

## **A Study on the Problems Faced by Female Petrol Pump Workers in Agastheeswaram Taluk, Nagercoil**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Women's participation in petrol pump work has increased in recent years. However, they face several occupational, social, and health-related challenges. The present study aims to analyze the problems faced by female petrol pump workers in Agastheeswaram Taluk, Nagercoil. A total of 50 respondents were selected using purposive sampling. The study is descriptive in nature. India has more than 50% of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65% below the age of 35. The average age of an Indian is predicted to be 29 in 2020, compared to 37 in China and 48 in Japan. By 2030, India's dependence ratio is predicted to be slightly above 0.4. According to the results, the majority of workers experience health concerns such as body discomfort, breathing difficulties, and dizziness as a result of working long hours and being around petrol fumes. Additionally common are social issues including economic instability and harassment. The study comes to the conclusion that welfare programs and better working conditions are crucial. Inadequate lavatory facilities, severe musculoskeletal strain, and physical health risks from toxic fuel fumes are just a few of the systemic workplace issues faced by female petrol pump operators. In addition, girls often have to put up with dangerous late-night shifts in a male-dominated workplace, harsh working conditions, and low pay.*

**Keywords:** *Petrol pump workers Health-related challenges, Health issues*

### **Introduction**

Greek is where the word petroleum originates. Petroleum products are complex mixtures, while mineral oils, which are produced by distillation from mined organic solids like cannel coal and refined oils made from them, are derived from crude oil as it is processed in oil refineries. Road oil, asphalt, heating, transportation, and the production of energy all depend heavily on petroleum products. They are employed in the production of synthetic materials, chemicals, and polymers that we use on a daily basis. Petrol, heating oil/diesel fuel and jet fuel accounted for almost 74% of the 6.89 billion barrels of petroleum we utilised in 2013.

### **Objectives**

- To identify occupational problems
- To assess health issues
- To analyze working conditions problems

## Methodology

The nature of the study is descriptive. The study was conducted in Agastheeswaram Taluk, Nagercoil, which comprises several petrol bunks located in areas such as Vadasery, Kottar, and Chettikulam. For the purpose of the study, a list of female petrol pump workers was identified with the help of local sources and supervisors. The total number of female petrol pump workers identified in the selected areas was approximately 80. Among them, 50 respondents were selected for the study using a purposive sampling method, considering their availability and willingness to participate. The data collection tools were developed based on a review of existing literature. Primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule, which included questions related to socio-demographic profile, occupational problems, health issues, and working conditions. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, and reports. The collected data were classified, tabulated, and analyzed using simple statistical techniques such as percentage analysis and mean values.

## Analysis and Interpretation

Table:1 **Socio-economic conditions:**

| S. No | Variables         | Value Level       | Respondent |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1     | Age               | 18-25             | 30%        |
|       |                   | 26-35             | 34%        |
|       |                   | 36-45             | 36%        |
| 2     | Marital status    | Unmarried         | 36%        |
|       |                   | Married           | 46%        |
|       |                   | separate          | 18%        |
| 3     | Education         | School level      | 58%        |
|       |                   | Degree            | 24%        |
|       |                   | Illiterate        | 18%        |
| 4     | Earners           | Only me           | 32%        |
|       |                   | Husband and other | 68%        |
| 5     | Number of Child   | 1-2               | 38%        |
|       |                   | Above 2           | 38%        |
|       |                   | No baby           | 24%        |
| 6     | Work experience   | 1Year             | 60%        |
|       |                   | 1-5Years          | 24%        |
|       |                   | Above5Years       | 16%        |
| 7     | Distance for work | Below 5km         | 76%        |
|       |                   | Above 5km         | 24%        |
| 8     | Accommodation     | Own house         | 80%        |
|       |                   | Rent House        | 20%        |
| 9     | Debt Status       | Debt              | 58%        |
|       |                   | No debt           | 42%        |
| 10    | Work Timings      | Morning Shift     | 68%        |
|       |                   | Night Shift       | 12%        |
|       |                   | Rotation          | 20%        |

- The study found that 48% of the respondents were unmarried, while 32% were married, showing that nearly half of the respondents belonged to the unmarried category.
- Regarding education, 64% of the respondents belonged to the first educational category, indicating that the majority had a lower level of educational attainment. In the family earning pattern, 49% of the respondents' families depended on a single earning member, which shows a considerable economic burden on one person in the house hold.
- With regard to number of children, 44% of the respondents had three children, representing the largest group. In terms of work experience, 50% of the respondents belonged to the first level of work experience, indicating that half of them had only limited experience.
- Regarding travel to the workplace, 54% of the respondents travelled under the first distance category, while 46% traveled longer distances, showing that a notable proportion traveled far for work. The study revealed that 76% of the respondents belonged to the first accommodation category, and 72% reported debt, indicating financial and living-related challenges. About 70.6% of the respondents belonged to the first work-timing category, showing that the majority worked under a common timing pattern.

Table: 2 **Occupational Problems:**

| S. No | Variables                       | Value Level | Respondents<br>N-50% |
|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1     | Long working hours              | Yes No      | 88%<br>12%           |
| 2     | Week off provide correctly      | Yes No      | 80%<br>20%           |
| 3     | Rest for work                   | Yes No      | 80%<br>20%           |
| 4     | Customer speak dis respectfully | Yes No      | 76%<br>24%           |
| 5     | No using mobile phone           | Yes No      | 82%<br>18%           |
| 6     | Sexual Harassment at work place | Yes No      | 58%<br>42%           |
| 7     | Supervisors behave harshly      | Yes No      | 70%<br>30%           |
| 8     | Deduction from Salary           | Yes No      | 84%<br>16%           |
| 9     | Difficult For Leave             | Yes No      | 72%<br>28%           |
| 10    | Job cause rift your family      | Yes No      | 64%<br>36%           |

- 88% of the respondents stated that it was difficult to work in a standing position for long hours of 8 to 12 hours, which indicates serious physical strain in the workplace.
- 80% of the respondents reported that weekly off was provided correctly.
- 80% of the respondents stated that they were given permission to sit or rest during work.
- 76% of the respondents reported that customers spoke to them disrespectfully, showing the presence of social and emotional stress in their work environment.
- 82% of the respondents stated that there was a ban on using mobile phones during work hours.
- 58% of the respondents reported sexual harassment against women in the workplace, indicating an important gender and safety concern.
- 70% of the respondents said that managers or supervisors behaved harshly with them.
- 84% of the respondents reported that if a mistake occurred at work, such as short cash, it was deducted from their salary.
- 72% of the respondents said that it was difficult to take leave for family functions.

#### Welfare and Safety Facilities

Table: 3 **Health Problems**

| S. No | Variable                                                          | Value Level | Respondent |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| 1     | Petrol cause you dizziness                                        | Yes No      | 88%<br>12% |
| 2     | Breath problem                                                    | Yes No      | 80%<br>20% |
| 3     | Swelling in your legs                                             | Yes No      | 90%<br>10% |
| 4     | Fuel cause sores or skin peeling                                  | Yes No      | 88%<br>12% |
| 5     | Smell causes loss of appetite                                     | Yes No      | 88%<br>12% |
| 6     | Backpain or hip pain                                              | Yes No      | 82%<br>18% |
| 7     | Management provide mask and gloves                                | Yes No      | 80%<br>20% |
| 8     | Medical checkup once in a year                                    | Yes No      | 82%<br>18% |
| 9     | Experience skin irritation due to working in the sun for longtime | Yes No      | 82%<br>18% |
| 10    | After work energy to do household chores                          | Yes No      | 76%<br>24% |

- 90% of the respondents reported irritation due to smoke and noise caused by traffic congestion. 88% of the respondents stated that the smell of petrol caused dizziness or vomiting.
- 80% of the respondents reported continuous shortness of breath or asthma-related problems.
- 90% of the respondents suffered from varicose veins or swelling in the legs, showing a major occupational health issue.
- 88% of the respondents stated that handling fuel caused sores or peeling of skin on their hands. 88% of the respondents reported loss of appetite due to smell exposure.
- 82% of the respondents frequently experienced back pain or hip pain.

**Table: 4 Economic Condition and Job Security**

| S. No | Variables                                                | Value Level | Respondents |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1     | Salary sufficient for your family expenses               | Yes No      | 74%<br>26%  |
| 2     | Cost of transportation to work a heavy burden            | Yes No      | 76%<br>24%  |
| 3     | Bonus and Overtime pay provided correctly                | Yes No      | 84%<br>16%  |
| 4     | Issued ESI medical insurance card                        | Yes No      | 80%<br>20%  |
| 5     | Provident Fund being deducted                            | Yes No      | 80%<br>20%  |
| 6     | Loan assistance from the bank management for emergencies | Yes No      | 76%<br>24%  |

- 76% of the respondents stated that they had enough energy after work to do household chores, while the remaining respondents may have experienced work fatigue.
- 74% of the respondents reported that their salary was sufficient for family expenses. 76% of the respondents said that transportation cost to work was a heavy burden. 84% of the respondents stated that bonus or overtime wages were provided correctly. 80% of the respondents reported that they had been issued an ESI card.
- 80% of the respondents stated that PF was being deducted.
- 76% of the respondents reported that they could get loan assistance from bank management during emergencies.
- 84% of the respondents stated that they were doing the job only until they found another job, showing low job commitment and insecurity.

- 80% of the respondents reported having a savings habit.
- Only 54% of the respondents were aware of the government-announced minimum wage, showing that awareness of labour rights was only moderate.
- 80% of the respondents reported hesitation in saying in society that they worked at a petrol bunk, indicating the presence of social stigma attached to the occupation.

### **Suggestion**

- Strict implementation of safety guidelines and equal wage laws.
- Mandatory provision of PPE and routine medical checkups.
- Improved workplace infrastructure, including separate restrooms and designated eating areas.
- The enforcement of secure, women-only shifts or heightened security for late-night operations

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that female petrol pump workers face significant occupational, health, and socio-economic challenges. Long working hours, continuous standing, and exposure to petrol fumes lead to problems such as dizziness, breathing issues, and body pain. In addition, workplace issues like customer misbehavior, supervisor pressure, and harassment affect their well-being. Most respondents report only a moderate level of job satisfaction. The study suggests improving working conditions by providing rest intervals, safety equipment, medical facilities, and awareness of labour rights. Ensuring a safe and supportive work environment is essential to enhance the quality of life and job satisfaction of female petrol pump workers.

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