awareness of the benefits provided by the ESI scheme in the rural area 61.64% are partially aware, 63.54% are partial aware in urban area and in semi urban area 64.51% are partial aware . This shows that the majority are partial aware about the benefits provided by the ESI in Choudwar zone , Odisha.

- For the sources of awareness of the ESI benefits, 39.73% in rural area came to know through the News paper/TV/Radio. Similarly in case of urban and semi-urban areas the majority got the information from the same media. Hence, it shows that the
News papers/ TV/Radio are the important source of information irrespective of demography.

➢ In regard to satisfaction with measures taken by the corporation all most in all areas majority are satisfied. The satisfactions in rural area are 61.86%, in urban area 61.19% and in the semi-urban area 64.52% are satisfied.

➢ Regarding the awareness about the formalities for claiming various benefits provided by the ESIC, in urban area 61.98% are not at all aware. Similarly 65.98% are not at all aware in rural area the trend is same also in semi-urban area.

➢ For visiting various ESI sponsored hospital during the sick, in rural area 49.48% prefer to visit the ESI hospitals, in case of urban, the preference level is 51.04% and corresponding figure for semi-urban respondents is 50%. On an average 50% prefer to visit the ESI hospitals.

➢ For continuation after retirement in the medical benefits scheme of the corporation, 71.23% said no in the rural area, 67.19% said no in urban area and the perception in semi-urban area is also not so encouraging. So majority do not prefer to continue the medical benefits after the retirement.

➢ Answering to the question related to availing sickness benefits provided by the corporation under ESI scheme in semi-urban area, 66.13% avail the benefit, in rural area 76.29% are availing, in urban area 55.73% are availing the same in semi-urban area. The majority are availing the services of ESI scheme.

➢ Responding to availing the maternity benefits provided by the ESI, in urban area 65.52% of female respondents availing the facility, in case of rural area 66.67% avail the same and for semi-urban 64.29% take the benefits. This benefit is available for female insured persons only. So the male component was not considered. This concludes that majority are availing the maternity benefits provided by the ESI.
For the availing disablement benefits, in the rural area 78.35% cannot say anything, in urban area and semi-urban area the corresponding perception for the same are 69.27% and 69.35%. This concludes that majority of the insured persons in the research area are not aware of the disablement benefits.

Joining to the question related to satisfaction with the services of the administrative staff for claiming the benefits, in rural area 72.16% are partially satisfied, in urban area 77.60% are partially satisfied and the perception for the same in semi-urban area is 68.55%. This shows that majority in all the areas are partially satisfied with the services of the administrative staff for claiming the benefits.

Responding to the question related to satisfaction with the services of the employer for claiming the benefits, 65.32% in semi-urban area are partially satisfied, in urban area 63.54% are partially satisfied and in rural area the same is 64.95%. This concludes that most of the respondents are partially satisfied.

Answering to the question related to availing any other benefits, in rural area 50.52% do not avail the benefits, the same for the urban and semi-urban area are 57.46% and 54.41%. More than fifty percent are not availing the benefits.

Responding to the satisfaction with the amount of cash benefits, 58.76% are partially satisfied in rural area, 69.79% of the respondent in urban area are partially satisfied and the perception for the same in semi-urban area is 73.39%. The majority are partially satisfied for the cash benefits.

For delay in getting payments, in urban area 58.33% perceived a moderate delay, 72.16% believe there is moderate delay in rural area and 60.48% in semi-urban area. The majority irrespective of demography viewed that there is moderate delay in getting benefits.
Suggestions:

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are proposed so as to make the functioning of the ESI more effective.

- **Enhance the Awareness of the ESI Scheme**
  
  It is observed that a large number of insured persons and employers are not fully aware of the ESI Scheme. They are also not aware of the functioning of the various types of machinery, particularly the ESI Courts and the Grievances Redress Cell. So efforts are to be made on the part of the Corporation to enhance the level of awareness among the insured persons and the employers about the ESI Scheme. The Corporation should also make sure that all the insured persons and employers covered under the ESI Scheme are getting the printed educational material about the Scheme in a language known to them. Besides the print media, the corporation can also consider press publicity, electronic media and workshops in this regard.

- **Improve the quality of medical care**
  
  The study reveals that arrangements made by the corporation for medical services are not satisfactory. A good number of insured persons are not availing medical care offered by the corporation through the ESI dispensaries and hospitals. Again, most of the insured persons availing the medical care are not satisfied with its quality. Therefore, the corporation has to take the necessary measures to improve the quality of medical care provided by the ESI dispensaries and hospitals. The corporation can adapt a policy whereby the insured persons can seek treatment from the hospitals of their choice, at least, in some case requiring specialist care, ensuring reimbursement by the corporation.
➢ **Simplify the formalities**

It is found from the study that too much formality prevents a good number of insured persons from availing the various cash benefits. Therefore, the corporation has to relax the conditions and simplify the formalities for claiming the cash benefits so as to enable the insured persons to avail the benefits under the ESI Scheme.

➢ **Increase the amount of cash benefits**

The study reveals that most of the insured persons are not satisfied with the amount of cash benefits, particularly in the amount of sickness and disablement benefits. The insured persons who are availing the sickness benefit get only fifty percent of their wages. Those who are availing the disablement benefits get seventy percent of their wages. It is proposed that full wages may be given to the insured persons who are unable to work due to sickness. Compensation for disablement may also be increased considerably. Maternity benefit period may be raised from three months to four and a half months, as in the case of the Government employees.

➢ **Timely payment of cash benefits**

It is observed that there is delay in getting payment of the cash benefits except the sickness benefit. Besides, the insured persons are not satisfied with the services of the administrative staff of the corporation for claiming the benefits except the sickness benefit. Therefore, the corporation should take the necessary steps to avoid the delay. Proper guidance should be given to the insured persons about the formalities for claiming the benefits. A sort of more human approach is expected from the administrative staff. The corporation can also consider simplifying formalities and extending computerization.
Change the attitudinal orientation of the personnel

It is observed that a large number of employers are not satisfied with the working of Inspectors and Revenue Recovery Machinery of the corporation due to the indifferent or hostile attitude of the personnel. The attitudinal orientations of the personnel of the Inspectors and Revenue Recovery Machinery towards the employers need a marked change. They can be more sympathetic and courteous towards the employers. Their positive attitude and proper understanding will go a long way in the successful implementation of the ESI scheme.

Speedy redressal of grievances/complaints

The study reveals that a considerable number of insured persons and employers are not satisfied in the working of the grievances redress cell. Non-response on the part of the authorities and delay in the disposal of the grievances/complaints are the reasons for their dissatisfaction. Now, the grievances redress cells are functioning at the regional and national levels only. The corporation may set up grievances redress cells at the lower levels by giving the required authority for the disposal of grievances/complaints. This will help the speedy redress of grievances/complaints of the insured persons and employers.

Better representation of employees in the local ESI bodies

It is observed that there is no adequate representation of employees in the various advisory boards of the corporation and the local committees. Due concern should be given to the employees while taking decisions in matters related to administration of the ESI Scheme. Therefore, it is desirable that the representation of the employees and employers in the advisory boards may be raised. Law may be amended accordingly.
Timely constitution of advisory bodies

The study finds that there is delay in constituting of Regional Boards and Local Committees. The corporation has not constituted Regional Boards in all the regions where ESI Scheme is implemented. Similarly, local committees have not been constituted in all the centers where the ESI Scheme is implemented. The number of meetings conducted in a year by these bodies is also few. For better performance of the ESI Scheme, it is essential that Regional Board and local committees are to be constituted timely and in all the regions and centers where the ESI Scheme is implemented. Meetings at the regular intervals are also desirable.

Implications of the study

On the basis of the findings of the study, it is found that the ESIC Corporation is not keen on giving adequate information to the insured persons and employers about the ESI Scheme, the quality of medical care provided to the insured persons through ESI dispensaries and hospitals is rather poor, the amount of cash benefit is meager, there is delay in disbursement of cash benefits, the insured persons do not get the services of the administrative staff for availing of benefits, the working of the machinery of the corporation for administration of ESI Scheme is not up to the expectations of the insured persons and employers, due concern is not given to them while taking decisions related to the administration of the ESI Scheme, the corporation gives importance to raising of funds targeting only the insured persons and employers but is not very enthusiastic about its effective utilization of funds. The present study will definitely help the policy makers of ESIC to revisit the implementation part of the Scheme. This will greatly help the insured persons at large and at the same time the perception of the beneficiaries will change towards the ESI Scheme implemented in this part of the country. The present study will also help to sort out the administrative problems faced by the ESIC of Choudwar Zone of Odisha.
Scope for future research

The present study is the first of its kind in Odisha for Choudwar Zone to my knowledge. In this study, entire focus was on the Choudwar Zone only. However, during the field visit and after the discussion with the expert core group of doctors involved in the field of ESI services, it is also understood that the scope is not restricted to performance analysis only, it can be extended to other aspects also. This study concentrated on the overall awareness and benefits availed by the insured persons of that region. The research can be carried in other areas, i.e.- the working of the machinery like revenue recovery machinery, employees insurance courts, grievances redress cell, similarly, on the fund management side, it can be working capital management, financial performance analysis etc.

Conclusion

The Government is spending crores of rupees since last sixty years after the inception of ESI Act, with the main objective of providing social security. During the study, it was found that in the Choudwar Zone, which covers 9 districts of Odisha, (which includes Anugul, Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj) that major problem is operational deficiency of the ESI. This includes various factors like, distance, lack of awareness of various schemes of ESI, lack of support of the employer, delay in getting payment, difficult procedure for claiming benefits, etc. For this scheme to be a success, a social movement is needed to create awareness among the people in the rural and semi-urban area specially. Illiteracy is also a major stumble block for the popularization of the scheme. Because of this, people are not able to understand their legitimate rights and this contributes to one of the reasons for the failure of any scheme implemented by the government. People should be aware about their rights so that those involved in the implementation of the scheme will be cautious before doing any undesirable things.
Improvement of medical facilities is also important; in this regard more and more hospitals should be tied up with ESI. Mobile hospital concepts should also be introduced for the benefit of the people residing in rural areas. There should be combined effort both from the government and the public for the successful implementation of schemes related to ESI. More importantly the political will is needed among the political parties for the improvement and implementation of this programme.