

Socio-Cultural Lives of Women Workers Working in Cashew Processing Industries in Selected Tehsils of Kolhapur District

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Abstract:

The present paper deals with the socio-cultural life of women workers working in cashew processing industries in Chandgad, Ajara and Gadhinglaj tehsils of Kolhapur district. Chandgad, Ajara and Gadhinglaj are the prominent tehsils in Kolhapur where the cashew processing industries provide ample job opportunities to the needy people. Most of the labour force required in cashew factories is the women workers; hence many women belonged to lower and lower-middle class families find cashew factories as the only source of income to support their families in the absence of other sources of livelihood such agriculture and allied fields. The present paper focuses on the familial, social and cultural lives of these women workers in order to understand their status in public life and the role of employment, especially in the cashew factories, in maintaining their dignities in the familial and social spheres of the lives.

Keywords: women workers, socio-cultural life, education, status, religion and caste.

Introduction:

The present paper brings to forth the socio-cultural lives of the women workers working as the main labour force in the cashew processing industries in Chandgad, Ajara and Gadhinglaj tehsils of Kolhapur district. In the era of globalization, where with the advent in technology and rapid proliferation of information, the means of leading a successful social and professional lives have been changed drastically. People in different sectors, with the easily accessible knowledge coupled with latest trends in fashionable life-style, are taking much care of their personal disposition in the society. The employment opportunities and education play vital role in their development. Durkheim (1950) rightly mentioned that “particular social milieu . . . determine the ideal that education realizes” (Thompson, 2017). However, there are still some people, who are unaware of these developments, but are playing major role in providing modern life-style to many. The cashew processing industry workers, and especially women workers, are among these people, who are living at the verge of modern socio-cultural developments. Therefore, in this paper an attempt is made to assess the social and cultural lives of these women workers and the role of cashew

processing industries in providing a source to lead them stable lives in the society. In order to assess their social lives, 350 samples from the 27 factories belonged to small, medium and large scale industries are randomly selected and are analyzed at the scales of their age, religion, caste, education, type of family they live in and their status in the family, attitude of society towards them, job satisfaction and gender discrimination at the workplace, etc.

Analysis:

The data collected in the field work through predetermined interview schedule is analyzed on the basis of different parameters and further interpreted in order to understand their views which are expressed here:

a) Age wise Distribution of the Respondents:

Following table shows age wise distribution of the sample respondents from the study area.

Table No. 1

Age wise Distribution of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Age Group (In Years)	No. of Respondents	Percent (%)
1.	18-25	28	8.00
2.	26-35	98	28.00
3.	36-45	158	45.14
4.	46-60	53	15.14
5.	Above 60	13	3.71
Total =		350	100.00

Source: Field Work

The majority of the respondents (45%) are from the age group of 36-45 years which is the highest number of the respondents than other age groups. It indicates that nearly half of the respondents belonged to this group is young and energetic. 15.10% and 28% respondents are from the age group of 46-60 years and 26-45 years respectively. On the other hand, only 3.70% respondents are from the age group of above 60 years. It means that only few respondents from the above 60 years are engaged in this activity.

b) Religion and Caste wise Distribution of Respondents:

The cashew processing industry appears to have women workers from the entire Kolhapur district. The proportion of local women workers in particular is the highest. It was also seen that women of different religions were working in the cashew processing industry which is seen in the following table.

Table No. 2

Religion wise Distribution of Respondents

Sr. No.	Name of Religion	No. of Respondents	Percent (%)
1	Hindu	324	92.6
2	Muslim	11	3.1
3	Buddha	8	2.3
4	Christian	5	1.4
5	Other	2	0.6
Total =		350	100

Source: Field Work

Majority of the women workers (92.6%) in cashew processing factories belong to the Hindu religion. On the other hand, 2.3% respondents are Buddhist, 3.1% are Muslim, 1.4% are Christian and 0.6% belong to other religion category.

Caste is an important factor that determines a person's place in society. The women workers in the cashew processing industry are of different castes and appear to be working together. As per data available, majority of the women respondents working in cashew processing industry are from the Maratha caste and its ratio is 62.29% which is highest from other castes. Mahar caste women workers are 18% whereas Lingayat caste women workers are 5%. The proportion of Muslim and Chambar women workers is found to be similar. The

proportion of women workers from other castes was generally less than 1%. These mainly include carpenters, Christians, Gurbas and other castes.

c) Marital Status:

Marital status of the women workers from the study area is classified into four major categories like married, unmarried, divorced and widow and it is presented in following table. The number of married women is greater than the other categories which also indicate that these women are under control of their husbands. Following it, 15.14% women are widowed who work in cashew industries primarily to shoulder the responsibilities of their households after their husbands. They live with their children and work to earn their livelihood.

Table No. 3

Marital Status

Sr. No.	Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percent (%)
1	Married	266	76.00
2	Unmarried	28	8.00
3	Divorced	3	0.86
4	Widow	53	15.14
Total =		350	100

Source: Field Work

d) Attitude of Society towards Women working in Cashew Units:

The society has a sympathetic attitude towards women who are struggling to cope up with the situations of their lives and working to earn their bread. The researcher has tried to know such attitude of society towards women working in the cashew units.

Table No. 4

Attitude of Society towards Women working in Cashew Units

Sr. No.	Scale	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Liberal	2	1
2	Respectful	16	5
3	Modest	53	15
4	Sympathetic	131	37
5	Can't Say	148	42
Total =		350	100

Source: Field Work

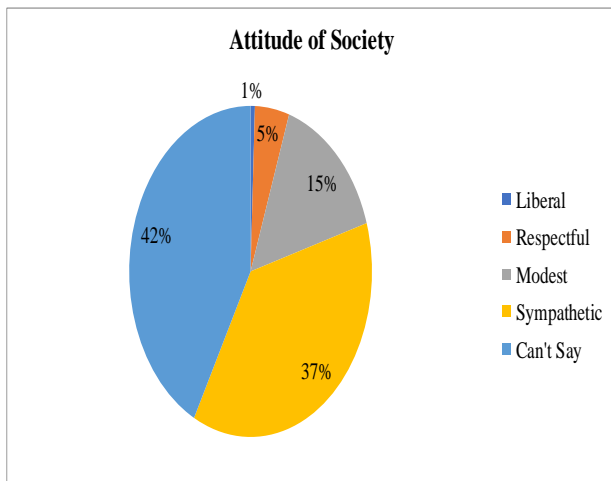


Figure 1

Only 1% women respondents said that there is a liberal attitude of society towards their work whereas 5% women said that their work in cashew industry is respectful. According to the 15% respondents, their work in cashew industry is accepted in the society with diffidence. 37% respondents expressed sympathetic attitude of the society towards them whereas 42% women workers said that they cannot say what other people feel about them or their work in cashew processing industry.

e) Job Satisfaction of Women Workers:

The opinions pertaining to the job satisfaction expressed by the women workers are presented in the following table. It shows that 32% women have mentioned that they are fully satisfied with their job. It is followed by the 29.43% and 24.86% women who have opined very good and good respectively about job satisfaction. Only 10% women are satisfied at average level about their job. The proportion of women about their job satisfaction at below average level (3.71%) is very negligible.

Table No. 5

Job Satisfaction of Women Workers

Sr. No.	Scale	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Excellent	13	3.71
2	Very Good	35	10.00
3	Good	87	24.86
4	Average	112	32.00
5	Below Average	103	29.43
Total =		350	100

Source: Field Work

f) Moral Support from Society to Women working in Cashew Units:

Moral support is essential for doing better work. Here the researcher has also collected the opinions of women workers regarding the moral support from society to do their work in the cashew units. The following table expresses the opinions of respondents about the moral support they received from the society:

Table No. 6

Moral Support from Society to Women working in Cashew Units

Sr. No.	Scale	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Excellent	2	0.57
2	Very Good	25	7.14
3	Good	68	19.43
4	Average	178	50.86
5	Below Average	77	22.00
Total =		350	100.00

Source: Field Work

More than 50% women said that there is average moral support to them to do their work. It is followed by the women with below average response (22%) and good opinion (19.43%) about the moral support they got from the society for their working in the cashew units. 7.14% women have expressed that there is very good support from the society and only handful of women (0.57%) said that they receive full moral support from the society. It means that society poorly supports the work in cashew processing industry.

g) Social Status of Women workers due to job:

The researcher has collected data regarding social status of women workers due to their job which is presented in the following table:

Table No. 7

Social Status of Women workers due to job

Sr. No.	Scale	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Excellent	8	2
2	Very Good	12	4
3	Good	42	12

4	Average	161	46
5	Below Average	127	36
Total =		350	100.00

Source: Field Work

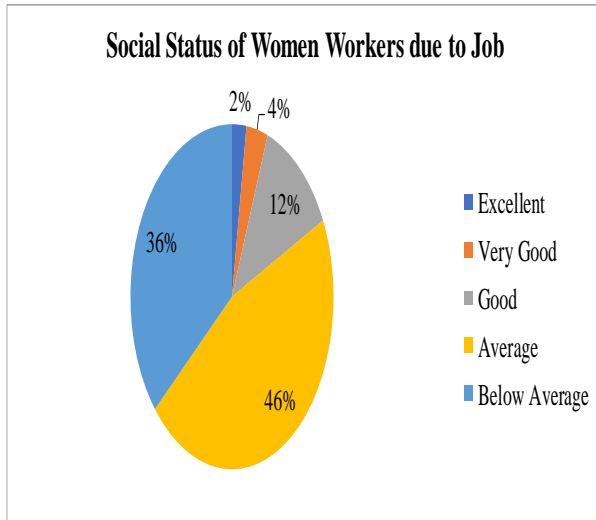


Figure No. 2

Majority of the women (46%) have the opinion that there is average social status they receive due to their job. 36% women have expressed below average opinion about the social status their job provide and only 12% women have the good opinion about the social status in the society due to their job. The proportion of women with excellent (4%) and very good level (2%) opinions is very negligible.

h) Participation in Religious and Cultural Programme:

The participation in religious and cultural programmes plays significant role in revealing the socio-cultural lives of women workers. Mira Seth (2021) correctly mentions that “Institutional mechanisms for dealing with women’s development and issues relating to women are also based on the cultural context in which women are viewed in India.” The cultural context helps to determine the social identity of the women. The women workers have expressed their opinion about their participation in religious and cultural programmes in the village. The data presented in the above table shows that the proportion of women workers is highest (26.86%) with very good opinion about their participation in religious and cultural programme.

Table No. 8

Table No. 8
Participation in Religious and Cultural Programme

Sr. No.	Scale	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Excellent	59	16.86
2	Very Good	94	26.86
3	Good	84	24.00
4	Average	48	13.71
5	Below Average	65	18.57
Total =		350	100.00

Source: Field Work

24% women workers have the good opinion and 16.86% women have excellent opinion about their participation in religious and cultural programme. The only 13.71% women workers have expressed average level opinion about their participation in religious and cultural programme. But the proportion of women workers with the opinion at below average level is 18.57% about their participation in religious and cultural programme.

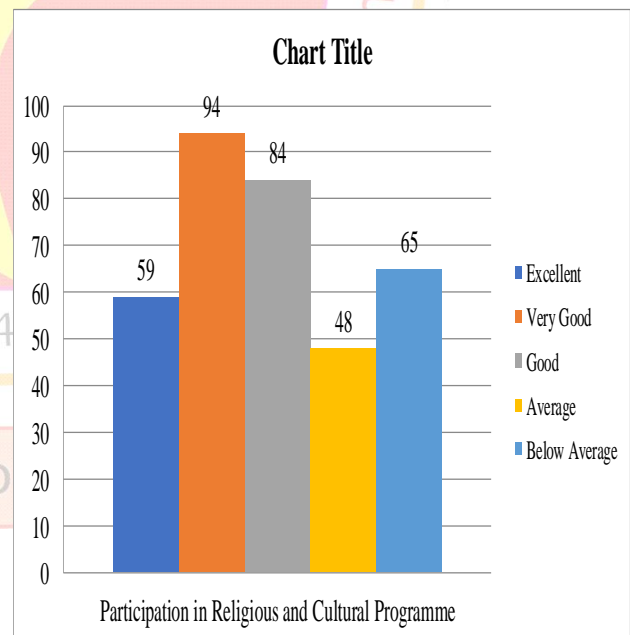


Figure No. 3

Result and Discussion:

The interpretation of the data collected reflects that the women workers working in cashew processing industry are, though employed as the main labour force, living at the verge both at the workplace as well as in the society. Among the women interviewed, majority of them are from the

age group of 36 to 45 and are married which shows that they are much experienced and working only to satisfy the needs of their daily lives. Most of the women are from the Maratha caste in Hindu religion. The attitude of the society towards these women is sympathetic as though the number of women who cannot express what others feel about them is greater than sympathetic category, it is supposed as invalid as it cannot help to determine the attitude of others towards these working women. Furthermore, the number of women whose satisfaction is average and below average is greater shows that neither these women are happy to work in cashew processing industry nor are they willing to work there. Most of these women feel that working in cashew processing industry is not an esteemed job as they do not find any kind of status it provides; however, there are mixed kinds of opinions about their cultural and religious participation.

References:

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