

Social Mobility through MNCs: A Sociological Study of Product Promoters, Helpers and Sales Girls in Shopping Malls, Global Brand Shops and Food Joints in Bangalore

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Bangalore city, which was known as the pensioner's paradise has become a hub of malls, global brand shops and many food joints due to globalization. These malls, brand shops and food joints have impacted the social, cultural and economic life of the people in the city. They offer not only a wide choice to the customers but also employment opportunities even to young boys and girls who are not technically qualified. This new breed of workers does not have academic degrees; what facilitates them in getting jobs is their ability to speak fluent English, which was called "glue of India" by Pandit Nehru. A huge chunk of the middle class in the urban centres speaks fluent English. This results in a demand for an army of English-speaking service personnel to cater to them.

The influx of these malls, global brand shops and food joints has generated employment opportunities to young boys and girls who have good communication skills, as product promoters, salesmen and saleswomen or helpers. Here, young women are in greater demand than men, a phenomenon which is also seen in various other professions and is named feminization of labour by Guy Standing. Young girls hailing from lower and lower middle classes who live in slums find themselves working in air conditioned shops, wearing smart outfits (uniform) and makeup provided by the brand outlet. This has brought about a change not only in their economic status but also their lifestyles. More often than not these girls supplement the family income, thereby improving the standard of living of the family. There is a need to investigate whether there is upward social mobility through these newly created employment opportunities.

According to the optimists, due to globalization on the one hand, the size of the middle class is increasing, and on the other, the lower middle classes, at least in the urban centres are trying to catch up with what they have missed all these years. Hence a large chunk of semi-qualified young female population is found in this retail sector. The present study is an attempt to sneak peek into the lives of this huge army of female workers.

A total of 460 respondents were contacted on the basis of convenience sampling method, in brand shops and foreign food joints in shopping malls and independent of shopping malls.