

**Social Exclusion and Discrimination of Lower Grade Employees of Indian Railways**

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**Introduction**

Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack of denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole (Ruth Levitas et al, 2017). Discrimination is the act of making a distinction based on their group membership, rather than on relevant personal characteristics, constitutes discriminatory behaviour (Vani Kant Borooah et al, 2013). In defining discrimination, economists follow the lead of Becker (1971, p.18): “discrimination in the market place consists of voluntarily relinquishing profits in order to cater to prejudice”. Defined in this sense, discrimination is the “price” of prejudice

The consequences of social exclusion depend crucially on the functioning of social institutions and the degree to which they are exclusionary and discriminatory in their outcomes (Sen 2000, Haan 1999). When the colonial state classified Dalits under a single category as depressed classes, and later as Scheduled Caste, that it became possible for them to start imagining themselves as a single political community with common experience and interest, as Dalits. However, the colonial constructs and classifications of caste groupings also imposed their own limitations. Dalits worked in stigmatised occupations that handled ‘impure’ materials such as human faces, dead animals, hides etc. Tanning, scavenging, sweeping, and cleaning jobs remain distinctively Dalit’s occupations in modern India (Sukhadeo et al, 2009).

In Indian Railways, lower category Group of D employees, more Scheduled Castes are working and their representation is more than the Group A, B and C employees. Their contribution to make the Indian Railways emerge as a second biggest employer in the World is a fact. But it is a vain to note that the wages, welfare measures and status of the lower category employees are at low level in comparison with employees working in other public and private sector performing similar nature of work. They are also excluded and discriminated in wages, promotional avenue and status compared to other Group of A, B and C employees even though they had more than 30 years of experience. There is no uniformity in providing the privileges for all employees. They experienced social exclusion and discrimination in their working place and residential areas. They are deprived in social status and left behind in the poor economical status especially high in medical department. These issues have not been investigated so far.

Hence it is necessary to investigate the social exclusion and discrimination of lower category of Group D employees in Railway Hospital, Railway colony and workshops in Perambur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu and suggest ways and means to eliminate social exclusion and discrimination.

**Objectives**

**General objective**

To assess the social exclusion and discrimination of lower category group D employees in Indian Railways, Tamil Nadu and analyze their associated factors for development of inclusive measures.

### Specific Objectives

- To examine the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of lower category employees.
- To assess the social exclusion and discrimination in education, economic, living and working place, social interactions and political participation and treating morbidity.
- To identify the inclusive measures to eliminate social exclusion and discrimination of lower category employees.

### Hypotheses

- Sex of employees does not differentiate their social exclusion or discrimination.
- Social characteristics employees do not associate with exclusion or discrimination
- Economic characteristic of employees do not associate with exclusion or discrimination.
- Demography of characteristic of employees does not associate with exclusion or discrimination.

### Review of Literature

In Tamil Nadu Arunthathiyar, one among the three major Dalit groups (Pallar, Parayar and Arunthathiyar) is considered to be the lowest and the most marginalized and most excluded caste group among Dalits and are known as the 'Dalit among Dalits'. They are the most oppressed and poorest caste group in India, compelled by their status and poverty to do the most menial and low, dignified jobs such as manual scavenging, death messengers for upper caste community, dead body burials, flaying carcasses or dead animals, drum beating in upper caste death funerals, cleaning communal toilets etc. The nature of work, salary paid and services provided through welfare programs differs between Arunthathiyar (contract employee) and Sanitary Cleaner/Sanitary Sweeper/Safaiwala as group D employee(Government of India employee).Even though few literature is available for Arunthathiyar we can't either compare or refer the status of social exclusion and discrimination of these two different populations. The social exclusion and discrimination of lower grade Group D railway employees in India or Tamilnadu have not been investigated so far. Hence the related literature is not available for reference. This study is the first attempt in the research.

### Methodology

#### Research Approach

Analytical research approach is adopted for the present research on the social exclusion and discrimination of lower category employee of Group D employees in Indian Railways.

#### Source of Data

The lower category of Group D employees in Railway Hospital, Railway colony and workshops in Perambur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu constitutes the study population. This study used the data collected from randomly selected 422 lower category employees in Railway Hospital, Railway colony and workshops in Perambur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu under the study on "**An Investigation on Social Exclusion and Discrimination of Lower Cader Employees of Indian Railways**" (Santhanagopal , 2017). Data was collected through interview with the selected lower category employees in Railways.

#### Variables

The following variables are considered in this study:

Social: Religion, caste, education, reasons for drop outs from school , marital status, type of family, occupation, residence (Rural/ Urban) and experience of employee and their spouse.

Economic: Present scale of pay , income of respondent and their spouse, total family income, total family expenditure, debt and its source/repayment, type of house and its ownership , and standard of living.

Demographic: Age of employee and their spouse, family size, and age at marriage of employee.

Others:

Access to school for children.

Morbidity experienced by respondent and their spouse

Treatment seeking behavior

Use of alcohol and its expenses.

### **Composite indices are developed:**

**Exclusion and discrimination** in provision of staff quarters/accessible to all facilities as that of others, treating respondent's quarters by others ,supervisor discriminating/ill-treating , allotment of work , compelling to work more than official hours of work , treating by other category of employees , looked down by other workers due to nature of work , entering in to staff quarters of officers , washing hand/leg after work using the water of quarters of officers, untouchable based on caste by other staff , other community exclude/discriminate based on caste and nature of work , worshipping in temple anywhere , inviting respondent for functions of other community , treating respondent to mix/sit/eat with others , asking to clean the dining place and eat at the end of function, and equal treatment , attending respondent's function by other workers/officers and the extent of their attendance, member in trade union and their role, important position of SC community in trade union and their role in decision making , knowledge on human rights, having human rights , knowledge on welfare programs of Railway department , utilization of welfare programs , and treatment of morbidity experienced by respondent in Railway hospital. Scoring procedure is adopted for each of these aspects and arrived the total score of exclusion and discrimination for each respondent.

**Standard of living index** is developed based on type of house , ownership of house , source of drinking water , electricity for house , fuel used for cooking , toilet facility , value of plot , value of jewels , possession of telephone/mobile , fan , cycle ,grinder , mixy , two wheeler , computer , refrigerator , television and car .Scoring procedure is adopted to arrive total score of these items for each respondent and categorized into low , medium , and high groups.

### **Method of Analysis of Data**

The collected data is computerized and the Researcher used the methods of tabular analysis, Chi-square test of significance and logistic regression in the analysis of data.

### **Results**

Out of 422 respondents, 62.6 percent are males and 37.4 percent are females. Majority is working as Safaiwala (96.4 percent) and the remaining are Sanitary cleaner and Sanitary Jamadar. Majority belong to Hindu (84.1 percent) followed by Christian (14.7 percent) and Muslim (1.2 percent). 46.2 percent of respondents belong to Scheduled Caste (SC), 10.2 percent to Scheduled Tribe (ST) and 43.6 percent to non- SC/ST.

More respondents belong to nuclear family (59.5 percent). About 29 percent are not married and 26.3 percent are widow/widower but one-third of respondents married at less than 21 years. Mean age of respondent is at 39.88 years, age at marriage is at 15 years, 7.8 years of schooling, work experience of 10.6 years, annual income of Rs. 2,75,094 and family size of 4. Ownership and type of house of respondents indicate their backwardness and exclusion in economic status. Only 31percent are residing in rural areas.

Two-thirds of last child of respondents studied/ studying in Government school and one- third in private school . 16 percent of respondents have not attended the school

(illiterates). Respondents who attended school dropped out from school in 6-17 years of age due to mostly non interest in the study and poverty condition of family. Custom (5.4 percent), non-affordability (37.4 percent), and non- interest (55.2percent) are the reason for the respondent not studied further. These imply the exclusion of respondents in education.

Among those who stayed in staff quarters, their residence is close to other staff quarters within 0.5 km in 36.4 percent. 85 percent of quarters are accessible to all facilities compared to other staff quarters. Poor maintenance is for 15percent of quarters. About one- fourth of respondents need allotment of quarters.

Other staff staying in the quarters are not allowed their children to mix with SC/ST children, not allowing Safaiwala workers to get in to the inside of quarters of other category workers/officers, and others are not participating in the functions held in the quarters of Safaiwala.

Half of community of respondents is treating the respondents badly based on their job. 41percent of respondents are not satisfied with the present menial job as it is not suited to their education and there is no chance of promotion.

Supervisor of all respondents discriminated or ill-treated. Generally other category of railway employees badly treated or not respected the respondents.

Fifty-six percent of respondents got loan in the last one year to meet their family expenditure and half of them have not repaid the loan at the time of survey.

Twenty-two percent of family members mostly respondents are in the habit of consuming alcohol. 30 percent of them spent Rs. 300 -3000 per month and 70 percent spent Rs. 5000 and above which leads them to live in poverty condition.

SC community occupying important position in trade union is very low at 3.6 percent and not played any role in decision making of trade union.

Knowledge on human rights is at low level .Respondents utilized welfare programs such as “pass” (99percent), medical facility/reimbursement of medical expenses (81percent), tuition fees for children’s education (21.3percent), scholarship (7percent) and holiday home (7percent) welfare programs. They have not utilized other welfare measures introduced by Indian Railways.

More males (10 percent) than females (6.9 percent) experienced morbidity during the past 3 months prior to the survey. They have taken treatment in railway hospital (69 percent) private hospital (28.2 percent) and state hospitals (2.8 percent). The standard of living is at low for 21.6 percent, medium for 54 percent and high for 24.4 percent of respondent’s households.

Exclusion or discrimination in 30 situations is considered. Total exclusion or discrimination of respondents is at low level in 21.6 percent, medium in 54percent and high in 24.4 percent. Sex, religion, caste, education of respondents and spouse, marital status, work experience of respondent, type of family, present scale of pay, annual income of respondent, annual expenditure, annual expenses for alcohol, standard of living, age of respondent, age at marriage of respondent and family size are significantly associated with the exclusion or discrimination of respondents as per the rejection of null hypotheses.

Logistic regression on total social exclusion or discrimination is carried out using 19 background characteristics of respondents. Results shows that education of respondents , marital status, occupation of respondent, scale of pay, annual income of respondents, annual total family income, annual family expenditure, and expenditure on alcohol are significantly associated with the social exclusion or discrimination of respondents.

Respondents belong to SC, present low scale of pay in Rs.10000 – 20900, widow/divorced, respondent working as Safaiwala, high annual income (Rs. 275001 – 552000), low annual family income (Rs.96000 – 270000), high annual expenditure

(Rs.213401- 1000000), respondents attended 6-8 years of schooling and high annual expenditure on consumption of alcohol are more likely to be socially excluded or discriminated compared to their respective counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

Safaiwala employees are excluded in economic, education particularly higher education with heavy drop out from school, standard of living and providing staff quarters for needy persons. Children are not allowed with other caste children. Employees are not allowed to get in to other's staff quarters and other caste workers/officers are not attending functions held in respondent's house/quarters. Their community and others treating them badly due to nature of their work. Other category of workers are also badly treating and not respecting. Supervisors are discriminating and ill-treating them. Unpaid debt and expenses towards alcohol makes them to exclude themselves socially and economically in the community. Their position and participation in decision making process in trade unions is very negligible. Exclusion in the knowledge of human rights is at high level. Knowledge as well as utilization of all railway welfare programs is at low level. Treatment of morbidity in Railway hospital is better. Three-fourths of respondents are excluded or discriminated in various 30 situations. Respondents belong to Scheduled Caste, low scale of pay, widow/divorced, low family income, high annual expenses towards alcohol needs to be considered by Railways for developing and implementing need based inclusive measures.

Motivate employees to provide higher education to their children by improving easy accessible to better educational institutions. Create awareness about human rights, welfare programs, and role in trade unions and utilize them more effectively. Change the behavior of community, environment in working place to promote a good social interaction for dignified life of employees. Counseling on avoiding consumption of alcohol is necessary for betterment of economic as well as health status of employee.

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