A study on socio-economic status of house maid workers in Karnataka: A Sociological Study

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Abstract – During last few decades there has been phenomenal growth in the numbers of working women in India and most of them occupied in informal employment. It is clearly evident that income of house maid workers is lowest among all the women employee of informal sector and they even face many problems compare to others. House maid workers are engaged in household works like washing utensils floor mopping, washing clothes cooking, and as well as some outdoor works such as buying vegetables, milk etc. Majority of them live in poor living conditions without any colors and struggling for everyday survival.

An effort has been made in this study to trace out the socio-economic status of maid servants. For this purpose, present study total 250 female maid servants are selected for the analysis. The researcher used structured questionnaire for collecting data. The collected data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution. The result shows that poor economic status was the main reason for taking the job as maid servants. It was also evident that, maid servants had to face many problems at work place. Moreover problems like low self esteem and under development are moon among maid servants due to lack respect in the society.

Keywords: Domestic workers, Domestic work, socio-economic problems.

Introduction

Women play a very important role in building a nation, which includes a part of a home maker. Women workers in India constitute one third of the total workforce. In India, majority of the women are engaged in the unorganized sector such as agriculture, construction, domestic service etc., Domestic work is largely considered as a female work and it has been in great demand. The women who are doing the homemaker service in the other's house are known as domestic servant, workers and maids. Generally women do these types of works for their own and familial livelihood. The work expected from them may be part time or full time or around the clock. Since domestic work is not a skilled job it is an avenue of employment of poor, largely illiterate and semi illiterate women and they continue to persists in domestic work even without substantial rights and benefits.

The present study is considered to be very relevant to the present day society as it reflects the various hidden issues pertaining to the domestic workers. The study is of current relevance as the domestic workers face several problems such as low salary, over time work without pay. Housemaid workers do not have social security as they the part of unorganized sector of employment. Hence there is a need to assess the social and economical status of women domestic workers.

By conducting this study the researcher has put her effort to explore to the socio-economic status of the women domestic workers.

Various studies have been undertaken during past few decades about the role of women in emerging labour market. Bul Govind Baboo and Laxmi Panwar (1984) had conducted a study on maid servants in Hariyana. The study revealed that women are going through a miserable life. The problems faced by the maid servants are low wage, long hours of work, frequent change over in nature of job, lack of freedom and poor societal status due to inferior status of the job. Shrayana Bhattacharyas and Shalini Sinha (2009) have studied on domestic workers in India; Background and issues. The study revealed that women domestic workers make a greater work enforcement hence they fail to give quality care for their children and elderly.

According to a conducted by Sindhu Menon (2010), the caste system and language plays a vital role in the lives of domestic works. A study conducted by Nisha Varia (2011) shows that, millions of women migrate to various parts in Asia and middle east to earn for their survival as domestic workers. Neetha (2013) in her study on "Minimum wages for domestic work" shows that, social understanding of household work was the critical factor in understanding the state's response in understanding the issues faced by the domestic workers apart from labour market issues that govern legislative interventions. According to Angel D (2017) , the workforce in the unorganized sector in India is classified in four divisions viz occupation, nature of employment, distressed categories and service categories.

In contrast to Indian scenario, Kalayan (2006) in his report revealed that migrant workers in United Kingdom (UK) have the legal status of workers and they are entitled to rights such as the minimum wage, time off etc.

According to Ramadevi K (2015), the modern system of domestic work is an outgrowth of the system of slavery, though its nature, function and relation have undergone considerable changes over time, though the character of the industry did not change much, certain temporal and spatial distinctions could be traced.

Significance of the Study

A domestic worker not only provides the service to the needy persons of the society but also uplifts their family in all grounds. Domestic servants are proved to be a necessity for non working house wives. For the illiterate and women of poor educational status the domestic work or the house maid work is among the most convenient and comfortable job for the women society. In urban areas the people appoint the domestic workers for carrying out their household work. But at the same time 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. Hence the study mainly focuses to the socio economic status and the problems faced by domestic servants.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to understand and examine the socio economic status of maid servants, their work nature and wage structures.

Area of the study

For the present study, Bagalkot city of Karnataka was chosen for sample of study. There has been rapid population growth migration and influx of labour from the neighboring villages. From the total of maid workers in the Bagalkot city 250 were selected as sample through stratified random sampling. The study was conducted during 2016-17.

Methodology

This is a survey study that makes use of the descriptive survey design. Respondents in this study were 250, who are working in Bagalkot city in order to assess their socio-economic status. As the researcher herself desires to go personally to ascertain the problems of maid servants through a questionnaire which is specifically prepared for the study to elicit the intervention.

The data collected in the study were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution. Secondary data was collected from literature related the study, books, journals, websites etc. To explore this issue, computed a set of stable matches that would be predicted to arise from the observed in the set of information collected.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Frequency of the socio demographic status of the respondents

(i) Religious status	:	Particulars	Numbers	Percentage
		Hindu	160	64
		Christian	50	20
		Muslim	40	16
		Total	250	100
(ii) Age at the time maid servant	:	Below 20 years	20	08
		21-30 years	40	16
		31-40 years	80	32
		41-50 years	65	26
		51 & above	45	18
		Total	250	100
(iii) Marital status	:	Un married	15	06
		Married	90	36
		Widow	70	28
		Divorce	25	10
		Separated/Deserted	50	20
		Total	250	100
(iv) Educational status	:	Illiterate	115	46
		Primary level	75	30
		Secondary level	35	14
		PUC level	25	10
		Total	250	100
(v) Profession of the husband	:	Daily wages labourer	90	36
		Auto driver	55	22
		Office peon	20	08
		Office cleaner	15	06
		Driver	45	18
		Self employment	25	10
		Total	250	100
(vi) Living status				
a) Respondents area	:	Village	160	64
		Town	75	30
		City	15	06
		Total	250	100
b) House facility	:	Own house	150	60
		Rented	85	34
		Leasing	15	06
		Total	250	100
c) House type	:	Pucca	130	52
		Thatched	70	28
		Concrete	15	06
		Asbestos	35	14
		Total	250	100
d) House compartment	:	One room	145	58
		Two room	105	42
		Total	250	100
e) Drinking water facility	:	Own tap	155	62
		Public tap	95	38
		Total	250	100
f) Toilet facility	:	Own	100	40

		Common	80	32
		Open space	70	28
		Total	250	100
g) Electricity facility	:	Yes	225	90
		No	25	10
		Total	250	100
h) Cooking facility	:	LPG	155	62
		Kerosene	30	12
		Fire wood	65	26
		Total	250	100
i) Amenities	:	Television	240	96
		Vehicles (two wheeler)	185	74
		Swing Machine	25	10
		Refrigerator	15	06
		Mixer/grander	50	20
		Mobile phone	245	98
vii) Reason for doing domestic work	:	Easily Available	60	24
		Find it easy	80	32
		Safer than Casual labour	40	16
		Don't have other skills	70	28
		Total	250	100

The above table indicates the social demographic status of the respondents. Among 250 respondents about 64% are belongs to Hindu. As regards the age of respondents, about 32% are belongs to 31-40 years of age group and about 36% are married women's. Regarding educational status of the respondents about 46% are illiterate. Among total 250 respondents husband's about 36% are working as daily wages labours, and about 32% have expressed reason for doing domestic work as it is easy to find for their livelihood.

In regards to living facilities it could be understood that 64% of the respondents in the periphery villages of the city. Majority of the respondent reported that about 60% are living in their own house. Among them 52% of respondents are living in the pucca houses where as 28% of the respondents are living in the thatches houses. Probably all the housing facility would be get the respondents under the government schemes. About 62% of them are having the facility of drinking water and 40% of them are having the toiled facility. About 90% of the respondents' houses are electrified and about 62% of the respondents are using LPG for their cooking, the amenities like television, two wheeler vehicles, mixer/grinder was there in majority of the respondent houses and about 98% of the respondents were using mobile phones.

Table II Frequency of the economic demographic status of the respondents.

i) Working in houses	:	Particulars	Number	Percentage
		1 house	40	16
		2 house	70	28
		3 house	95	38
		4+ house	45	18
		Total	250	100
ii) Working hours per day	:	1-2 hours	120	48
		2-4 hours	85	34
		4-6 hours	45	18
		Total	250	100
iii) Salary payment with respect to time period	:	Weekly	130	52
		Monthly	90	36
		As & when need	30	12
		Total	250	100
iv) Monthly income	:	Below Rs. 3500	25	10

		Rs. 3501-5500	75	30
		Rs. 5501-7000	115	46
		Above 7501	35	14
		Total	250	100
v) Monthly expenditure	:	Rs. 3500 – 5000	110	44
		Rs. 5001-7000	95	38
		Above 7001	45	18
		Total	250	100
vi) Monthly savings	:	Below Rs. 1000	85	34
		Rs. 1001 -2000	110	44
		Rs. 2001 – 3000	35	14
		Above 3001	20	08
		Total	250	100
vii) Satisfaction with earnings	:	Satisfied	95	38
		Un satisfied	155	68
		Total	250	100
viii) Income sufficient to lead family	:	Yes	95	38
		No	155	62
		Total	250	100
ix) Borrowings / loans	:	Below Rs. 1000	90	36
		Rs. 1001 – 2000	105	42
		Rs. 2001 – 3000	45	18
		Above Rs. 3000	10	04
		Total	250	100

Out of total 250 respondents above 38% are working in 3 hours daily. About 48% were indicated that they are working between 1-2 hours per day. Among total 250 respondents about 52% were getting their salary on weekly. About 46% of the subjects are getting their salary on monthly basis and 44% of them were incurred a nominal expenditure per month. In regard to the savings only 44% of the respondents are saving some money for their future. Out of total 250 respondents about 62% were reported to be unsatisfied with their salary earned. About 62% of the respondents said that their income is not sufficient to lead their family at present. Among the total 250 respondents about 42% of the respondents were borrowings money from other source for their family maintenance.

Table III Frequency of problems faced by the respondents.

i) Health Problems	:	Particulars	Number	Percentage
		Back pain	60	24
		Joint pain	70	28
		Allergy	40	16
		Asthama	35	14
		Injuries	25	10
		Others	20	08
		Total	250	100
ii) Salary /House/Month with respect to working hours.	:	Rs. 500 1-2 hours	105	42
		Rs. 500 – 1000 2-4 hours	70	28
		Rs. 1001 – 1600 3-6 hours	55	22
		Above Rs. 1600 6+ hours	20	08
		Total	250	100
iii) Leave facility	:	Leave nil	65	26

		If needed	110	44
		2-3 days	45	18
		Not allowed	30	12
		Total	250	100
iv) Harassment faced	:	Verbal Comment/whistling	55	22
		Physical touching/feeling up	20	08
		Visual staring learning, gesticulating	25	10
		Reported	65	26
		Not reported	85	34
		Total	250	100
v) Personal Problems	:	Little time to care for children	65	26
		Little time to care for husband	20	08
		Caste discrimination in working place	45	18
		Not able to attend relative's function	20	08
		Feel trained	25	10
		Deduct money from salary	40	16
		No fixed working hours	35	14
		Total	250	100

Apart from socio-economic problems, health problems are most common for respondents due to restless and continuously working with water and chemicals such as phenol, washing powder detergents etc. The common health problems are asthma, joint pain, skill allergies and back pain etc. Out of 250 respondents about 42% reported that they are working between 1 to 2 hours daily with minimum salary of Rs. 500/- per month per house. Among 250 respondents about 44% reported that they are getting leave when they needed. Regarding harassment faced by the respondents one way the other was common, of which 34% of the respondents were not reported. It is reported that about 26% of the respondents, little time to care for children, which is followed by caste discriminately (18%), money deduction from salary (16%) and no fixed working hours (14%) respectively.

Conclusion

The demand of maid labors among middle and upper class people in Bagalkot city of Karnataka has been drastically increased because of scarcity of time and lack physical fitness among house wives. The most of the migrant women from lower socio economic background work as domestic laborers. Maid servants in Bagalkot area have very poor educational status. The poor economic status is the main reason for taking the job as maid servants.

The domestic workers generally engage in several of household works such as cleaning utensils, sweeping and cleaning houses, washing clothes and fetching water etc. The wages paid to them are very low when compared to other laborers. The job of domestic workers is not recognized in the society. It is revealed and inferred that the socio economic condition of domestic workers are not good.

The domestic laborers face many problems at the work place such as, low wage, a minimal pay or no pay for extra work, no fixed working hours, absence of leave facility, no respect, physical harassment by the employer etc.

Psychological and emotional problems among domestic workers occur as a result of lack of leisure time and continuous work load. Totally they have been worst exploited.

Now days, the domestic workers are most vulnerable unorganized group and lack of social security and social stigma related to domestic work would make the women more vulnerable in this sector.

Suggestions:

To improve the working conditions and quality of life of the workers in the unorganized sector in general and house maid workers in particulars, the minimum wages policy should be implemented strictly in all segments of the unorganized sector including house maid labors so that income security is maintained.

The majority of the workers in the unorganized sector including domestic workers do not receive social security benefits. The government should initiate to provide for social security benefits to these workers.

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