A Study on the Self-esteem of Rehabilitated Victims of Bonded Labourers in Tiruvallur District

J. Damen Queen[1], Dr.A.Umesh Samuel[2]

[1]Ph.D Research Scholar, (PT) Department of Social Work, Bishop Heber College (Autonomous),
[2]Dean (Research) &Associate Professor in Social Work. Bishop Heber College (Autonomous),

Abstract: *It is a well-known fact that bonded labourers face a lot of problem in a day to day life. It is one of the worst human right violations. They experience all kind of violence including physical, sexual, emotional and psychological. They live such an inhumane life in the bondage. No proper housing and sanitation facility for them and they are forced to work for long working hours and they are not allowed to go back to their native as they wish to. They are paid very low and most of the time the victim are not paid because they come under debt bondage. Such victims are rescued and given habitation, building resilience among them is very essential. Self-esteem is an important factor in bring back these rescued labours to normal live. Thus this study will focus on the self- esteem level of rescued bonded labours.*
The present study tries to understand the socio-demographic status and the self-esteem of the respondents. The research design used for this study is descriptive. The study was conducted in two villages namely Kanchi and Kaladipet in Thiruvallur district. The primary data was collected from 50 respondents, Twenty-five respondents were male and rests twenty five were female by adopting purposive non random sampling. Interview schedule was used and it consists of General details of the respondents, Socio economic variables and *Rosenberg self-esteem* *(Rosenberg 1965). The various issues of bonded labours and the status of their self-esteem are discussed further in the main study.*
Keywords: *Bonded labours, Rehabilitation, Self-esteem, psychological wellbeing.*

I.   Introduction

Self-esteem refers to a person's subjective evaluation of their own worth: put simply, it is how good a person feels about him or herself. During the 1970's and 80's the fostering of self-esteem was seen to be of great benefit in and of itself. Self-esteem is how we value ourselves; it is how we perceive our value to the world and how valuable we think we are to others

According to Nathaniel Branden, a famous Psychotherapist and philosopher explains the Six Pillars of Self-Esteem, they are
1.   The Practice of Living Consciously
2.   The Practice of Self-Acceptance
3.   The Practice of Self-Responsibility
4.   The Practice of Self-Assertiveness
5.   The Practice of Living Purposefully
6.   The Practice of Personal Integrity

Positive self-esteem gives the strength and flexibility to take charge of one's life and learn from the mistake without the fear of rejection.Some outward signs of positive self-esteem: Confidence, Self-direction, Non-blaming behaviour, An awareness of personal strengths, An ability to make mistakes and learn from them, An ability to accept mistakes from others, Optimism, An ability to solve problems, cooperative attitude and Good self-care.

1.2 Positive Self-esteem:
A person with low self-esteem feels unworthy, incapable, and incompetent.In fact, because the person with low self-esteem feels so poorly about one self. Some of the signs of low self-esteem includes, Negative view of life, Perfectionist attitude, Suspicious thought, Blaming others, feeling being unloved and unlovable and self-stigma.

1.3. Low self-esteem:
A person with low self-esteem probably says a lot of negative things about themselves. They might criticise themselves, their actions, and abilities or joke about themselves in a very negative way. They might put themselves down, doubt themselves, or blame themselves when things go wrong. Often, they might not recognise their positive qualities.

People with low self-esteem might expect that things would not turn out well for them. They might often feel depressed, ashamed, anxious, guilty, frustrated, and angry. They find it very difficult to speaking up for them and their needs, avoid challenges and opportunities, or be extra aggressive in their interactions with others.

1.4. Self-esteem and Psychological wellbeing:

Self-esteem is crucial to psychological and social well-being. Generally people with a higher self-esteem have a better quality of life thus making over all psychological wellness. According to Tudor (Tudor, 1996), self-concept, identity and self-esteem are among the key elements of mental health. But low self-esteem can have an effect on various aspects of a person. It influences aspirations, personal goals and interaction with others. This article focuses on the importance of self-esteem as a protective factor in influencing the psychological wellbeing of an individual. Self-esteem is an important domain in enhancing the wellbeing of an individual). Recently, several studies have shown that subjective well-being significantly correlates with high self-esteem, and that self-esteem shares significant variance in both mental well-being and happiness (Zimmerman, 2000).

II.   Review of literature

Experimental studies over the last 15 years specify that self-esteem is an significant psychological factor contributing to health and quality of life (Evans, 1997)Self-esteem has been found to be the most dominant and powerful predictor of happiness, while low self-esteem leads to maladjustment, positive self-esteem, internal standards and aspirations actively seem to contribute to 'well-being' (Garmezy, 1984; Glick and Zigler, 1992).

The protective nature of self-esteem is particularly evident in studies examining stress and/or physical disease in which self-esteem is revealed to safeguard the individual from fear and uncertainty. This is also observed among chronically ill individuals. It has been found that a greater feeling of efficacy, mastery, high self-esteem, in blend with having a partner and many close relationships, all have direct protective effects on the development of depressive symptoms in the chronically ill (Penninx *et al.*, 1998). Self-esteem has also been shown to enhance an individual's ability to cope with disease and post-operative survival.

Research results indicate that self-esteem is inversely correlated with anxiety and other signs of psychological and physical distress (Beck *et al.*, 2001). Self-esteem was shown to serve the fundamental psychological function of buffering anxiety, with the pursuit of self-esteem as a defensive avoidance tool against basic human fears.

To sum up, there is a logical relation between self-esteem and internalizing problem behaviour and to determine, positive self-esteem is highly associated with psychological mental well-being, adjustment, happiness, success and satisfaction. It is also associated with recovery after severe diseases.

III.   Issues of Bonded Labours:

'Bonded Labour refers to a worker who rendered service under condition of bondage arising from economic consideration, notably indebtedness through a loan or an advance. Where debt is the root cause of bondage, the implication is that the worker (or dependents or heirs) is tied to a particular creditor for a specified or unspecified period until the loan is repaid' (ILO 2001).It is a known fact that bonded labourers face a lot of problem and stress in a day to day life. Even after they are rescued and given rehabilitation, they still face lots of challenges in the society. One of the contributing factors is the individual inner strength- self-esteem, which helps in rebuilding the psychological wellbeing of an individual.

3.1 Specific objective:
- To study their Socio economic variables
- To measure self-esteem level of bonded labourers

3.2 Significance of the study:

It is a well-known fact that bonded labourers face a lot of problem in a day to day life. It is one of the worst human right violations. They experience all kind of violence including physical, sexual, emotional and psychological. They live such an inhumane life in the bondage. No proper housing and sanitation facility for them and they are forced to work for long working hours and they are not allowed to go back to their native as they wish to. They are paid very low and most of the time the victim are not paid because they come under debt bondage. Such victims are rescued and given habitation, building resilience among them is very essential.Self-esteem is an important factor in bring back these rescued labours to normal live. Thus this study will focus on the self-esteem level of rescued bonded labours.

3.3 Research methodology:

  The present study tries to understand the socio-demographic status and the self-esteem of the respondents. The research design used for this study is descriptive. The study was conducted in two villages namely Kanchi and Kaladipet in Thiruvallur district. The primary data was collected from 50 respondents, Twenty-five respondents were male and rests twenty five were female by adopting purposive non random sampling. Interview schedule was used and it consists of General details of the respondents, Socio economic variables and **Rosenberg self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965)**Self-esteemscale is a ten-item liket scale with item answered on a four-point scale from strongly to strongly disagree the higher the score the higher the self-esteem. They are divided into low self-esteem (15 and below 15) and high self-esteem (16 and above).

3.4 Field of study:

  IRCDS- Integrated Rural Community Development Society is a Non-Governmental organization established in 1986 to facilitate community based action among the marginalized and the poor communities in Thiruvallur district. They had implemented projects in more than twenty-seven villages of Thiruvallur district.Thiruvallur is one of the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu State. The district lies in the extreme north-east corner of the state. The district is divided into 14 blocks and has 540 panchayat villages (group of 4 to 5 villages' form a panchayat).

3.5 Inclusive criteria for sample selection:

- Respondent should be a victim of bonded labour for more than 5 year and below 10 years
- He/she must be rescued one year before
- He/she should be married.
- He/ she must be a victim receiving rehabilitation under IRCDS
- Victims from the same family were also included as part of the sample.

IV. Analysis And Discussion

Table I: Demographic Variable of the respondent:

Variable	Respondents	Percentage
Age		
25-35	20	40
36-45	21	42
46-55	06	12
56-65	03	06
Education		
Illiterate	**35**	**70**
Primary Education	**08**	**16**
High School	**07**	**14**
Occupation		
Agriculture	**20**	**40**
Private Company	**08**	**16**
Self employed	**20**	**40**
Unemployed	**02**	**04**
Family System		
Joint Family	**29**	**58**
Nuclear Family	**21**	**42**
Caste		
Irular Tribe	**50**	**100**

  This segment shows the personal data of the respondents like their age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, family type, religion and caste. This study shows that all the fifty per cent of the respondents are from Irular Tribe, they are one of the marginalised groups in Tamil Nadu. Some of the experts argue that bondage labour system in Tamil Nadu is one kind of caste based discrimination. This study is evident in that aspect.

  This study also prove that majority of seventy per cent of the respondent were illiterates. "The overall literacy gap amongst the various groups and tribal has come down from 19.77 per cent in 1961 to 14.03 per cent in 2011. S.N. Tripathy in 1989 highlighted that Illiteracy among the tribal people is an important factor responsible for the continuation of practice of bondage and exploitation.

  The occupation of the occupation shows that thirty per cent of the respondents were involved in agricultural work daily wages (coolie). Since these bonded labours were in debt bondage for many years, being illiterate and with less skill, they find difficult to get a decent job. Twenty six per cent were fishermen, since they stay close to Pondi dam in Tiruvallur District.

Table –II : Economic Condition of the Respondent

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Monthly Income		
< 3000	0.7	14
3001 – 5000	31	62
5001 – 10000	12	24
Income Satisfaction		
Satisfied	20	40
Not Satisfied	30	60
Debt Status		
Below 10000	23	46
10001 – 20000	0.3	06
Do not have debt	24	48
Savings Status		
Chits	4	8
SHG	21	42
Not saving	25	50

The table reveals that majority of Seventy six of the respondent earn less than five thousand per month and they also expressed that sixty percent of the respondent were not satisfied with their income. With this Though sixty six percent of the respondent were part of SHG only fourty two per cent of them involved in saving. The debt status of the respondent reveals that majority of forty eight per cent of the respondent do not have debt, forty per cent of the respondents have debt below ten thousand rupees.

According to ***ILO in 2009*** estimates that 9.3million forced labourers exixts in south asia pacific were in debt bondage. The study shows though the victims were released from debt bondage , due to poverty and helplessness, these victims take money for debts.
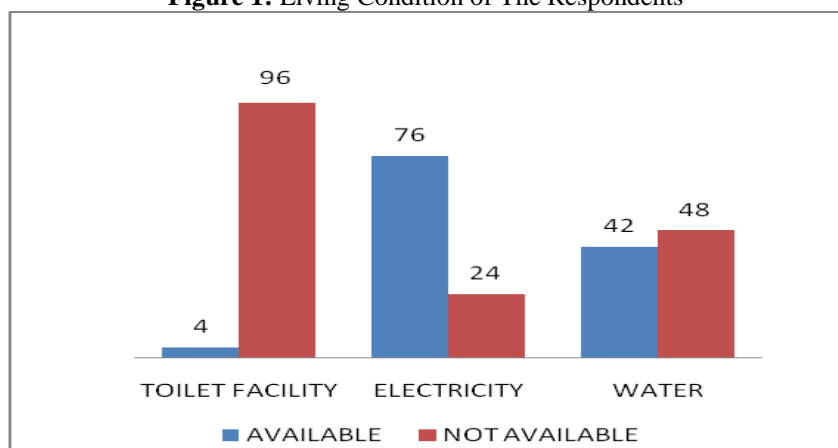
Figure 1: Living Condition of The Respondents

Figure 1 reveals that majority of ninety six per cent of the respondents do not have toilet facility whereas four per cent of the respondent have toilet facility at home. Seventy six percent of the respondent have electricity facility where as twenty four percent of the respondent do not have electricity facility. Forty eight percent of the respondents do not have water facility where as forty two percent have water facility.

The respondents live in a group house which is given by government under rehabilitation scheme, the study shows that majority of ninety six per cent of the respondent do not have toilet facility and Forty eight percent of the respondents do not have water facility.While respondent also expressed that they use fire wood for their cooking, It is a real challenging situation during the monsoon season

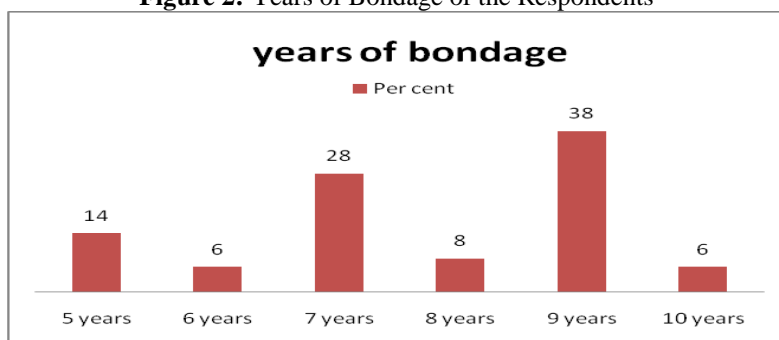**Figure 2:** Years of Bondage of the Respondents

Figure 2 shows the years of bondage of the respondents. The table shows that a majority of thirty eight per cent of the respondents were in bondage for nine years, twenty eight per cent of them were in bondage for seven years, fourteen percent of them were in bondage for five years, eight per cent of them were in bondage for eight years, six per cent of them were in bondage for six years and rest six per cent were in bondage for ten years.

To understand respondent's background, this section also shows that how many years the respondent has been under bondage. Eighty six per cent of respondent were in bondage for more than 8 years. A significant finding includes Cen percent of the respondent belong to Irular community. This is more evident that bonded labour system is a kind of Cast-based discrimination. Object poverty traps these people to be cot in the web of bondage.

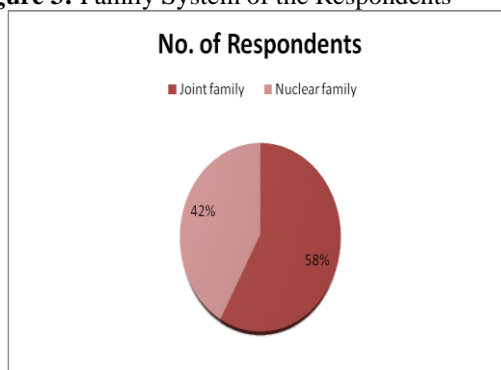**Figure 3:** Family System of the Respondents

Figure 3 reveals indicate the family system of the respondents. It is seen that forty eight per cent of the respondents live in a joint family whereas forty two per cent live as a nuclear family.

Table III: Working Hours of the Respondent

S. No	Hours per day	Respondent	Percent
1	< 5 hours	14	28
2	Between 5-10 hours	33	66
3	>10 hours	01	02
4	Not applicable	02	04
	Total	**50**	**100**

Table**III shows** the working hours of the respondent. The table reveals that majority of sixty six percent of the respondent work between five to ten hours per day, twenty eight per cent of the respondent work only below five hours and two per cent work or more than ten hours a day.
As majority of the respondents involved in agricultural, usually the working hour will be less than ten hours per day.

Table IV: Self Esteem Level of The Respondents

S.No	Self-esteem level	No of respondent	Percentage
1	Low self esteem	19	38
2	High self esteem	31	62
	Total	**50**	**100**

Table IV shows the self-esteem level of the respondents. The table reveals that majority of sixty two per cent of the respondent had high self-esteem whereas thirty eight per cent of the respondent had low self-esteem.

Table IV: Comparing Gender and Self-esteem of the Respondent

S.No	Sex	Low self esteem	High self esteem
1	Male	8	17
2	Female	11	14
	Total	**19(38)**	**31(62)**

Table value=1.499
Df=2
Calculated x value=0.76
Level of significance=0.05

Testing of hypothesis:
Null hypothesis: There exist no association between sex and self-esteem of the respondent
Research hypothesis: There exist an association between sex and self-esteem of the respondent.
Inference: As per the outcome of the chi-square test applied to the above data null hypothesis is rejected. I.e. self-esteem does vary among male and female groups. Majority of 62% of the respondent have high self esteem level.

V.   Suggestions

The researcher provides suggestions based on the findings, got from primary data .the suggestion framed would be useful to help the organisation working towards the benefit of bonded labours.
1. Self-help group are the good strategy to enhance the psychological wellbeing and thereby improving their self-esteem and self-acceptance.
2. Counselling should be given to the family, so that these families should not go back into the cob of bonded labours system.
3. The organisation can help them out in conducting program on the importance of saving and also caution them about the ill effects of debt bondage.
4. Social workers should keenly have a watch over the families , so that they don't back to debt bondage.
5. The government has provided houses to the respondent under group housing scheme but they are lacking basic facilities such as water and toilet. There is an urgent need to improve the quality of facilities. The assistance of the corporate sector can be availed, if necessary in achieving this objective, especially because the corporate undertake such programs under the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility Scheme.)
6. Adult education program has to be initiated in the respondent communities since generally literacy level is low.
7. This community receives material help from the organization but little help for the psychosocial advancement. This can be done by working closely with the irular community.

VI.   Conclusion

Since these bonded labours had been facing lots of problem throughout their life it is very hard for them to come out from the trauma. The study proves that self-esteem level of the respondents is low among women, ,it very important to work on the areas to bring in high self esteem and self acceptance among the vicitms. Self-esteem is a positive factor where social work can focus on counselling and building resilient individual.Hence NGO's working in that area rehabilitation of bonded labours should focus on the psychosocial rehabilitation.

Reference

[1]   Lim, L., Saulsman, L., & Nathan, P. *Improving Self-Esteem.* Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Clinical Interventions, 2005.
[2]   Nathaniel Branden, *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem,* 1995 Pg. 368
[3]   Evans, D.R.*Health promotion, wellness programs, quality of life and the marketing of psychology.* Canadian Psychology, 1997, Pg- 38, 1–12.
[4]   Zimmerman, S.L.*Self-esteem, personal control, optimism, extraversion and the subjective well-being* of Midwestern University , Sciences and Engineering, 2000,60(7-B).
[5]   Penninx, B.W., van Tilburg, T., Boeke, A.J.P., Deeg, D.J., Kriegsman, D.M. and van Eijk, J.T. *Effects of social support and personal coping resources on depressive symptoms: different for various chronic diseases,*Health Psychology,1998 17,551–558.

[6]   Garmezy, N, *The study of stress and competence in children: a building block for developmental psychopathology*. Child Development, 1984, Pg - 97–111.

[7]   Beck, A.T., Brown, G.K., Steer, R.A., Kuyken, W. and Grisham, J.*Psychometric properties of the Beck Self-Esteem Scales.* Behavior Research and Therapy, 2011, Pg- 39, 115–124

[8]   Arindell, W.A. Hanewald,G.J., &Kolk, A.M, 'Cross-national constancy of dimensions of parental rearing styles :The Dutch version of the parental Bonding Instrument (PBI).' In: Personality and Individual Difference, 1989, Pg- 949-956.

[9]   ILO, *Report on Stopping Forced Labour*, 2001.

[10]   J. Breman, I. Guacrin and A. Prakash (eds*.), Bonded Labour in the Rice Mills: Fate or Opportunity*?*Old and new practices of labour bondage,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 284-311.

[11]   Tripathy, S.N.1989.Bonded Labour in India, New Delhi, Discovery publishing house, 1989.