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Address

• Vikram Nagar, Boudhi Chouk, Latur.
• Tq. Latur, Dis. Latur 413512 (MS.)
• (+91) 9922455749, (+91) 8999250451

Email

• aairjpramod@gmail.com
• aayushijournal@gmail.com

Website

• www.aairjournal.com

CHIEF EDITOR – PRAMOD PRAKASHRAO TANDALE

Kolhapur Laundry Business: Opportunities and Challenges

Miss. Sunanda R. Parit

Research Student,
Department of Economics,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur.
Email: sunanda.parit@rediffmail.com

Dr. D. K. More,

Associate Professor,
K. R. P. Kanya Mahavidyalaya,
Islampur, Tal. Walwa. Dist. Sangli
Email: dinkarmore111@gmail.com

Abstract

Washing clothes is an important activity for each and everyone in daily life. In Maharashtra, Kolhapur is a well developed district in respect to education, culture, sports, industry, social, co-operatives, political etc. Social change is necessary and need of modern age. From Chh. Shahu Maharaja's period, special weightage has been given to Bara Balutedars. In that period socio-economic status of Washermen as well as other Balutedars were good. But now-a-days, the modern technology attacked on these Balutedar's traditional occupation. Hence, the traditional occupations' such as- Washermen is comes under critical situation and it is essential to upgrade them in various manners to survive their occupation. This research paper highlights the different aspects of laundry business like- changing nature of laundry business, impacts of modern technology, opportunities and challenges etc.

Keywords: Laundry Business, Balutedari, Dry Cleaning, Washermen Community etc.

Introduction:

Generally, Laundry and dry cleaning services include washing, dry cleaning and ironing different types of clothes. Cleaning sensitive Stuff, Three Piece, Curtains, Sherwanis, Blankets and other home accessories are washed and dry cleaned by the Washermen with systematic manner. Now-a-days, due to increasing number of working family members, life style of the population is changed. Family members are preferred to utilize outsourced laundry and dry cleaning services due to their daily busy schedule. In addition, most of the winter clothes cannot be washed or dry-cleaned inside the home due to their stuff nature. That is why; people give preference to wash warm clothes from the laundry. The present research paper has focused on changing nature of Washermen occupation, different types of occupational problems and its impact on Washermen's standard of living and overall development.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To study the changing structure of Kolhapur laundry business.
2. To study the opportunities and challenges of laundry workers in Kolhapur district.
3. To find out of impacts of modern technology on the laundry business.
4. To find out the problems of Washermen community and suggest policy measures for empowerment of laundry workers.

Hypothesis of the Study: On the basis of objectives the following hypothesis are lined out for the study.

There is significant contribution of modern technology in the progress of laundry business.

Data Base and Methodology:

Present research paper has used primary as well as secondary data. In Kolhapur district about 10000 Washermen workers are directly involved in washing, ironing and dry cleaning activities. Out of these 500 (5%) sample respondents are selected for the collection of the primary data. Multistage random sampling method has been used for the selection of sample respondents. Secondary data collected through related journals, magazines, research articles etc.

Nature of Washermen Occupation: Traditional vs. Modern:

Earlier Washermen used to perform their activities with soaps, wood planks and wash tubs. Today, the nature of Washermen occupation has been widely changed. Generally, advanced technology is used for superior results in Washermen occupation. Modern washing machines, advanced detergents and chemicals make wash easier and more effective than traditional methods. Washermen mainly use hand wash method for their occupation and only washing and ironing activities were performed in traditional occupation. Due to technological progress and requirement of customer, Washermen have to use modern machineries for different activities. These machineries include- washing machines, hydro extractor, dryer etc. These machines give superior results against the traditional methods.

Table No. 1
Nature of Laundry Business in Kolhapur District

Sr. No.	Nature of Laundry Business		
	Name of the Service	Service Provides (in Traditional)	Service Provides (in Modern)
1.	Washing Clothes	- By hand only	- By hand and Washing Machines
2.	Ironing Clothes	- By Coal iron only	- By Coal iron - By Electric iron - By Roll Press/Calendar Machine
3.	Dry Cleaning	---	- Use Chemical, - White Washing Powder - Use Bleaching Powder
4.	Bleach	---	- Use Bleaching Powder, - Bleaching Liquid
5.	Starch	---	- Use <i>Shabu</i> and Corn Flower Solvent
6.	Clothes Dry	- On open space-Sunlight	- Dryer Machine - Stumler Machine - Hydro Machine

Source: Field Survey (July 2013 to May 2015)

Now-a-days, nature of laundry business is changed due to its need and existence the occupation in competitive age. Table No. 1 shows the flow of Washermen services in Kolhapur district. Washermen play a vital role in the service sector with variety of their work.

Changing Nature of Laundry Business:

Now-a-days, technology comes into every sector and business also. Laundry occupation is not exception to this. Besides, households as well as commercial businesses need the services of laundry and dry-cleaning. Business such as- restaurants, hotel industry and other government and non-government offices require laundry services daily. All these factors play a significant role in laundry and dry cleaning business. With the growth of Urbanization, different activities of Washermen like washing of clothes, ironing and dry-cleaning have turned out to be a commercial proposition. It led to the establishment with modern dry-cleaning units in the urban areas as well in big towns.

Table No. 2
Changing Nature of Laundry Business

Sr. No.	Nature of Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Continue with Tradition Pattern	214	42.80
2.	Continue with Modern Technology	286	57.20
Total =		500	100

Source: Field Survey (July 2013 to May 2015)

Table No. 2 shows that changing nature of Laundry Business in present days and expected to be in future. 42.80% Washermen respondents wish to continue their occupation with traditional method. According to them, four major reasons to wish continue their traditional Washermen occupation and these are: lack of other business opportunities, landless, lack of capital and illiteracy. The study found that majority of the respondents (57.20%) expects to continue their occupation with modern technology. They expect to take benefits from modern technology. According to them, modern technology is beneficial to its user; hence they wish to continue this occupation with next generation.

Modern Laundry Effects:

Table No. 3 highlights on customer's preference to modern laundry against domestic laundry. Domestic laundry refers Washermen who perform their occupation in home. They collected dirty clothes from door to door and after washing. On the other hand, the customer themselves visit the modern laundry shops for washing, dry cleaning and ironing their clothes. In the laundry process the nature of work is same but the nature of service is different.

Majority of the respondents answered that attractive service (37.2 %) and on time delivery (20.4 %) are responsible factors to customer's turn towards modern laundry. Use of modern machinery and superior work also affect customers' satisfaction, replied 18.8 % and 9.4 % respondents respectively. In Kolhapur district, most of the respondents are engaged in their traditional occupation with family members. Due to lack of capital, lack of government support and competition, they cannot set up modern laundry.

Table No. 3
Modern Laundry Effects

Sr. No.	Other Laundry Effects	No. of Respondents	Percent (%)
1.	Uses of modern machinery	94	18.8
2.	Attractive service	186	37.2
3.	On time delivery	102	20.4
4.	Superior work	47	9.4
5.	Other effects	71	14.2
Total =		500	100

Source: Field Survey (July 2013 to May 2015)

Some of them have used modern techniques in their occupation and become successful as well as settled in their occupation.

Impacts of Modern Technology on Laundry Business:

Society is developing day-by-day and majority of people have their busy schedule. Following are some positive and negative impacts with its nature and effects on Laundry Business.

Positive Impacts:

Table No. 4
Positive Impacts of Modern Technology

Sr. No.	Positive Impacts	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Save Time and High Profit	67	13.4
2.	Reduce Human Work / Require Less Manpower	84	16.8
3.	Work With Adjustable Time	114	22.8
4.	Increase Income	76	15.2
5.	Work Superiority	47	9.4
6.	Work of 24*7	42	8.4
7.	Require Small Work Place	38	7.6
8.	Wash More Clothes in One Time	32	6.4
Total =		500	100

Source: Field Survey (July 2013 to May 2015)

Table No. 4 shows the positive impacts of modern machineries or technology on Laundry Business. As per sample respondents, following are the positive impacts are found during the field survey.

Negative Impacts:

Everyone wants to use new techniques or modern machineries in their occupation for different purposes. Modern machineries have some advantages and some disadvantages. Considering the negative aspects of modern machineries, it has reduced manpower as well as increase unemployment.

Table No. 5
Negative Impacts of Modern Technology

Sr. No.	Negative Impacts	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	High Consumption of Water and Electricity	123	24.6
2.	Seasonality of Employment	47	9.4
3.	Not Fixed Job	56	11.2
4.	Reduce Employment/Manpower	71	14.2
5.	Increase Competition	84	16.8
6.	High Maintenance	52	10.4
7.	Health Problems	67	13.4
Total =		500	100

Source: Field Survey (July 2013 to May 2015)

Though the benefits from modern machineries are limited to Washermen, but it increases unemployment among them. Modern machineries broadly affected especially on livelihood of BPL labour or Washermen. Following are some disadvantages or negative impacts of modern technology which have affected laundry business. Table No. 5 shows that negative impacts of modern technology on laundry business. 24.6% respondents reported that modern machinery has consumed high water and electricity and 14.2% respondents reported reduced employment.

SWOT Analysis of laundry business:

An analysis of Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats mostly helps to assess overall potential of laundry business in Kolhapur district. Based on all these aspects of laundry business, Kolhapur district has been summarized in the form of SWOT analysis.

A. Strengths:The strengths of laundry business are as follows:

- Modern equipments and technology
- Less capital investment and potential good profit
- Home based occupation and performing with adjustable time
- Wide scope to extend traditional occupation with modern techniques and technology .

B. Weaknesses:Due to lack of sufficient modernization and up-gradation of technology in Washermen occupation, its progress is very slow. The weaknesses of Washermen occupation are as follows:

- Inadequate current market study and strategy of marketing.
- Low level of modernization and up-gradation of technology.
- Critical process of obtaining bank loans, resulting in high cost of private borrowings.
- Don't have any brand name

C. Opportunities: Indian laundry industry has vast potentiality in the country as well as global market. Hence, at present it is necessary to explore the work efficiency with acceptance of advanced technology. Followings opportunities are helpful to overall development of Washermen occupation in Kolhapur district.

- Fast changing fashion trends helpful to extend occupation.
- Modernization of occupation with modern technology helps to increase trend of customers.
- Increase in disposable income and changing lifestyles of people
- Growing urban population with employees or professionals requires professional laundries for better serve them.

D. Threats (Challenges):

- Heavy competition of modern laundry
- High effects of season (rainy, winter, festival season etc.)
- Government departments and local bodies are not favourable for growth of this sector.
- Unavailability of labour and increasing labour cost
- Customer's attraction towards modern laundry

All above aspects clearly show that laundry business Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Washermen need to take proper decision to extend their occupation with modern technology which make them strong to face competition easily.

Conclusion:

The Researcher identified the need to build strong relations with customers by Washermen. Due to lack of unity, they cannot access benefits of government's different schemes for development to the community. Due to modern technology, nature of washing and dry cleaning clothes is completely changed. All above aspects of the study show that traditional Washermen occupation has undergone a big change. The traditional Washermen community has no other jobs or source; also they have not capital to undertake any other occupation. Hence, it is essential to provide support by the government for upliftment of this community. Otherwise, this community will remain jobless and without economic stability.

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