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A Study on Socio-Economic Status of Maid-Servant in Purulia Town

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Abstract:

Over last few decades, there have been rapid growths in the number of women employee in India and majority of them being engaged in informal sector of the economy where jobs are often low paid and repetitive. An attempt has been made in this study to trace out the socio-economic status of maid-servant as well as the manner in which they lives in the informal sector in Purulia Municipal area of the same district of West Bengal. The study has been carried out through personal interview and observation. Results indicate that most of the maid-servants (78%) are satisfied in their profession and most of the respondents (82.35%) do not engaged with other work except maid-servant for earning. However, economic compulsion is the main hardship for taking the job as maid-servants. The general educational status of the maid-servants is not satisfactory and wages of the maid-servants are very low. The maid-servants are subject to variety of exploitations starting from low wages to maltreatment and sexual harassment by the employer. In view of this exploitation it is necessary to improve their socio-economic status and working conditions.

KEYWORDS:

Maid-servant, Socio-economic status

INTRODUCTION:

It is found that among all categories in the informal sector, earnings of maid-servants are lowest and their problems are many. They are being employed generally for household tasks which include washing utensils and clothes, fetching water, sweeping and cleaning house along with a few outdoor tasks like irregular marketing, grocery shopping, ration drawing even childcare activity. Clearly, one of the main differences between paid and unpaid domestic work is that former involves following a work routine, which is imposed by the employer's order rather than evolved for oneself. In fact, many of these women are looking after more than one household but spend more time and work far more for their employer's than work in their own household. In many studies the focus has been on women's labour participation in agricultural and allied activities often erroneously considered to be only form of paid work available to the women of lower strata. In fact, in many rural areas female labours work as maid-servant and often combine this employment with agricultural work on a seasonal and even daily wage basis. Hence, domestic work contributes a substantive type of employment and generation of earnings for many women. In the wake of these factors, the problem faced by these maid-servants often remains hidden and gets ignored. These were some of the underlying concerns that gave birth to the idea for this study. It was felt that there is severe paucity of empirical data on the subject of socio-economic status against maid-servants, especially within the regional context. And the need to increase the body of knowledge was felt in order to present the reality to the mainstream population, and to question and deconstruct the myths and misinformed perceptions that

add layers of oppression to the lives of these women.

OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of the study was to trace the socio-economic status of maid-servant. It can be stated in terms of some specific objectives. These are:

- I. To examine the level of satisfaction towards the work of maid-servant.
- II. To reveal the socio-economic status of maid-servant in Purulia town.
- III. To examine the working environment of maid-servant and their problems.
- IV. To identify their general awareness towards education.

POPULATION:

Female serving as a maid-servant in Purulia municipality in the district of Purulia formed the population of the present study.

SAMPLE:

The sample consisted of 200 maid-servants taken from Purulia Municipal area of the district of Purulia. The process of sampling was done through simple random sampling.

TOOLS:

A questionnaire was developed and used in the present study for finding out measure the socio-economic status of maid-servant.

METHODOLOGY:

Survey methodology would be adopted for this investigation. The survey method gathers data from a relative large number of cases at a particular time. It is not concerned with the generalized statistics that result when data are abstracted from a number of individual cases. It is essentially cross-sectional.

METHOD:

- I. Survey for finding out the socio-economic status of maid-servant.
- II. Analysis of data and interpretation of results.

PROCEDURE:

The socio-economic status scale was administered on the samples of 200 maid-servants who are working in Purulia Municipal area in order to assess their socio-economic status. The investigator went to the individual respondent's house where the tool had to be carried out. Then the investigator made rapport with the respondent to make the situation more congenial for the administration of the tool. At this point investigator filled up the particulars as required at the top of the sheet by asking to the respondent. After filling up the particulars investigator himself read the instructions loudly as well as the mode of answering that is given on the sheet and asked the respondent to follow him. After making sure that they had understood the instructions then they were asked to start responding. Much care was taken that no item should remain unanswered. The investigator had presented all the items one by one and marked their responses into the appropriate box by putting tick mark. There was no time limit for their response in the entire item. The questionnaire was administered in the month of November 2011.

After administering the tool, the response sheets were scored according to the scoring procedure. For the measurement of socio-economic status of the maid-servant the score was made with the help of tally mark. The score was tabulated in a separate sheet. Tally marks have been given against each item according to the response 'Yes' and 'No'. After then response wise total tally marks were calculated in each item. The total responses of each item both in 'Yes' and 'No' were tabulated separately. The collected scores comprise the raw data for the present study. In order to get the Item-wise scores, the Item-wise raw scores were converted into percentage scores.

FINDINGS:

The following are the major findings of the study:

- ❖ Most of the maid-servants are satisfied in their profession. 78% maid-servants given positive response towards their profession and only 22% given negative response.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (82.35%) do not engaged with other work except their work as a servant for earning. Only 17.65% respondents are engaged to other activities.
- ❖ 20% respondents are the only earning member of their family and 80% respondents do not earn alone for the family. Other members of their family are engaged to work for earning.
- ❖ Nearly half of the respondents (44.90%) were told that other members of their family are engaged in this profession and rest of the respondents (55.10%) told that nobody engaged in this profession of their family.
- ❖ 65.31% respondents are working more than one family and 34.69% respondents are working only in one family.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (72.34%) think that they are interested to do hard work instead of present one for earning more money.
- ❖ 36.73% respondents have television in their own house and rests of them (63.27%) have no television in their house.
- ❖ Only 30% respondents have mobile phone in their house and rests of them (70%) have no mobile phone in their house.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (86%) houses are kachcha. Only 14% respondent houses are pucca.
- ❖ 90% respondents were told that they have no water source for their use in the house. Only 10% respondents told that they have water source for own use in the house.
- ❖ 72% respondents think that they do this job only for living by any means and others do not think so.
- ❖ 63.27% respondents were told that the environments of their dwelling house are according to their choice. Rests of them (36.73%) were not co-existence with this view.
- ❖ 72.92% respondents were told that they have good relationship with the other peoples of their surroundings and rests of the respondents have not.
- ❖ Most the respondents (71.74%) think that their social status do not hindered owing to serve as a maid-servant to others' family. Only 28.26% think that it is harmful to maintain the social status.
- ❖ 72% respondents were told that the employer and their family members do not behave roughly with them and 68% respondents told that the employer and their family members give to them proper respect.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (70.83%) were told that they get good behaviour from their family members and 29.17% respondent do not get the same behaviour from their family members.
- ❖ 30.43% respondents were told that they are oppressed by their husband or guardians. But 69.57% respondents are doing not oppressed by the same.
- ❖ 61.70% respondents were told that they do not spent too much time in own household job. But owing to that their family members do not create any type of disturbance in the family. Only 38.30% respondents have given their opinion against this.
- ❖ Most of their (67.39%) guardians or husbands do not tell them to leave the work permanently. Only 32.61% respondents told that their guardians or husbands tell them to leave the work.
- ❖ 38.78% of respondents think to leave their present job and 61.22% of them did not think so.
- ❖ 65.31% of total respondents in the study get time to watch television and remaining of them (34.69%) do not get any time to watch the television programme.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (78%) do not go to the cinema hall to watch film show.
- ❖ Only 8.16% of respondents have been faced physical abuse by their employer.
- ❖ Nearly half of the respondents (55.10%) were told that their employer use acrimonious remark about them.
- ❖ 56.82% of the respondents respond that their employers are sympathetic about their need and problem.
- ❖ Nearly half of the respondents (52%) are frequently faced sickness.
- ❖ 22% of respondents were told that if they absent in duties their employer deduct the amount proportionately from their monthly salary.
- ❖ 46% respondents were told that they get reward from their employer for good work and 54% do not get any type of reward from their employer.
- ❖ 72.92% of the respondents think that they have trust on their employers and 76.60% of the respondents participate in happiness and misery of their employers.
- ❖ 58.33% respondents think that this work is monotonous to them but other respondents (41.67%) do not think so.
- ❖ 41.67% respondents think that if they can stay in their own house for few days without work they will be happy. Other respondents (58.33%) do not think so.

- ❖ 67.35% respondents feel distressed if someone calls them as 'kajer lok'.
- ❖ 44.68% respondents feel that person who engaged in other profession see them in depressed position.
- ❖ Nearly half of the respondents (51.06%) think that their present profession resists them to live with dignity in the society.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (68%) are not literate. Only 32% of them are literate. Those who are not literate they have painful feeling for that.
- ❖ 68.75% of respondents think that they did not get literacy due to poverty and 31.25% of respondents think other reason behind this.
- ❖ 58.33% of respondents want to receive education if they get opportunity in future and 41.67% do not want to receive education in future.
- ❖ 77.14% respondents who are mother do not send their ward to school. Only 22.86% respondents send their ward to school.
- ❖ 34.29% of respondents teach their child in home and 65.75% of respondents do not do the same.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (85.71%) do not want to stop education of their school going child and engage them in household job.
- ❖ 64.58% of respondents think that lack of education is the main cause for their present condition.
- ❖ Most of their (98%) family income is below Rs. 3000.00 per-month and 28% of their family income is below Rs. 1000.00 per-month. Half (50%) of their family income is between Rs. 1001.00 to Rs.2000.00 per-month and 20% of their family income is between Rs. 2001.00 to Rs. 3000.00 per-month.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The demand of maid-servant among middle and upper strata people in the Purulia Municipality is generally fulfilled from native women and often domestic service contributes a substantive form of employment and generation of earnings for many poor women.

The maid-servants generally perform a series of household tasks such as cleaning utensils, sweeping and cleaning rooms, washing clothes, fetching water etc. However, the cooking is assigned to the expert workers. The wages of the maid-servants are very low compared to other workers.

The maid-servants have to face a lot of problems at the work place which include low level of wage, a minimal pay or no pay for extra work, absence of leave facility, sexual as well as physical harassment by male employer etc. These problems can never be overcome until the concept of unionism is developed among the maid-servants.

The economic compulsion is the main hardship for taking the job as maid-servants. The general educational status of the maid-servants in the area of Purulia Municipality is not satisfactory. The workers contribute their total earnings to the family. Since wages of the maid-servants are very low, they have been worst exploited.

The maid-servants are subject to variety of exploitations starting from low wages to maltreatment and sexual harassment by the employer. However, with a view to improving the socio-economic status and working conditions of maid-servants the following recommendations are recommended:

1. Most of the maid-servants get less than rupees three hundred per month as remuneration. So, appropriate wages should be fixed for them to keep up their economic status.
2. The social status of maid-servants is very low. They are staying in the lower ladder of the social hierarchy. So, proper attention should be given to keep up their social status, where they do not feel inferiority complex. All people of the society should be aware that every profession is equal in view of dignity.
3. Providing support service like day meal to all maid-servants irrespective of their nature of work.
4. Some degree of flexibility should be provided to the maid-servants in working hours.
5. Minimizing degree of command over the maid-servants by the employers and imposing acceptable workload to the maid-servants.
6. Proper understanding should be build up between maid-servants and employers over worker's failure to attend at work.
7. Maid-servants union should be setting up, which will look after their interests.
8. Equitable extra wages should be provided for extra workload due to arrival of employer's guests on holidays and festivals.
9. Annual incremental should be provided benefit to all maid-servants.
10. Minimum leave facilities should be provided to the maid-servants.
11. Legislation should be passed for the welfare of the maid-servants.
12. Most of the maid-servants started working while they are in the age-group of 8-12 years. Special attention should be paid to this particular group while planning programmes and interventions, in order to prevent them from entering abusive and neglectful situations as maid-servants.

13. More attention should be paid on child domestic worker to go to the school rather than working as maid-servant.

14. More emphasis should be given on Adult and Non-formal education to educate the illiterate maid-servants. The awareness campaign should be organizing to aware them about education.

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