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Review

Estate Tamils of Sri Lanka – a socio economic review

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Indo-Aryan migrated from India in the 5th century B.C. to form the largest ethnic group in Sri Lanka today, called the Sinhalese. Tamils, the second-largest ethnic group on the island, were originally from the Tamil region of Southern India. Until the British occupied Ceylon, Sinhalese and Tamil rulers fought for dominance over the island. Today, two sections of Tamils exist in Sri Lankan society: the Sri Lankan Tamils, and the Indian Tamils or Hill Country Tamils. The hill country Tamils are highly involved in the plantation sector of Sri Lanka. The main objectives of this work are to gain insight into the socio-economic status of Indian Tamils and their history. The author did a literature review on the history of Indian Tamils, their political-legal, geo- demographical and socio-economic status and their participation in Sri Lankan economic development. The data used for this work were secondary in nature and obtained from verifiable sources viz. electronic databases, libraries, scholarly articles, books etc. From the analysis, it is observed that their standard of living is below that of the national average: they suffer from demographic stress, are subjected to political and economic discrimination and historical exclusion. Greater political representation and equal civil rights for the stateless Tamils are among their basic concerns. In the economic arena, there should be improved working conditions and greater educational and occupational opportunities. The privatization of the country's tea plantations in the mid-1990s resulted in some short-term costs, affecting the Tamils. Social and cultural concerns include depriving the Tamils of the freedom of religious belief and protection from the attacks of the dominant community

Key Terms: Indo-Aryan emigration, Jaffna kingdom, Sinhalese, Hill country Tamils, Civil rights, Coffee/tea plantations, Stateless.

INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka formerly known as Ceylon is a pear shaped tiny island located in the Indian Ocean about twenty eight kilometres off the South-eastern coast of India. Sri Lanka has a population of about twenty one million in which Sinhalese makes up seventy four percent of the population and are concentrated in the densely populated Southwest. Sri Lankan Tamils, whose South Indian ancestors have lived

on the island for several centuries, are about twelve percent of the total population live who throughout the country and predominantly present in the Northern Province of the island. Indian Tamils, a distinct ethnic group, also known as plantation Tamils represent about five percent of the population. The British brought them to Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century as estate labourers to work initially in a coffee plantation and then later in tea,

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rubber plantations. They remain concentrated in the "tea country" of South-central Sri Lanka. Other minorities include Muslims (both Moors and Malays), at about seven percent of the population; Burghers, where descendants of European colonists, mainly from Netherlands, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and aboriginal Veddahs forms the island's population. Most Sinhalese practices Buddhism and most Tamils practice Hinduism. The majority of Sri Lanka's Muslims practice Sunni Islam. Sizable minorities of both Sinhalese and Tamils are Christians, most of whom are Roman Catholic. Thus, Sri Lanka is ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse. English is commonly used in government and spoken competently by about ten percent of people.

Evolution of Tamil migration to Sri Lanka

The manual labourers problem was a strange characteristic of the Sri Lankan society which the plantation was helping to solve in nineteenth century Ceylon. The Kandyans provided manual labour initially when there were only a few handfuls of plantations in 1830s. But within a few years they recoiled from the influx of planters and due to incidents of friction they withdrew into a state of some hostility to these intrusions of the coffee estates (The Examiner, 1853). In spite of that, some of them continued to perform the essential task of clearing the forest areas for payment. Although some low-country Sinhalese moved to the plantations seasonally and worked as regular hands until the early 1840s when they too withdrew from this role into those of domestics, traders, carters and fellers of forest (The Examiner, 1853). By the 1860s both group of Sinhalese were undertaking contracts for weeding and holding besides those for felling forest as a "piece work". They objected and avoided the routine work on estates because they had not the need and most of them had land of one sort or another (CO 54/235; 1847). They felt it is unessential to work for a strange person, the white planter, as none were not so poverty stricken as to tie themselves to the wage strings of.

Kandyans averted the estate-work as they regarded it as degrading and that caste contributed to their antipathy to such work (Vandendriesen, 1954). Besides, the treatment meted out to the labourers by the planters of the 1840s served to further aversion the regular estate work. However repugnant the restraints of plantation labour may be to the Sinhalese, it is not supposed to be a race knowing that they are incapable of exertion or insensible to the stimulus of gain. On the contrary, it is a curious fact that all the hardest works such as clearing the forest, "bandy" transport etc. connected with the estates were done by them. But in all of this they are to a certain extent obey their own masters as they work by contract or by the job. They are not amenable to the orders of an overseer, the white planter (CO, 1857).

Despite views from such a quarter, the hallowed practice of using the Sinhalese refusal to work on estates, as proof of their indolence continued to hold sway. Be that as it may, there was a need for immigrant labour. Famine on several occasions at many places and extreme poverty all around provided very few convenient propelling factors to the planters to import estate workers from South India. Higher wages in India sufficed to attract Tamil immigrants spontaneously and with little urging provided the 'pull' to bring immigrant labours from South India. At the outset, wages rose with competition and by the mid-1840s the estate labour received 6d to 9d^{5a} per day and, it is said that some could earn from 15s to 18s a month (The Examiner, 1853). In the Madras Presidency some labourers received 3d a day even in 1858. The fact that coffee culture necessitated a maximum supply of labour only seasonally combined with the proximity of the two countries, permitted the immigrants to return to their homes. At the outset, it was mainly a seasonal migration.

In 1823, the first batch of Tamil labourers came from Tamil Nadu then called the Madras Presidency. They came from the districts of Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, Madurai, Thanjavur, Thiruchirapalli and other parts of India to work in the Sri Lanakn coffee plantations. In the 1830s this migration was a mere trickle. The first great influx was in 1840s. According to a history of the Planters' Association, the first planter that attempted to recruit labourers in India was Lt. Col. Henry C. Bird in 1844. It was in fact illegal; it was not till 1847 that this stream of immigration was legalised by the Indian Government with the proviso that Ceylon was not used as a springboard to transport immigrants elsewhere. Labour problems were intensified at first by government reluctance to support the immigration of labourers from India. In 1840 there was an increase in the demand for labourers for repairing irrigation tanks in the dry zone. The Jaffna people who were employed to do this repair work as people of Indian origin accepted to work for lower wages than local labourers. The prospect of employment in Ceylon attracted enough workers, this is to increase the number of workers for expanding plantations and to keep labour costs extremely low.

Given the nature of the "push" factors in South India and the spontaneous form of the immigration, it is not surprising that the supply fluctuated. Several factors heightened this fluctuation. It includes:

- (1) The travails of the journey were considerable and not uncommonly, fatal. Then the sea journey to Mannar or Colombo in unregulated, crowded and unstable sailing vessels was far from pleasing. Only a small stream used the Tuticorin-Colombo route. But, most travelled via Mannar. Mannar to the hill-country was a long walk of over hundred and fifty mile largely through tropical, malarial jungle beset with elephants and leopards.
- (2) The labourers usually travelled in gangs and were not always protected from exploitation by those who ran the

sailing vessels; or against some of the local populace (CO 54/235; 1847). Also, they were certainly no protection from cholera and small pox which occasionally scourged immigrant and resident alike in the hill country.

(3) The planter treated their labourers with "disgraceful injustice and cruelty" (William, 1888) sick labourers were turned out of the estates; discipline was exceedingly arbitrary and cruel.

(4) The housing and the medical aid provided were far from adequate.

(5) Many planters did not pay the wages regularly or withheld them altogether especially when the coffee enterprise had slipped into a serious depression (De Silva, 1840-1955).

Socio-economic status of estate Tamils

The bulk of the Indian Tamil plantation workers in Sri Lanka were drawn from the most depressed and lowest caste groups in South India. While this may be an artefact of great poverty among such groups at the time when the colonial masters were recruiting such labourers from 1840s, onwards, it appears that the colonial masters and the employers of such labourers were deliberately looking for those from the relevant caste groups in their search for a pliant work force due to their firm stereotypical views about race and caste of workers. Over seventy five per cent of the Indian Tamil workers represent the lowest levels in the South Indian caste hierarchy, but interestingly those in supervisory grades were selected from among the higher status. Even though opting the plantation work force would have produced a levelling influence on people from different caste backgrounds, this has not happened for over hundred and fifty years. The colonial system and the plantations imposed many restrictions on the Indian Tamil plantation workers in order to keep them under harsh living conditions and minimum worker benefits within the plantation workforce. The Sinhala and, to some extent, Tamil nationalists movements in Sri Lanka treated them as an immigrant group with no local roots and mere interlopers brought in by the colonial masters. As an ethnic minority in post-independence Sri Lanka, the Indian Tamils lost their citizenship rights and a programme for repatriation to send a significant number of them back to India was initiated in the 1960s. One could argue that the "Untouchables" became "Touchable" within the plantation economy as members of lower castes worked and lived side by side with higher caste people within the plantations. There was however some degree replication of caste or even "an invention of caste" within the plantation economy as workers hierarchy broadly conformed to the caste system and some services such

as sanitary work, washing of cloths etc. were extracted on the caste basis.

The system of indentured labour that evolved in the plantations shared many features with the caste system as mobility of labour was restricted. The kanganis and other higher ranks came from more respected castes and chances of moving up or moving out were extremely limited. While ethnic barriers such as language, citizenship rights and poor education served to keep them within the plantation system, caste, class and to some extent, gender barriers reinforced their position as manual workers with limited rights and low dignity. The much of the tea pickers were women who had limited agency at home as well as in their work place. As a cumulative outcome of these circumstances, Indian Tamil plantation workers recorded the lowest educational levels and life expectancy, the poorest quality of life and the highest mortality levels in independent Sri Lanka, in spite of the widely acclaimed beneficial outcomes of the Sri Lankan welfare state. In addition, there are serious social problems such as alcoholism, domestic violence, poor housing, lack of support in old age and widespread poverty in many of these communities, adding to their social marginality.

The political mobilisation of the Indian Tamil community took a distinctly ethnic form particularly since 1940s, with a higher caste leadership in control of the Ceylon Indian Congress that later changed its name to Ceylon Workers Congress, representing Indian Tamil interests in Sri Lanka. In spite of its seemingly working class orientation, it is an upper caste-led organisation that has been part of the ruling governments in Sri Lanka without interruption since the 1970s. While looking onto the economic status of Indian Tamils, the evidence suggests that planters were treating their labourers much better in the 1850s and 1860s than in the 1940s. The most salient factor was that the labour supply was invariably short of the demand. This meant that plantations could not afford a bad name. By the 1850s planters saw that it was in their own self interest to treat their workers with some benevolence. With a ready demand for labour, the ill-treated immigrant had some chance to move to another planting district. Unlike the indentured labourers in the sugar colonies who was also favoured by the short period of notice he was entitled to give (CO, 1872).

The immigrant started estate life in debt to the kangany or the planter. This was inherent in the 'coastal advance' system which was used in conjunction with kangany system to recruit labour. As planter's agent, the kangany was provided with an advance to secure labourers but this advance was debited depending on the estate workers that he brought over. If the labourers need 'course cap' it will be provided but will be debited against him. This was his initial debt even though many kanganies

tended to spend only a fraction of the coast advance on the immigrant labourers, keeping the bulk of it for them (De Silva, 1940-1955). The main point was that the Kangany was the leader and representative of the labourers com-posing his gang and artfully bound them to him in every conceivable way. He was their banker and spokesman. This was a position of unwholesome power, though accepted by the immigrants themselves. It would appear that it was his natural rank as leader and middleman rather than that of creditor which resulted in such power. The planters themselves railed at the system and felt that it placed them in power of the kanganies and argued that as creditors they were placed in awkward position (Ferguson, 1866).

Much has been made of the fact that immigrants commenced their estate life in debt. The question hinges on the amount of their advance, their wages and how much they were able to save per month. According to a planter majority of his labourers came over, deeply indebted to the estate and they often found difficulty in repaying the advances though planters rarely charged interest (Ceylon, 1876). Even more significant is a kangany's admission, quite incidentally, that most of the hands on his estate were in his debt. But these views bear examination. Obviously these travelling advances differ since much depended on the size of the gang procured and how much money the immigrant desired to leave behind for his relatives in India. 4 to 6s should be sufficient for his journey. It would seem that the advance was seldom under 10s and 10 to 15s can be taken as the normal sum (Ceylon, 1870).

In the 1860s, the rate of estate wages vary where the adult males earned 7 to 9d a day, the amount varies in different districts, while women and boys received 4.5 to 7d. Off season the labourers were liable to get only four days work but in crop time five days or more probably a six days week was common. This would have brought the men roughly to 13 to 14s a month or 16 to 17 shillings a month. They could also earn 6d for bushel extra picked in crop time (Ceylon Observer, 1870). A feature of the plantations in Ceylon was that planters issued rice or rice money at standard rates, every week or every month. In 1840s this was at 5 to 6 shillings a bushel, in the late 1850s it varied from 6 to 8 shillings. A bushel was usually issued each month but some estates issued three fourth of a bushel with 2s for curry stuffs. Thus, 8 shillings can be regarded as the subsistence expenditure of each immigrant per month but one should note that they invariably sold a portion of the rice (Ceylon Times, 1863). This was possible because immigrants maintained vegetable plots near their line and because some even had a few cows which provided to be useful by-income.

Taking another shilling off for extras, this would have left an immigrant bachelor of the 1860s with 4 to 8 shilling

a month to pay off his initial debt, spend on clothing, on luxuries like arrack and toddy or to squirrel away as he pleased. The head of the family might have needed most of the savings for his dependents in India but one should note that the advance or initial debt could well have fulfilled this task, even if partially. If the family was in Ceylon the women and elder children could generally earn their keep as well. On these calculations an immigrant could work off his initial debt in three to four months. Matters were further complicated by the fact that apart from their initial debt, immigrants contracted other debts with their employees or kanganies in the form of advances for which they charged interest on these advances (Ceylon Observer, 1870). To sum up, the wages in the 1860s were adequate for subsistence and for savings as well though, obviously, on the basis of a very low standard of living and the assistance of vegetable plots, cows and poultry maintained by the immigrants themselves.

Education and Health Conditions

Education is the main factor that determines the social status of a development process of an individual's as well as a community. It transforms people psychologically, socially and culturally. Plantation community is one of the marginalized groups that are more vulnerable in educational achievements. The comparison of literacy rates with national level showed that the plantation community was only 76.9% while the national average was 91.8%. Similarly, only 20.2% of the plantation population has a secondary education and only 2.1% of them had a post secondary education. The comparable figures for the all island are 52.2 and 20.7% respectively. More than half (55.9%) of the plantation population had only primary education. A few of them had entered into the university system (Treasures of the Education System in Sri Lanka, 2005).

The indicators of health and nutrition are another source which reflects the backward and neglected nature of the plantation community. The percentage of undernourished children below the age group of five years in the plantation sector was 38.9% where as the percentage of the rural and the urban sector were lower and they were 21.8 and 12.8% respectively. Infant mortality in the sector was 60.6% while the national rate was only 25.3% and still birth rate is 20% in the plantation sector. The plantation health sector is still not integrated with the national health stream and it is treated as a separate entity. As a result, national health policies and health programmes are not fully covering the plantation community.

Plantation human development trust (PHDT) is the institution handling the entire health services of the plantation sector. Estate hospitals are not equipped with

the necessary facilities. Lack of qualified doctors, qualified health staffs and lack of medicine, indoor treatment facilities are the major problems faced by the estate health service (Gwatkin et al., 2004).

Housing, water supply and sanitation

The plantation sector has its own identical housing patterns known as line rooms, introduced by the colonial planters. The line rooms are barrack type structured with two hundred sq. feet for an entire family, with hardly any ventilation, no privacy for grown-up children and overcrowding due to larger families with their dependent parents. In the plantation sector, 185,533 families consists the population of 777,730 who lives in 163,580 housing units/line rooms. Most of these line rooms are more than 100 years old and seventy percent of them lives in dilapidated conditions. The percentage of self owned houses among the plantation community is estimated to be low as 10.2 and others who live in the line rooms owned by the plantation companies. Nearly, 13,000 families do not have even line rooms they live in temporary huts.

However, as a result of various housing programmes implemented by the different organization 45,000 new housing units were constructed and some of the old line rooms were upgraded. However, given the large number of unsuitable housing units in the plantation sector the challenges behind the provision of decent houses for the plantation community is enormous. With regard to the provision of drinking water and sanitation 90 and 62% of the needs of the estate sector are met respectively due to Donors, NGOs and Government interventions. But still 74% of the estate households use common taps and 15.5% use common well for drinking water. While nearly 25% of the households use latrines, another 25% do not have access to latrine facilities. After the re-privatization in 1992.

Government Agencies and NGOs had interest to improve the water supply and sanitation conditions, but the problem still prevails in higher level compare to the other sectors (Status of Workers Housing in Plantations, 2004).

Employment and Child labour

Labour force participation rate in the estate sector is around 45%. The sector also characterized by high labour force participation rate (43.4 percent) among females compare to the other sectors. However, in the recent years the labour force participation rate of the sector is

decreasing due to the emerging trend of greater emphasis on education over employment at a relatively younger generation. However there is a decline in the participation of female in labour force from 47.6% in 1986/87 to 45% in 1996/97 in the plantation sector. Out of the total active persons in the plantation community 80.6% are employed while the unemployment rate is 19% overall. But the unemployment rate among the younger generation is 70.5%. While 7.5% of the working people have permanent employment the others which are 28.7 percent are temporarily employed and 3.1% are self employed. On the other hand, only 9.1% of the plantation people have subsidiary occupations. Unemployment is an acute socio-economic as well as development problem because of its relationship to the poverty and human development. Unemployment has been identified as an emerging problem among the plantation youth especially after privatization of the plantations in 1992. Among all the plantation youth, the unemployment rate is 38.63% but it is 50.6% among the educated youth. Of the working youth only 43.67% have permanent employment and the balance engaged in temporary or casual works (Labour Force Survey in the North and East Colombo, 2002).

It is also noteworthy to explain that among the working youth only twenty five are satisfied with their present jobs while 67.75% are not satisfied. The reasons for dissatisfaction are low wage, lack of incentives, low states of job, lack of promotional aspects, lack of social security benefits etc. The higher poverty line defined by the Department of Census and Statistics revealed that nearly 80% of the plantation households lie below the poverty line. The income of plantation workers household is determined mainly by five sectors such as daily wage rate which is determine by the collective agreement, the number of days of work offered to them by the estate management, the number of days they actually worked, non-plantation work income that they are able to earn and number of income receives in the household. From the inception of the plantations, the managements have maintained a low wage mechanism in order to ensure chief labour and higher profit. Because of this mechanism, they receive very low level of wage in the country compare to the workers in the other sectors.

According to the collective agreement of 2004, they receive Rs 135/- as a basic wage per day plus Rs. 25 as price share supplement and 20 as the attendance incentive bonus for work attendance of over 75%. While the money wage increases from 1992, the real wages of the plantation workers does not show significant increases but showed a static trend in changes. A recent study showed that 67% of the estate workers earned less than Rs 5000 per month while 26% earns between Rs 5000 and Rs 7500, only 7% earns more than Rs. 7500 per

month. The average monthly income of tea estate workers was found to be Rs 2362 (Labour Force Survey in the North and East Colombo, 2002).

It is also noteworthy to indicate that the average income of a plantation worker is around 50% income of rural workers and 25% of an urban worker. In the plantation households, the average number of income receivers had decreased to 1.7 % in 2004. Thus, 23.8% of the estate households have only one working member, about 57% of the household have at least two working members, 13.6% households have three working members and only 5.6% of them have four or more than four working members. The increasing cost of living in the country has an adverse effect on poverty level of the plantation household (Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2003).

Although there is a slight improvement in schooling among the plantation children, child labour bound to be one of the serious issues. A study conducted by Vijesandiran for centre on plantation study showed that among the plantation children below eighteen years old, 28.82% had engaged in child labour. The child labour rate is high among the female (33.55%) compare to the male children (22.58%). Poverty and poor education facilities are found to be the major causes of child labour problem. It is observed that parents are compelled to send their children to work as avenue to cope with poverty incidence. In addition to this, it is also observed that there is an increasing trend in alcohol habit among the members of the plantation community. There is nearly 60% of the plantation workers consume alcohol and they spend 6.6% of their total income on alcohol and 6.7% of their income on Tobacco and Beetle. Alcoholism is seen as two aspects in relation to poverty in the plantation community (Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2003). One is that the alcoholism is one of the major causes for higher poverty incidence and the other one is that it is the result of the higher level of human poverty which prevails in the community.

Status of Women

Sri Lanka has attracted much attention as a country in which women are unusually favourable in society and in political field when compared to other countries of the SAARC region but the plantation women have been neglected and marginalized by development programmes. Plantation women's work has been undervalued and underestimated. The economic contribution to women has not been fully recognized. The plantation women tends to have multiple roles. Women have double burden as income earners and as care-takers. As a result, they

do not have leisure time on a normal working day. Estate women are vulnerable to the oppressive economic and social structures which exist in the system that has continued to be their subordinate for over a century. Women's subordination is rooted in patriarchy, in the plantation families, decision making on major issues like education of children, their employment and marriage, handling of the household authority structure of the family is been decided by the husband. Women form the majority among trade union subscribers but not even 1% of the position in the decision making level is shared by them. The isolated life led by them in the estate is another issues, most of them do not know any world beyond their estate. Female literacy rate remain lower in plantation sector than in the other sector and the school dropout rate of females remains high. It has been recorded that only 53% of female children actually complete primary schooling, 24% attends secondary school and only 4% remain until GCE 'O' level.

Women working as tea pluckers form the single largest segment of the plantation workforce in Sri Lanka. The smooth operation of factory-based tea processing is heavily dependent on the skillfulness and efficiency of the tea pluckers who brings in the green tea leaf. The female workers are economically far more important than male workers. Until 1978, however, female labourers were paid 20% less than male labourers. In 1978 the government passed legislation to increase and equalise plantation wages for all labour categories, thus removing the wage anomaly between male and female plantation labour that had existed in the sector since its beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The daily wage rate for all workers in 2002 was Rs.130.00 for an eight-hour workday. The tea pluckers are also entitled to an 'over kilo' payment of Rs.4 per kilogram during the periods of 'flush'. However, male labourers have the opportunity to earn extra cash by taking advantage of the plantation work schedule where men can do 'task work' that they usually complete within a few hours in the morning although they receive pay for an eight-hour day. They can either find additional employment as a casual wage labourer in a no plantation horticultural activities or engage in their own productive work (Kurien, 1982).

According to the office records of plantations, female workers earn relatively higher incomes than men, but evidence suggests that they neither handle nor manage their earnings. To start with, the female workers do not collect their own wages. Women's wages are routinely handed over to the males (husbands/ fathers) by the management and this practice was originated in the mid nineteenth century, when the Indian Tamil labour gangs, consisting entirely of families were brought to the newly opened plantations in the island from southern India. In

2002, 53 years after independence from the British and more than fifteen years after the large privately owned tea plantations were declared as state corporations and again after the 1995/96 privatisation of plantations, female wage earnings continued to be handed over to the males. This effectively carries on historically established norms of gender discrimination. Management personnel confirmed earlier observations that frequent family conflicts arise because men tends to waste the wages of their wives or other females on alcohol and gambling.

In the view of management, however, women do have the opportunity to collect their own wages, since there is a compulsory work stoppage when wage payments are made. Plantation workers are paid twice a month and although there is a work stoppage on the formal pay-day, the vast majority of the women tea pluckers simply stay at home and male members of the household collect their wages. It should be noted however, that there are instances when women collect the men's wages as well. But such cases are extremely rare. On the days when 'wage advance' is paid, only a few plantations stopped work anyway, usually in the afternoon, when the men were relatively free (Samarasinghe, 1993). It may be argued that as a consequence of a long history of male control of their earnings, the Indian Tamil female tea plantation workers would have internalised the belief that they cannot manage money and voluntarily leave the management of their earnings to the males. But this does not appear to be the reality. For instance, they have small amount of money that they had managed to hide away in an informal savings system called *Ceettu*. The participants would take turns in receiving the pooled sum of money each month. That money is not given to the males and the women spend it mainly on purchase of household goods and in some instances on jewellery. As for collecting their own wages, they had neither the resources nor the organisational capability to change the pattern in the face of a male-dominant workplace and a patriarchal domestic sphere. They viewed themselves as producers, working as many hours as possible to earn the maximum wages.

In addition to the above characteristics and social realities, tea plantation workers devote their lifetime which to an outsider may seem irrational. This situation of total institution remains almost the same as it was in the colonial period. It is the males in the family who collected the cash payment and spends it on themselves. Most of the families especially females in the household suffer and have to bear burdens mentally and physically with huge responsibility and worries in their lives. They have to earn, prepare meals, look-after the family, arrange marriages and dowries for their female children, look after grandchildren and the like. They tolerate all sorts of

harassment from their drunken males. As a family they have a peculiar lifestyle, which is totally different from that in the surrounding village culture. Culturally and socially females in Sri Lankan society still behaves in a traditional manner. This includes not drinking alcohol, smoking, or grumbling except for some elite classes and westernised females (Samarasinghe, 1993).

CONCLUSION

Beginning in the 1870s, the British owners of tea estates in Sri Lanka began bringing over Tamils from South India to provide cheap labour for their plantations. This process led to the uprooting of the Kandyan hill country Sinhalese peasantry from their traditional lands and deepened the majority Sinhalese view that the Indian Tamils were an alien population. The social status and backwardness of these communities have remained unchanged in spite of personal success of some individuals. The dominant ethos among many members of these communities is to seek individual rather than collective remedies for their problems through privately pursued exit strategies such as internal or overseas migration. In most instances, the plantation labours of Indian origin tend to deny, ignore and sweep under the carpet the problems they face rather than recognising them and dealing with them in an open manner.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Since decimalization the pound (symbol"£") has been divided into hundred pence. Prior to decimalization the pound was divided into 20 shillings, each of 12 (old) pence; thus there were 240 (old) pence to the pound. The new coins were marked initially with the wording New Penny (singular) or NEW PENCE (plural). The word "NEW" was dropped in 1982. The Symbol "p" was adopted to distinguish the new pennies from the old, which used the symbol "d" (from the Latin denarius, a coin used in the Roman.

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Full Length Research Paper

Challenges and opportunities of female domestic workers in accessing education: A qualitative study from Bahir Dar city administration, Amhara region, Ethiopia

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Domestic workers have been in existence throughout the Ethiopian history. However, there is no detail study about the actual conditions of the domestic workers. This means information about domestic workers is quite absent. Hence, this research intends to fill this knowledge gap by studying at least the educational conditions of domestic workers in Bahir Dar city administration in Amhara region. The study employed case study research design which includes solely a qualitative approach. The data were gathered from purposively selected interviewees, focus group discussants and key informants. The data were analyzed using thematic qualitative analysis technique. The study found that the major challenges of the domestic workers to access education are low wages, burden of work, time constraints, educational fee and unintended pregnancy. And the opportunities, are the existence of night school program and educational/stationery material support. Based on the findings the study recommended that governmental and non-governmental charity organizations should work to create strong income generating mechanisms for the domestic workers. Public discussion forums should be conducted to raise the awareness of employers regarding the overall situation of domestic workers. Strict labor laws should be introduced and implemented. And the existing activity of educational material support should be strengthened.

Key words: Domestic work, education and female.

INTRODUCTION

Although researches and documents about female domestic workers are very limited in Ethiopia, domestic workers have lived for a long period of time as one group of the society. In Ethiopian ancient literature, reference to female servants (or gered in Amharic) has been made

in various classic documents way back to the old testament. For instance, the 15th century manuscript of Psalms cited in Pankhurst (1985) - in the narrative on King Solomon, stated about 'the female servants at his service' in the palace of queen Sheba of Ethiopia'.

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Written documents dealing with servants/slaves as topical issues for discussion seem to have somehow increased in the 18th and 19thc social history of Ethiopia. For instance, Pankhurst (1976) wrote that countless women had served throughout the country as slaves or household servants. Slave owning in the early 19th c was quite common, and most well-to-do families would have many slaves, male and female, engaged in household chores. Likewise, Arnauld (1980) stated that among the rich, the mistress of the house would spend much of her time lying on an alga, or bed, and perhaps spinning, while she directed the work to her many servants or slaves.

A common feature of the day's description of female servants/slaves in the 19thc in Ethiopia was identifying them by the type of household chores they 'specialize'. For instance, Krapf (1967), noted that there were three hundred the King's 'grinding- women' and the 'water girls' who carried "all the necessary water for the King's household". Regarding the 'water girls' Arnauld (1980) noted about their social interaction, feelings and emotion as:

"...noisy crowd of chatting, romping girls, with large jars slung between their shoulders by a leather belt, or rope ... across the breast. These 'water-girls' were the slaves of the king, and their chief employment consisted of this daily duty of carrying water from the stream to the palace at the summit of the hill . . . they supply all water required for the use of the courtiers and guests, beside a body-guard of three hundred gunmen, all of whom are daily fed at the royal table."

The female servants/slaves engaged in cooking, preparing alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and other domestic chores were other group who specialized different types of household (Harris, 1943). There were also another group of female servants who, in addition to the household chores, played important roles during the warfare. These were known as 'Camp-followers'. They often prepared food for the troops at battlefield.

Sadly enough, in the earlier period, female domestic workers had been almost considered as slaves since they received little more than their subsistence, an occasional gift of clothes, and a very small number of amoles. Servants in Tegre, according to Pearce, cited in Pankhurst (1976), were paid in salt, but were given the equivalent of only three Maria Theresa dollars a year besides their upkeep. This, Pearce felt, was indeed the maximum they could judiciously be given, for, he declares:

"I have often observed that, if though their faithfulness and attention to their master may fit to make them an addition to their pay, or any present, they become immediately ungovernable and insolent, the least indulgence spoiling them for good servants." When not so indulged they were, he says, "very submissive", and

"never received anything from their master's hand without bowing and kissing the article" (Pankhurst, 1976).

Interestingly, the 1974 revolution might be taken as a turning point in the history of servants in this country. The pro-Marxist military government put domestic servants in the list of the oppressed and officially banned using the derogatory terms used to refer to servants (i.e. gered in Amharic for female). It was by this time that the now national parlance of yebet serategna (which literally translated to English as domestic worker) came into being. The Derg regime further introduced a system that allows domestic workers to establish their own association with their assumed oppressed compatriots that mainly consisted of prostitutes, waitresses, bartenders, daily laborers etc (Workers federation of Ethiopia, 1979).

In the current government of Ethiopia, female domestic workers have not still enjoyed equal opportunities in every area of benefits unlike the other group of women. In recent years, women's issues have become one of the premier agenda of the country. Especially, women's access to education has been recognized as a fundamental right, and increasing their access to education is among the educational goals of Ethiopia. To realize these goals, the current government of Ethiopia has put into place a variety of strategies designed to increase female participation rates in education and consequently in the overall development process. In this regard, the government scores a great success but this achievement has not touched female domestic workers.

To make it factual, UNESCO (2012) reported that Ethiopia is the 3rd most improved country in the world for primary enrolment rates since 2000 as it is one of the agenda to achieve the millennium development goal of education for all. It also reported that Ethiopia has a steady improvement in the participation of girls at primary level. The primary school girls/ boys ratio reached from 0.67 in 2000 to 0.92 in 2013. However, this achievement has not touched female domestic workers. For instance, according to the report by Ethiopia social security commission (2013), out of the four surveyed regions' female domestic workers, an overwhelming majority (60.8%) of them don't have access to primary education. Even those who have access of education (39.2%) have experienced high drop-out rate, only 41% of them survived to the last grade of primary education and there were only 29% enrolled in secondary education. This implies that female domestic workers have less access of education when they compare to the rest of women in Ethiopia. This happens not due to the reason that the government lacks interest in ameliorating the educational status of female domestic workers rather it is due to shortage of information about female domestic workers whereby the government fails to work on them (Emebet and Mellese, 2004).

Thus, this research is intended to fill this gap by studying the challenges and opportunities of female domestic

workers in accessing education in the city administration of Bahir Dar. The findings of this study will be helpful for some practical purposes. The study can serve as a source of information for development practitioners, policy-makers and development agents. The governmental bureaus like Ethiopian ministry of education can use it as a source to take action against the educational problems of marginalized group that includes domestic workers.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Description of the study area

Bahir Dar city administration is the third largest city in Ethiopia after Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa and has a population of 201,450. It is the capital town of Amhara national regional state and is the seat of the regional government and responsive sectoral office. For the administrative purposes the town is classified into 17 urban Kebeles (Local administration) with the current restructuring (2004), it also incorporated 6 rural Kebeles such as Zenzelma, Abaraji, Deshit, Worebo Kola Tsion, and part of Sebatamot, which are found in its surrounding. The town administration incorporates 3 satellite towns, 9 urban Kebeles and 4 rural Kebeles. The city has an estimated area of 186.38 kilometer square (ANRS, 2010)

Research methodology

Using appropriate research approach is a key step to achieve the proposed research objectives. Likewise, to achieve the proposed objectives of this research, the researcher relied on qualitative approach for its most advantage over quantitative approach. As Creswell (2003) argued that qualitative approach gives no prior social order external to the lived experience of the actors that predetermines outcomes of the research. The approach seeks to interpret the meaning people make of their lives in natural setting rather than describing statistical associations between variables. Again among the various types of research designs within qualitative approach, case study was taken as appropriate research design to attain these research objectives. As Kitchin and Tate (2000) claimed that since the case study research seeks to extract meaning from the data, it focuses on detail and natural order of events.

It is a concerned for an in-depth studying of a single social unit or phenomenon in holistic manner: nature of the event, relationships or processes of events and the possible outcome (Crang and Ian, 2007). This features of case study offers the researcher to have sufficient detail of information on challenges and opportunities of domestic workers in respect to education. Regarding the data collection instruments, this study employed semi-structured interviews with the purposively selected participants. For these purposes, 11 domestic workers were interviewed. Additionally, the study employed semi-structured interview for selected informants to extract supportive information about the issues. Hence, three teachers were interviewed. The semi-structured interviews, both with the target groups and with the key informants, were conducted in Amharic language. With the consent of the participants, they have been recorded through note taking and tape recording.

Moreover, in order to cross-check and validate the data obtained via interviews and to come up with a common understanding about the conditions of domestic workers, the researchers facilitated focus group discussion with domestic workers. To this effect, one focus group discussion was held and the discussion consisted of 8

persons. The discussion was conducted in Amharic language and the information recorded through note taking. The criteria of selecting the interviewed domestic workers were having of assertiveness behavior and staying at least one year in domestic work. To find this group of domestic workers, the researcher got prior knowledge from their neighborhood and employers.

Before beginning the interview, the researcher repeatedly told the purpose of the research and continually assured them that the recording and note taking are only used for the purpose of the research. Besides, the researcher informed them that their identity would be kept confidential and not disclosed even after the study. This encouraged them to be free to reveal things without fear. The interview session was arranged based on discussion with informant domestic workers and conducted in private and safe place. The interview and the discussion were conducted in Amharic language and the information recorded through note taking and tape recording.

To interpret the data obtained from the above stated tools, the researcher employed a thematic qualitative data analysis. In this regard, the analysis of the raw data involved five stages. At the beginning, the raw data obtained from interviews, key informant interview and focus group discussion were translated from Amharic to English; the raw data were then coded and organized on the bases of their dimension; the conditions of each dimension and category of data were interpreted. Following this, the description and classification of the raw data was made, and finally they were analyzed qualitatively. During analysis, the redundant information obtained from the data was eliminated.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the findings of the study. The findings are summarized and grouped into two major-sections. These are challenges and opportunities of accessing education.

Challenges of accessing education

Domestic workers have shown strong zeal to access education, however, their interest to access education is curtailed by different factors. Below are the challenges that domestic workers have confronted, as the study findings pinpointed.

Losing wages

Losing wage is one of the obstacles to the domestic workers' schooling. In line with this, the focus group discussants revealed that when they joined school, their employers refused to pay their monthly wages in order to compensate additional expense that their education might incur. The employers make another deal with the domestic workers, which may oblige domestic workers to lose their wages. Lack of money, the employer's lack of interest to pay wages when their domestic workers manifest the interest to start schooling, and inability to fulfill the basic needs hinder their dream to access education. The experience of the following interviewee explains the situation as follows:

Case 1

I used to earn \$5 per month before I started schooling. But after I joined school, my employers refused to pay me my monthly wages. Now, I am suffering because I have no money to buy clothes, shoes and other materials that I need. As a result, I am planning to quit my education at the end of this year.

According to the international labour organisation ('ILO') domestic work is undervalued and poorly regulated, with many domestic workers remaining underpaid and unprotected. Many countries do not address the issue of domestic work in any legislation, with the result that domestic workers remain vulnerable to unequal, unfair and abusive treatment and are subjected to work conditions which are not in line with the ILO's Decent Work Paradigm (ILO, 2012). Likewise, in Ethiopia no minimum wage is set for domestic workers and therefore one finds that most of the domestic workers are poorly paid. No strict regulations are in place to even make sure that monthly salary is paid for (Ethiopia bureau of labor and social affairs, 2010). Similarly, this study picked up a trend that the wages got lower or even lost as the workers started schooling. Therefore, losing of wage caused by the absence of appropriate regulations is one factor that hampers domestic workers to access education.

Work burden

Based on the data collected from the focus group discussants domestic work load is the other bottleneck which restricts domestic workers from schooling. The routine domestic work and the quantity of tasks that the domestic workers are supposed to carry out are usually very heavy. This affects the performance of them at school as well on the capacity to regularly attend their classes. Employers usually do not show willingness to ease the work burdens for the benefit of domestic workers' education. Concerning this, one of the interviewees stated as follows:

Case 2

I am a grade 6 student. I always face a heavy work burden. Consequently, my academic performance became below standard. When I sit to attend class, I usually feel sleepy. This is because I always go there being entirely exhausted by the domestic work. Last year, I failed to be promoted to grade 7. If I fail this year, I will be forced to quit schooling, and I will wait until things become convenient for me.

Likewise, one of the key informants also strengthened this information as follows:

I am a teacher in Fasilo primary school. As the education system of Ethiopia is self-contained, the students are

learning all subjects with a single teacher until they reach grade 4. Hence, I teach my students from grade 1 to grade 4, and this helps me to understand their problems in detail. The students who are domestic workers are not actively participating in class. They are dizzy and often fall asleep in class due to the workload that they have at their house. As a result, many quitted their schooling as they failed to withstand the challenge.

Most studies found that domestic workers are faced with a higher amount domestic workload than any other groups (Henry and Gravel, 2006). According to the world bank east African studies, domestic workers have spent approximately 105 hours each week performing household work which includes cooking, taking care of children, cleaning, washing etc. They are often exposed to work intensity as they are often doing two or more activities at once, such as taking care of children while cleaning. Such work intensity would bring many negative health consequences upon them, such as lack of sleep, stress, and lack of recreation (Beck et al., 2013). In the same vein, this study found workload as a major problem of domestic workers and its consequences are directly affected their educational condition. For instance, they became dizzy and often fallen asleep while they were in class, and as a result of these they could not actively participated in class.

Time constraint

According to the focus group discussants, lack of time to study is another problem that affects their education. The following cases further strengthen time constraint as a factor hampering domestic workers' academic performance.

Case 3

I am a grade 9 student. I am working throughout the day without any rest. I don't have time to study. Sometimes, I am inclined to stop my education because I know that I could not be successful in my education under this circumstance.

Case 4

I am from the rural community of Sekella Woreda in west Gojjam zone. I came to Bahir Dar to get access of education. I have worked as a baby sitter in my aunt's house. Though I do not have monthly wage, my aunt is fulfilling the necessary stationery materials and uniforms for schooling, and I am happy with the access I got, but my problem is time constraint. From grade 1 to 5, for instance, I used to stand 1st to 3rd, but after that my result has decreased. I know where my weak side lies- I do not

allot ample time and do not study being programmed. This is due to the time constraint the domestic workload has brought about. When I became a grade six student, I ranked 5th which was uncommon for me. This shows that my performance is decreasing from time to time. If this condition is continued in such manner, I will quit my education until things become suitable for me.

The above interview results show that even though domestic workers are committed to tolerate the low wage they earn per month, they do not want to compromise the factors that are going to constrain their education. They start domestic work to enjoy the opportunity they missed in the rural area, among which education can be one, but after employment they are usually busy with domestic work to fulfill their wishes and plans. Unless they finish the routine domestic work, they won't move on to their lessons. As a result, many of them fall short of time to deal with their lessons, and finally end up being unsuccessful in achieving their objectives. To protect such challenge, Ethiopia has no form of regulation of any kind for domestic workers and labor laws covering domestic workers have not been yet introduced (Ethiopia bureau of labor and social affairs, 2010). Similarly, in most Sub-Saharan African countries domestic workers have not legislative rights including no set of working hours, and little access to social protection. Their isolation and vulnerability as workers is made more complex by their invisibility in private homes and their dependence on the good will of their employers. Hence, they have been often forced to work long hours and this condition would in turn affect their other needs which include education (Gernigon, 2010).

Education fee

Some of the focus group discussants stated that the technical and vocational college fee is very expensive. Most of the domestic workers who completed grade 10 manifested their wish to join technical and vocational colleges in the extension program, because this can provide them alternative skills as well for future job opportunities. However, since the fees are higher than their paying capacity, they usually fail to achieve their personal objectives. In general, the domestic workers' low income, the precariousness of their living, and their difficulty to plan for themselves affect their capacity to afford the expenditures related to schooling. The following interviewees stated the condition as follows:

Case 5

I came from the rural area of Motta. Having failed to cover my school expenses, I started domestic work in 2006 and continued for three years until I completed grade 10. I would have liked to pursue my education in a

technical and vocational college, but I discovered that the monthly fee was unbearable as to capacity. Upon completion of grade ten, I started to work in a cafe for a monthly wage of \$10. Side by side, I started part-time domestic work and used to earn \$11. This was not even enough to cover the college fees as it is too expensive.

Case 6

I became domestic worker when I was in grade seven (2008) since I lost my parents. Currently, I am a student in Bahir Dar Technique and Vocational College studying Cooperative Accounting. I used to be a fairly good performing student and that is why I joined preparatory school, but I failed to join university. The work burden, coupled with my health problem, made me fail. When I was in grade 9 and 10, I used to perform well since I was not loaded but later on, as fulfilling sustenance has become a priority, I started to use much of my time for domestic work. I work in four houses as part-time domestic worker and earn \$20 per month, out of which \$14 is allocated for house rent and college fees. I use only \$6 for my living expense. I do pay \$9 for my college fee but if I fail to pay on the exact day, I will be penalized. My income is not constant or guaranteed, so I usually pay late with penalty. I tried to ask for 50% discount as I am an orphaned, with no one to help me; I have not yet got any solution.

International standard classifications of occupations stated that even if domestic work contributes to sustaining life and is critically related to economic and social development; it is not regulated in many contexts. This is because it is invisible and done within the private space of the home – not defined as a “workplace”. It also holds the low value of women's unpaid housework, not defined as work, because it is not considered as producing value. Domestic work is seen as a “labor of love” or part of women's inherent attributes, needing no special skill (Mata-Greenwood, 2001). This fact is being true when it comes into Ethiopia. As a result of this, Ethiopian domestic workers do not earn what they deserved and their remunerations are too minimal (Ethiopia bureau of labor and social affairs, 2010). This study found that given their low wages, domestic workers spend most of their salaries on basic needs like food, cloth and shelter. Due to their low wages most of them were not able to pay their educational fees as it is expensive to them.

Unintended pregnancy

The focus group discussants explained that even though the problems of domestic workers is multifaceted and deep rooted, unintended pregnancy is one of the most severe bottlenecks hindering their effort to continue

education. To this end, the following interviewees described their experiences as follow:

Case 7

I am from the rural kebeles of Debreworkos. Upon the death of my father, my mother got married to a man who became my step-father. Because we could not understand each other, he fired me out of the home, and I came to Bahir Dar. Then, I was employed as a domestic worker at the age of 15, with the help of a broker. I worked for five years for a man who was a bachelor. My monthly wage was initially \$1, but was later increased to \$3. I was learning in the evening program. Meanwhile he promised to marry me; I had sexual relations with him willingly, and later got pregnant. When the pregnancy became seven months, he created a pretext and advised me to go to my mother and bear there. I gave birth to a male baby, and later, he refused to take me back. I stayed with my mother for some years until my baby grows. Later I came back to Bahir Dar and started domestic work. Currently, I am earning \$6 but send \$4 to my son. As a result, I couldn't pursue my education and for this I have often accused the man who impregnated me.

Case 8

My parents passed away while I was a kid, making me helpless in the rural area. I had no one to live with. Then, I became a cow keeper whereby my teacher got me and brought me to Bahir Dar to live with his mother. I started again schooling in Bahir Dar serving as a domestic worker of my former teacher's mother. I have attended school up to grade 4. Unluckily, the old woman got retired and she fell short of money to cover my school expenses. I did not want to quit my education, so I looked for another domestic work. I succeeded in getting a new employment as well for my project of education, up to grade 8. The family where I started working was not an extended family, but a husband and a wife, where the wife was working in the rural area. I worked for some time, but one day, the man forcefully raped me. I was 14 by then, and I got pregnant. I had no any knowledge if or not I was pregnant until four months. Once I recognized that I was pregnant, I decided to go to Felega Hiwot Hospital where I could abort, but they told me that it was impossible as it was above three months. Knowing that I was pregnant, my employer (the man) used a pretext to fire me, blaming me for having stolen some gold. He didn't give me my monthly wage. I managed to get a work as a daily laborer and I brought up my child. Then, I got married to a man who is a daily laborer like me, from whom I gave birth to a baby boy. Also this man denied me when I gave birth to my second child. Now I am working as a part-time domestic worker. I am still very

eager to continue my schooling, but I failed to do so since I am a mother of two children.

As international labour organisation ('ILO') reported the private confinement in which domestic workers work, is a perfect breeding ground for sexual abuse. The fact that this workers work in isolation, they are susceptible to mistreatment by their employers and the lack of power, fear to lose their jobs and bad financial situations forces them to keep quiet about such abuse (ILO, 2012). Likewise, this study identified that domestic workers are forced into sexual intercourse with their male employers. Consequently, they experienced unwanted pregnancy and such situation created problem upon their schooling.

Opportunities of Accessing Education

The existence of night school program

The existence of night school program in Bahir Dar town is a good opportunity in creating access to education for domestic workers. In this regard, the focus group discussants revealed that, due to the nature of their job, they could not go for schooling in the regular program, so they commonly follow the evening program. In line with this, one of the interviewees shared her experience as follows:

Case 9

As I am a domestic worker, I have to clean the house, prepare food, wash clothes and do other domestic routines. These household tasks should be accomplished during day time. If I prepare food at night, it will get spoiled next day and may pose health problem on the family. Hence, the nature of my job does not allow me to attend schooling in the regular program/day time. The only alternative I have is to get enrolled in the evening program.

The Government of Ethiopia has spent most its national budget on education and in the last decade more than 80% of the new schools have been built across the country. In line with this, most of these schools have evening programs in addition to the regular one (Workineh, 2013). This condition is, therefore, a good opportunity for housemaids' schooling as the nature of their job would not allow them to go to school at the day time.

Educational/stationery material support

The focus group discussants stated that a non-governmental organization named *Communita Voluntari Per il Mondo /CVM/* provided them educational material support. Besides, there are some employers who do fulfill

stationery materials, including uniforms for their domestic workers. The following experiences of the interviewees help disclose the situations further:

Case 10

As I am a student, I am working in my employer's house with no salary. Although my employer agreed to cover my educational expenses, she does not fulfill all I need. As a result, I faced problems of not getting exercise books, pens and other educational materials. However, after I became member of Ewiket Birhan domestic workers association, CVM supports me with the necessary educational materials that I need.

Case 11

I am from kebele 09 of Bahir Dar. I joined domestic work in order to get access to education as my parents had no the capacity to cover the necessary stationery materials that I need in the course of my schooling. I am now in grade four; it was via my relatives that I met my employers. They do not pay a monthly wage, but they merely fulfill stationery materials and uniforms I need for my education.

Over the past few years, in response to global changes in the labour market as well as persisted exploitation, domestic workers' organizing has shown signs of revival—a revival that uses both traditional and different organizational models and strategies. Alongside this there is a growing interest and concern by non-governmental organizations (NGO), and governments in the situation-or plight- of domestic workers (ILO, 2012). To this end, some NGOs like CVM have worked in Ethiopia to support domestic workers. Similarly, the information we get from the above two interviews tells us that there are supports domestic workers enjoy because they are domestic workers. They, for instance, explained that they received support of stationary materials such as pens, pencils, exercise books etc. from CVM because of the fact that they belong to the associations that CVM facilitates with the technical assistance of the office of women, children and youth. Some also get the will of their employers to go to school and some sort of educational materials support. To this end, one can understand that these groups of housemaids getting advantaged from supports which have made them enjoy relative access to education for a better tomorrow.

CONCLUSION

It is widely assumed that access to formal education is a prerequisite for improving women's status. To this end, many women across the world are increasingly benefited from education. Yet, Ethiopia domestic workers do not

enjoyed such privilege due to multifaceted factors. These factors include losing wages, heavy work load, long hours of work, education fee and unintended pregnancy. However, the availability of educational/stationery material support and the existence of night school program promote domestic workers' opportunities to education. To tackle the identified problems, the researcher suggests that strong income generating mechanisms should be created for domestic workers; public discussion forums should be conducted to raise the awareness of employers regarding the overall situation of domestic workers; strict labour laws covering domestic workers should be introduced and implemented; and nongovernmental and governmental organizations should work further on scaling up educational material supports.

Conflict of Interests

The author have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Influence of smoking and job stress on the nutritional behaviour of factory workers in Ibadan metropolis

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Healthy life style is considered a significant factor in the total fitness and wellness of individuals and groups in the society. Individual healthy nutritional behaviour is a key element in preventing diseases and improving health. The study investigated the influence of smoking and job stress on the nutritional behaviour of factory workers in Ibadan, metropolis. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select eight hundred and eighty-four workers from sixteen factories in Ibadan. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.72 on the Cronbach alpha scale and were analyzed using inferential statistics of simple regression at 0.05 significance level. The result revealed a significant predictive effect of smoking and job stress on the nutritional behaviour of the respondents. Education through sensitization on the importance of healthy lifestyle among workers was recommended.

Key words: Smoking, job stress, nutritional behaviour, factory workers, influence.

INTRODUCTION

Nutrition is at the heart of man's health status as man, to a great extent, is basically a product of his nutritional behaviour. It is a common saying that one is what one eats. Good nutritional behaviour is therefore an important requisite for wellness. Wellness transcends health in that it connotes optimal health, that is, it implies operating at the peak of the health continuum. Smith et al. (2006) defined wellness as the optimal state of health of individuals and groups which involves the realization of the fullest physical, psychological, social, spiritual and economical potential and the fulfillment of one's role expectations in the family, community, place of worship, workplace and other settings. Health as well as wellness is determined by a constellation of factors that cut across the individual and his living environment to the social and

cultural factors within which he operates. As such, health is influenced by so many factors that are culturally, socially, economically and politically determined.

The impact of behaviour in determining the direction of health in the health continuum is enormous. As such, any effort targeted at ensuring wellness, must attempt to modify behaviour. Behaviour generally and health behaviour particularly is complex as it is affected by so many factors. Individual health behaviours are influenced by intrapersonal, socio-cultural, policy and physical environmental factors. These factors are likely to interact with multiple levels of environmental issues such as living and working conditions and community characteristics which are relevant for understanding and changing behaviours. When behaviour maintains particular pattern

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overtime, it is described as lifestyle. The world health organization (1998) thus defined lifestyle as “a way of living based on identifiable patterns of behaviour which are determined by the interplay between an individual’s personal characteristics, social interactions, and socio-economic and environmental living conditions.” In the same vein, Mandel et al. (1999) noted that *lifestyle* is a complex health dimension that dynamically involves personal, environmental, behavioural, and occupational factors. Although some researchers have attempted to conceptualize lifestyle as a matter of personal choice and individual responsibility, many others have argued for the existence of predetermined personal, cultural, environmental, and health factors that intertwine with various aspects of lifestyle (Lhussier and Carr, 2008).

Healthy lifestyle is a dominant force which helps to prevent diseases and promote health. It is considered a significant factor in the adoption of healthy habits and protective behaviours which are generally recognized as being centered on some areas of personal health behaviours, like smoking, diet, alcohol consumption and participation in physical activity (Conner and Norman 1996, Ewles and Simnet 1995). Ioannou (2002) stated that these personal health behaviours are classified within the lifestyle field of health related behaviours, and tend to be presented as a key element in preventing diseases and improving health.

Quoting the WHO, Goston et al. (2012) stated that the world is rapidly urbanizing with significant changes in people’s living and working conditions, lifestyles, social behavior and health. According to them, rising levels of diabetes, obesity, and other chronic conditions have attracted considerable attention. Healthy diet, increased physical activity, tobacco control, and reduced stress are at the centre of efforts aimed at preventing and controlling these health conditions. The workplace provides a unique and viable avenue for health promotion as various job characteristics can be used to identify potential target groups for implementation and evaluation of health promotion interventions (Goston et al., 2012; Beresford et al., 2007; Devine et al. 2007; Noblet 2003; Campbell et al., 2002).

Goston et al. (2012) noted that occupational categories may show differences in health-related behaviours such as diet and physical activity that contribute to chronic disease. Apart from occupational categories, various studies have identified a range of psychological, environmental and social factors that may influence an individual’s readiness to engage in healthy eating and regular physical activity (Burton and Turrell, 2000; AlQuaiz and Tayel, 2009; Nomura et al., 2010). Among workers, the most common barriers to healthy diet at the individual level are lack of willpower (AlQuaiz and Tayel, 2009) and the cost of healthy foods (Pawlak and Colby, 2009).

Smoking is a harmful lifestyle that has adverse effect

on health and wellness. Researchers have identified that tobacco intake causes cardio-vascular diseases; as about 1 in every 5 deaths from cardio-vascular diseases is attributable to smoking (Insel and Roth, 2002). Studies on the relationship between smoking and nutritional behaviour have indicated that there is a substantial difference in the nutritional behaviour of smokers and non-smokers. In a meta-analysis designed to assess the relationship between smoking status and nutrient intakes, it was established that smoking has negative effect on nutritional behaviour (Dallongeville et al., 1998). Fifty-one published nutritional surveys from 15 different countries with 47,250 nonsmokers and 35,870 smokers were used in the analysis in which unhealthy nutritional behaviour among smokers was higher than non-smokers. Findings of the meta-analysis revealed that smokers reported higher intakes of energy, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and alcohol and lower intakes of polyunsaturated fat, fiber, vitamin C, vitamin E and β -carotene than non-smokers. Dallongeville et al. (1998) thus concluded that the substantial difference in the nutritional behaviour of smokers and non-smokers may exacerbate the deleterious effects of smoke components on cancer and coronary heart disease risk among smokers.

Stress is considered another strong factor in shaping lifestyle. It is believed that life is full of stress and individuals react to stress in diverse ways. Some individuals, in a bid to evolve coping strategies might develop lifestyles that are harmful to health and poor nutritional habit could be a major one. What one does when stressed is basically to restore balance in the near-equilibrium state that the stressor has distorted and eating habit could be one of the ways of striving to regain this balance. Torres and Nowson (2007) stated that stress appears to alter overall food intake in two ways, resulting in under or overeating, which may be influenced by stressor severity. According to them, chronic life stress seems to be associated with a greater preference for energy- and nutrient-dense foods that is, foods that are high in sugar and fat. They concluded that stress-induced eating may be one factor contributing to the development of obesity. Moreover, Debbie and Jeffery (2003) in a study centered on assessing the relationship between stress and harmful health habits among working adults reported that high stress level for both men and women was associated with a higher fat diet, less frequent exercise, cigarette smoking, recent increases in smoking, less self-efficacy to quit smoking, and less self-efficacy not to smoke when stressed. In another study, Potocka and Moscicka (2011) reported unhealthy eating patterns among Polish employees who were under high stress level. The study reported that stressors as overload, lack of control over work and inappropriate work organization were especially related to poorer eating habits.

The nature of work in factories is suspected to predispose workers to a notable level of stress and some

lifestyle that might affect their nutritional behaviour and their overall health and well being. This study was therefore designed to examine the influence of health related lifestyles (smoking, and stress) on the nutritional behaviour of male factory workers in Ibadan metropolis.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

1. Smoking behaviour will not significantly predict nutritional behaviour of male factory workers Ibadan metropolis
2. Job stress will not significantly predict nutritional behaviour of male factory workers Ibadan metropolis

METHODOLOGY

Study area

The city of Ibadan was chosen for this study because it is greatly undergoing industrialization which is tied to the congestion of Lagos state. Many industries are springing up in Ibadan as industrialists are somewhat looking for a fresh terrain as Lagos seems to be congested. Ibadan is located in south-western Nigeria. It is the capital of Oyo State, and is reputed to be the largest indigenous city in Africa, south of the Sahara. Ibadan had been the centre of administration of the old Western Region, Nigeria since the days of the British colonial rule. It is situated 78 miles inland from Lagos, and is a prominent transit point between the coastal region and the areas to the north. Parts of the city's ancient protective walls still stand till today, and its population is estimated to be about 3,800,000 according to 2006 estimates. The principal inhabitants of the city are the Yoruba.

Ibadan's beginnings are shrouded in mystery; they were recorded only in oral tradition. It is said that the earliest group of settlers at Ibadan were fugitives from justice who were expelled from nearby villages. This small group later swelled with the arrival of immigrants from all over Yoruba land (now western Nigeria). Recorded history begins in 1829, after the region was convulsed by extended intertribal wars. In that year the victorious armies of the Ife, Ijebu, and Oyo kingdoms camped at Ibadan and formed the nucleus of the modern city. The British colonial government assumed control of the city in 1893. After the railway arrived from Lagos (1901), the line was extended northward to Kano (1912), thus ensuring the city's continuing economic importance.

The economic activities of Ibadan include agriculture, commerce, handicrafts, manufacturing and service industries. Although the city's farming population has declined, it is still large for an urban area. Many cultivators are part-time farmers who augment their earnings with other work. Ibadan is an important commercial centre. Virtually every street and corner in the traditional core and the inner suburbs of the city is a market square or stall. Within the city there are two eight-day periodic markets—Ibuko (Bode) and Oje—and many daily markets. The largest daily market stretches in a belt from the railway station in the west to the centre of the city and is Ibadan's commercial core.

Sample and instrumentation

The descriptive survey research design was used in carrying out

the study. The population for this study comprised male factory workers in Ibadan metropolis. The stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 884 respondents from selected factories in the metropolis. The instrument for the study was a modified structured questionnaire adapted from standardized instruments. The instrument was validated by obtaining experts' opinion from the department of human kinetics and health education and institute of education, university of Ibadan, Ibadan. The Cronbach alpha reliability scale was used to estimate the internal consistency of the instrument which was estimated at 0.72 Cronbach alpha.

Data collection and analysis

The instrument was administered by the researchers and their assistants and the collected data were analyzed using inferential statistics of simple regression at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Smoking behaviour will not significantly predict nutritional behaviour of male factory workers Ibadan metropolis (Table 1) The table revealed that smoking has significant influence on nutritional behaviour of the respondents ($R = 0.79$, $p < 0.05$). The table further revealed that 22.9% ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.229$) of the variance in nutritional behaviour among the respondents were accountable for by smoking. Furthermore, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results from the regression analysis showed that there was significant influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable; $F(1, 882) = 323.914$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$.

Hypotheses 2: Job stress will not significantly predict nutritional behaviour of male factory workers Ibadan metropolis (Table 2). The regression table above revealed that job stress has significant influence on nutritional behaviour of the respondents ($R = 0.645$, $p < 0.05$). The table further revealed that 41.6% ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.416$) of the variance in nutritional behaviour among the respondents were accountable for by job stress. Furthermore, the ANOVA results from the regression analysis showed that there was significant influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable; $F(1, 882) = 775.362$, $p < 0.05$.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that nutritional behaviour is enhanced with enhanced lifestyle. The results of the hypotheses indicate that nutritional behaviour is strongly influenced by lifestyle. The findings of the study confirmed the framework that smoking, occupational stress and exercise are potent health behaviours that play enormous role in disease prevention, longevity and

Table 1. Regression table showing influence of job stress on nutritional behaviour

Analysis of variance (ANOVA)								
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Sig.
Regression	969.821	1	969.821	323.914	0.79	0.23	0.229	.000
Residual	3251.557	882	2.994					
Total	4221.379	883						

a. Predictor: (Constant), Smoking
b. Dependent Variable: Nutrition behaviour

Source: Fieldwork 2013

Table 2. Regression table showing influence of job stress on nutritional behaviour

ANOVA								
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Sig.
Regression	1758.442	1	1758.442	775.362	0.645	0.417	0.416	0.000
Residual	2462.937	882	2.268					
Total	4221.379	883						

a. Predictor: (Constant), Job stress
b. Dependent Variable: Nutrition behaviour

Source: Fieldwork 2013

wellbeing. Individuals who participate regularly in physical activity, due to the demand of exercise might record higher fluid (water) intake. They are also more likely to maintain good appetite corresponding to the burning of the calorie that follows physical activeness. It is also important to note that physically active individuals, who in most cases, aim at reducing weight, choose their food wisely thereby avoiding food with high fat contents that are more likely to predispose them to some health conditions associated with high fat intake. The finding of the study that indicated significant effect of occupational stress on nutritional behaviour corroborates the findings of Potocka and Moscicka (2011) which also indicated significant effect of occupational stress on nutritional behaviour among polish workers.

It is unfortunate to note that in Nigeria, most workers are tied to their job for the fear of losing it at the detriment of their health. Majority of Nigerian workers hardly create time for recreational activities as a result of their work and this has deleterious effect on their health. Devising strategies to improve the nutritional behaviour of Nigerian workers must be given serious attention as the adverse effect of poor nutritional behaviour on health and wellness is colossal. Glanz et al. (1994) reported that poor nutritional behaviour leads to the development of most chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease, some cancers (example, breast, colon, prostate, stomach, and cancers of the head and neck), type II diabetes mellitus and osteoporosis among others. They recommended that

for a healthful nutritional behaviour, attitude of people should include limiting consumption of high-fat foods, having a high intake of fruit and vegetables, increasing fiber, controlling caloric intake to prevent obesity, avoid smoking, alcohol, managing work stress and engaging in controlled social life.

CONCLUSION

Findings of the study revealed that smoking and job stress significantly influence the nutritional behaviour of male factory workers in Ibadan metropolis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Concerted effort must be made by concerned stakeholders especially the labour unions, to ensure that the health and well-being of human elements in work places are given precedence over profits. Workers, in the course of pursuing the profit-driven targets of their employers are subjected to ugly work experiences which might have harmful effect on their health.
2. Effort must be made to increase awareness and knowledge on the benefits of healthy lifestyle of which

good nutritional behaviour is included among workers. Work place ethics must include zero tolerance to unhealthy habits like smoking, alcohol consumption and sedentary living. Defaulters of these policies must be handed stiff penalties to serve as deterrent to others.

3. There is the need to include health and healthy lifestyle education in all education curricula in Nigeria. This is because knowledge on healthy behaviour gained in school can be carried over to the work place later in life.

4. The work environment must also be made health friendly in order to facilitate healthy lifestyles. The sale of alcoholic beverages and cigarettes within and around the work place must be prohibited. It is also important to ensure that every corporation has a cafeteria with trained dieticians as operators. This is to ensure health friendly eating outlet to workers and prevent them from resorting to any available eatery where their nutrition requirement might not be adequately met.

Conflict of Interests

The author have not declared any conflict of interests.

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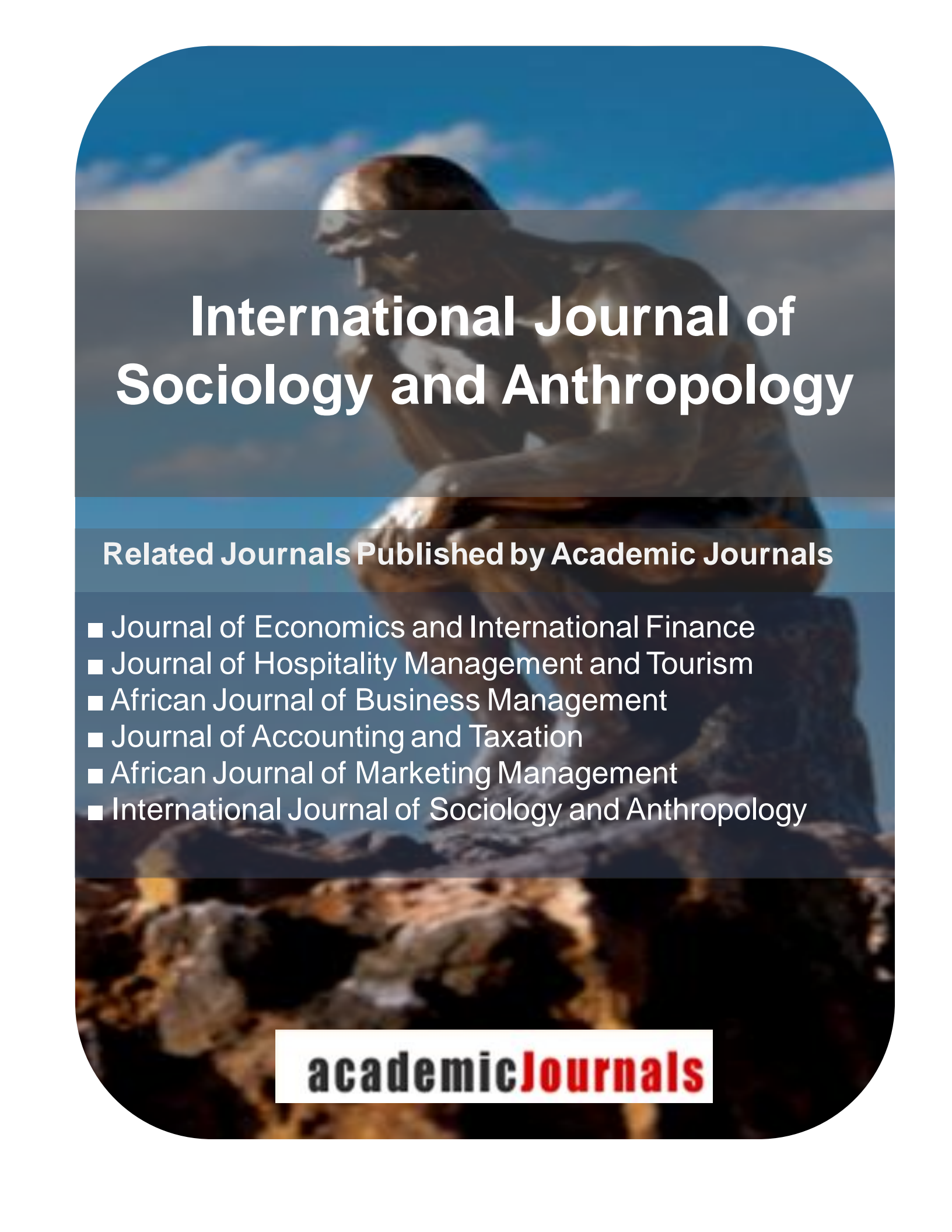
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