FACTORS AFFECTING OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AMONG THE WEAKER SECTIONS OF MALDA

ABSTRACT

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(ABSTRACT)

India after achieving the independence from the colonial rule made considerable progress and achieved levels of development. But the fruits of development could not reach to everyone equally and it entranced the gap between the poor and the rich. The weaker section of people who were neglected and economically worst off from time immemorium could not reap the fruits of development even after gaining assurances in the constitution of independent India. Inspite of certain structural changes and new opportunity structure, the miserable condition of weaker sections could not be improved and in most cases the quality of life remained the same. The major reason of the perpetuation of poverty among weaker sections is the imbalance between explosion of population and the respective resources for its smooth survival. Population increased to an alarming extent while resources of livelihood, avenues of earning and other
required facilities are not increased up to that extent. This created high degree of unemployment among the masses and generated keen competition. Persons belonging to upper and middle class have enough education and training to meet the prevailing competitions market while weaker sections and downtrodden who have no income even for two square meals a day, could equip their children with education and training for the competition. Consequently, the upper and middle class people succeeded to achieve higher positions and against it, the weaker sections and downtrodden are miserably fighting the war of their survival. As a result, the children of weaker sections instead of going to school, they go to the labour force market to sell their labour for the wages decided not in their favour. In these circumstances, social and occupational mobility is at lowest degree among the weaker sections.

The Indian villages, where a considerable size of population reside, failed to provide jobs to most of their population. Persons who own land are engaged in doing agriculture. Their economic condition could not be improved because they had to feed more persons,
while their quantity of land and production of crops remained the same. Apart from this, landless labourers increased day by day. In the village side, small scale industries could not be established which could provide jobs to the villagers. The traditional village occupations day by day become overcrowded. Such circumstances compelled the village people to move towards urban areas for their survivals. Those who took initiative in this direction succeeded to change their position to some extent.

A sociological perusal of the weaker sections indicate that the degree of social and occupational mobility among them is low. Inspite of the developmental measures adopted by the government, still they could not be as mobile as desired. The analysis of the studies conducted on this subject find several reasons or factors which facilitate or impede occupational mobility among the weaker sections. These studies suggest two groups of factors where one group of factors facilitate upward occupational mobility, while other group of factors impede upward or responsible for downward mobility.
The factors which are responsible for upward mobility are such as (a) Education, (b) Higher Income, (C) Migration, (d) Better Opportunity, (e) Overcrowding in several traditional village occupations, (f) Desire to raise one's social status etc. The other groups of factors which impede mobility are: (a) Illiteracy, (b) Lower Income, (c) Birth in low caste or low class family, (d) Administrative inefficiency, (e) Economic dependence, (f) Absence of opportunity structure (g) Lack of proper leadership etc.

Indian society is characterised as a multi-segmental society. There are various forms of segments, groups and classes into which Indian population is divided and show variations. A high degree of social inequality exists among different peoples and groups. Inspite of the efforts made by the government and other agencies, the gap between high and low and distance between rich and poor could not be shortened. It is thought necessary that at least lower sections of the population must be given special privileges, so that they may raise their status and be shortened the gap between rich and poor. This will also help the
reformers and planners to gear up the speed of the social transformation in Indian society. Further, it is also a matter of great importance for a student of social stratification and mobility as well is to find out the factors that facilitate or impede occupational mobility.

In this context, it is desirable to test the relevance and effectiveness of the factors which are mentioned above be studied in different milieu, situations and at different levels. This type of study provides enough data to assess the reliability of such factors. The present study attempts to find out the relevance and effectiveness of these factors for occupational mobility. It will give us an insight to understand the process of social transformation among the weaker section of Malda in particular and Indian society in general.

Objectives:

The major concern of the present investigation is to assess and find out factors that facilitate or impede occupational mobility among the weaker sections. The analysis of the existing literature on this subject and
the studies conducted indicate variety of factors, which in one or the other way influence occupational mobility. The present study concentrates on some of these factors such as: education, migration, income, opportunity structure and desire to raise one's status which influence the mobility among the weaker sections in particular and society in general. Thus, the present study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To study the socio-demographic characteristics of five occupational groups of weaker sections i.e., Rickshaw Pullers, Coolies, Sweepers, Peons and Small Shopkeepers and to understand the inter-group variations.

2. To assess the levels of education among the weaker sections under study.

3. To find out the role of education in facilitating occupational mobility among these occupational groups.

4. To study the extent of migration that takes place among these occupational groups.

5. To find out the impact of migration on occupational mobility among weaker sections.
(6) To study the economic status of the above mentioned groups of weaker sections

(7) To find out the role of economic status of the population under study in facilitating the occupational mobility.

(8) To study the opportunity structure that exists in the society as perceived by the weaker sections.

(9) To find out the role of opportunity structure in changing occupational status of the population under study.

(10) To assess how far the five occupational groups of weaker sections are desirous to change their occupational status.

(11) To find out the level of aspiration to change one's status that affects occupational mobility among the five occupational groups of weaker sections.

**Research Tool:**

In the light of studying the objectives, the pre-coded interview schedule was formed as a major tool for collecting data which included questions pertaining to the following areas:
(1) Socio-demographic characteristics (i.e., age, sex, marital status, religion, caste, rural-ruban background, size and type of family, education, income and family monthly income.

(2) Perception of education and its role (respondents' level of education, their perception about the role and utility of education in their life with particular reference to the achievement of success and status).

(3) Migration (the degree and level of migration of the respondents, the place from where migration takes place, the reasons for migrating from the native place. Similarly, the levels of migration of respondents' fathers and from where they migrated, the reasons why respondents' fathers migrated from their native place).

(4) Economic Status (The levels of income and economic status of respondents).

(5) Perception of opportunity structure (Respondents' perception about the adequacy of opportunity structure that exists at the places of their work).
(6) Desire to raise one's status (Respondents' desire to raise their occupational status, the attempt which they make and the measures which they adopt to change their occupation, the extent which they can go to change their occupational status.

Sampling Plan:

Malda town is the universe of the present study. The researcher selected this town as a universe due to several reasons. First, he had already conducted a survey on weaker sections of Malda town to find out the degree and extent of occupational mobility among them during the course of his M. Phil degree. Thus, he has adequate knowledge of the field and have good rapport with the population under study. Second, the researcher himself belongs to the district of Malda and also well acquainted with the socio-demographic language as well. Further, it is more convenient and economical to the researcher to collect data from his home town. The data was collected from the 300 respondents who were selected for the purpose of study.
Presentation of Data:

The data collected through the administration of the interview schedule have been statistically analysed and presented in tabular form. In the tables, the frequencies \( f \) and their corresponding percentages \( \% \) have been given. The mean has been obtained whenever necessary. Case histories have also been cited to highlight the main features of the study.

Analysis of Data:

The data on the basis of tables and statistical inferences have been analysed. The characteristics of the data and the direction to which they lead have been given in respective chapters. While interpreting data impressionistic and subjective interpretation have been avoided. Only factual analysis and the conclusion arising out of that have been presented. The \( X^2 \) test has also been used wherever necessary.

Findings:

The mean age of the total population is 47 years. Out of the five occupational groups sweeper is the only
group among whom both the sex i.e., male and female representation is found. It indicates that both male and female are engaged in this sweeping occupation. Overall, majority of the total population are Hindus. In the entire sample 83.33 percent are Hindus and 16.67 percent are Muslims. These five occupational groups are from twelve different castes. These are Brahmin, Kayasta, Dom, Teli, Napit, Malakar, Dhopa, Hari, Baniya, Muchi, Sarnakar and Sudra. Dom has the highest (20.66%) representation in the entire sample while Brahmin has got the third position (11.00%). Muslims could not specify their caste. The family size of sweepers is the biggest (6) and it is smallest (4) among Peons. The average family size of the total population is of 5 members. The majority percentage (90.67%) of the total population have nuclear family. The highest illiteracy and the lowest level of education are found among the sweepers, while highest level (upto high school) of education is found among the Peons. In the entire sample only (24.00%) respondents are educated upto the high school.

The majority of the respondents of all the five occupational groups agree that success is possible only through education and still it plays a vital role in achieving the profitable occupations or better jobs.
The majority of respondents wanted to have higher education and vocational training. But, due to poverty and lack of opportunity could not achieve it. Apart from this, few percentages did not like to take education or vocational training due to lack of proper guidance.

The majority percentage of all the five occupational groups agree that education gives perfection to the human being, it certainly develops new abilities, helps to lead honourable life and also helps to attain better position in the society. Apart from this, it is also understood that education is still useful if it is acquired in good institution.

Statistically, it has been found important as the value of $X^2$ is (9.48) which is significant at 0.01% level or $P < 0.001$. It testifies that education plays a major role in moulding the personality and providing better opportunities in life. The statistical test also indicates that education and occupational mobility have a positive association.

The majority of respondents i.e., 60.67% of the entire sample is migrants and 39.33% are non-migrants. Among
the migrants most of them came from Bihar state and lowest percentage (12.71%) of them have come from out of the town. Out of the total migrants population, majority respondents have rural background, while 43.33% have urban background.

The majority of the migrants left their native place due to poverty and the temptation of better jobs and remuneration.

The majority of the respondents' fathers are non migrants and few percentages of them are migrants. Among the migrants (respondents' fathers), majority of them migrated from out of the province, from the Bihar state. The highest percentage of respondents' fathers (migrants) had rural background. The respondents' fathers migrated due to poverty, unstable job and the temptation of better jobs.

Statistically, it has been found important by the $X^2$ value (5.57), which is significant at 5% level or $P < 0.05$. It testifies that migration and occupational mobility have a positive relation.

In the entire sample, majority (29.00%) of the respondents' monthly income is Rs. 500-700/-. The
average monthly income of the total population is Rs. 706/-. The levels of income of individuals highly influence the social and economic status of persons.

Statistically, it has been found important by the value of $X^2$ (86.84), which is significant at 0.01% level or $P < 0.001$. It testifies that level of monthly income and occupational mobility are associated positively.

Out of the total sample, majority of the respondents' family monthly income is Rs. 500-900/-. Their average family monthly income is Rs. 918/-. The family monthly income is also equally important for social and economic status of persons.

Statistically it has also been tested.

The highest percentage (51.33%) of the total respondents have a feeling that they have no opportunity to earn their livelihood at their native place, while, lowest percentage (14.67) of them have positive opinion about it.

The majority of the total population agree that occupations are overcrowded and have a dim chance of new addition in the existing labour market situation in their native place.
The highest percentage (50.66%) of the total respondents agree that it is very difficult to get job in the native place.

It may be concluded that due to lack of proper opportunity, non-availability of job and overcrowdedness in the labour market, people migrated from their native place. It is also understood that those who succeeded to overcome these problems have become upward mobile in the occupational hierarchy and those who could not do so remained immobile in ladder of occupational, income and prestige hierarchy.

The majority of respondents (79.67%) of all the five occupational groups are interested to change their present occupation, while 20.33% do not want.

Those who want to change their occupation, majority of them (42.25) argue that due less earning from their present occupation they want to change it.

Those who do not want to change their occupation, among them two equal highest percentages (29.50%) of respondents reason that they—do not want to change their present occupation because they have not enough resources and proper opportunity to change it.
The higher (28.04%) percentage of the total respondents reply that they tried for another job in order to change their present occupation.

The highest percentage (59.00%) of the entire sample agree to do hard work to achieve better occupations, while, lowest percentage (5.33%) of them have different attitude towards it.

In the entire sample, the higher percentage (57.33) is ready to take risk to enter into the new profession, while lowest percentage (9.34%) of them is not ready to take risk.

The above findings lead the researcher to conclude that mostly respondents are desirous to change their occupations in order to earn more and enhance social prestige to lead a honourable life in the society. It is also understood from the present findings that as much as the respondents are desirous to change their met the required endeavour or efforts to achieve their longing goals. In fact, those who are desirous as well as succeeded to overcome their prevailing problems and hurdles, have become occupationally upward mobile. This has been proved statistically proved.
RECOMMENDATION:

A sociological perusal of the present investigation creates avenues for further research on the variables which has not been encompassed under this study. The conclusion of the research findings suggests that apart from education, migration, economic status, opportunity structure and desire to raise one's status, other variables which lead to upward occupational mobility may also be studied to assess the relevance, utility and effectiveness of these variables. Besides these, some exclusive studies may also be conducted on the factors which affect downward mobility. The present piece of investigation also provokes to conduct a comparative study on occupational mobility among weaker sections (lower class), middle class and upper class of the society. As occupation is one of the most important determinant of individual's social and economic status in the society, as such, if we study occupational mobility, it will give us an insight to understand how social status and economic status changes from time to time of these three social classes (i.e., lower class, middle class and upper class). It will also help the
reformers, planners and researchers to examine the nature of inequality which exists in these groups of social classes in particular and Indian society in general.