

WOMEN IN UNORGANIZED SECTOR IN INDIA- A CASE STUDY OF FEMALE DOMESTIC WORKERS

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Abstract: Domestic work, a predominantly female occupation, has been increasing in India. The international labour organization broadly defines a domestic worker as someone who carries out household work in private households in return for wages. The present study examines the socio-economic conditions of female domestic workers. The results of study show that majority of domestic workers were illiterate and economically vulnerable. They spend 70-90 percent of their total consumption expenditure on food items and unable to maintain decent standard of living. The 72 percent domestic workers were living below poverty line. The 73.33 percent full-time domestic workers were working 11-13 hours a day. The average hourly wage rate of domestic worker was found to be Rs. 18.51 nowhere near the government recommended minimum wage for unskilled work. The study concluded that most of the domestic workers work long hours for meagre pay and without any public holiday. They are deprived of labour standards. The study suggests that there is need of government institutions and NGOs must come forward to organize these domestic workers to improve their lot.

Keywords: Women, Domestic Workers, Unorganized Sector.

Introduction: Unorganized sector play an important role in Indian economy by providing employment opportunities to large segment of workers. The workers working in this sector are stated as unorganized workers. These workers are not recognized under any law and do not have any legal and social protection. They are not entitled to minimum wages, paid leave and any kind of social security benefits. Large majority of these workers are working in small scale industries, agriculture sector and migrate to cities to perform jobs like rickshaw puller, waiters in restaurants and domestic workers (Unni and Rani, 1999). Women are also very prominent in this sector. Majority of them are engaged in domestic work. The international labour organization broadly defines a domestic worker as someone who carries out household work in private households in return for wages (Kundu, 2007).

As a result of transforming of family structure from joint to nuclear families, domestic workers became necessity for every urban household. The increasing women work participation rate doubles the burden of doing domestic chores for women. The burden of domestic chores is passed on to domestic workers. In absence of domestic workers, women not even men are unable to go outside their home to earn higher wages. Despite importance of their work, minimum wage act does not cover the domestic workers, these workers do not have any job security as everything depends upon mood of employer. The domestic workers are facing lot of problems. The present study examines the socio-economic conditions of domestic workers. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the socio-economic conditions of female domestic workers.
2. To examine the working and living conditions of female domestic workers.
3. To acknowledge the various problems faced by these female workers.

Database and Methodology: The basic objective of the present study is to examine the socio-economic conditions of female domestic workers. For the purpose of study, a convenient sample of 70 part-time and 30 full-time female domestic workers have been taken from Amritsar city of Punjab based on convenient sampling technique. The basic statistical techniques like Engel ratios, per capita monthly expenditure on food, hourly wage rate of female domestic workers has also been calculated. The Engel ratio is ratio of food expenditure to total consumption expenditure. The ratio always lies between 0 and 1, smaller the ratio higher is the standard of living and vice-versa. The income of domestic workers was calculated after adding the imputed value of kind payments. The imputed value of tea and biscuits has

been taken as Rs. 5, roti with vegetable as Rs.15 and full lunch and dinner (for full-time workers) as Rs.25. The imputed value of fresh clothes has been taken as Rs.1000 p.a. The 3 working days were taken as paid holiday so at time of calculating the monthly working hours of respondents daily working hours were multiplied by 28. In the survey, one previous month has taken as reference month.

Results and Discussion: The present study examined the socio economic conditions of female domestic workers of Amritsar city. The main findings of the study are:

- The study has found that majority (i.e. 65 percent) of domestic workers were in the age group of 14-25 years, 30 percent belongs to the age group of 25-50 years and 5 percent were above 50 year of age.
- As far as the literacy rate was concerned, 60 percent domestic workers were illiterate, 25 percent have done primary schooling and only 15 percent of them have done secondary schooling. Thus majority of domestic workers were illiterate or barely literate.
- The study has found that 45 percent domestic workers belonged to Schedule Caste, 40 percent were from Backward Caste and 10 percent from other castes.
- Regarding the ownership of house, 45 percent domestic workers lives in their own house whereas 55 percent have rented house.
- As far as the sanitation facilities were concerned, 50 percent domestic workers have public water supply, 5 percent of them have their own motor connections (some have illegal connections) and remaining 45 percent use hand pumps to collect water.
- The majority of domestic workers (i.e. 70 percent), have toilet in their house remaining 30 percent did not have toilet facility.
- The study has found that majority of domestic workers have fear of violence from their husband. Their husbands get drunk and beat them still they never complaint to the police.
- The results of the study shows that 88 percent of domestic workers have Engel's ratio that lies between 0.7-0.9 which revealed that majority of respondents spent 70-90 percent of their total consumption expenditure on food items. Thus majority of domestic workers were unable to maintain decent standard of living.
- Another indicator of standard of living is poverty line. In India urban poverty line recommended by the government (as per Tendukar committee) is Rs. 1155 per capita monthly expenditures. The study has found that 72 percent of domestic workers have below Rs.1155 monthly per capita expenditures. Thus large majority of domestic workers were BPL.
- The 42.86 per cent of part-time domestic workers were working 5-7 hours a day whereas 35.71 percent of workers were working between 3-5 hours and 18.57 percent workers working 1-3 hours. Only 2.86 percent of part-time workers were working 7-8 hours a day. But in case of full-time workers 73.33 percent workers were working above 11-13 hours whereas 26.67 percent respondents were working 7-9 hours. The results of the study revealed that majority of full-time workers work more than government recommended working hours (8 hours a day).
- The majority domestic workers stated that behaviour of employers to any mistake of domestic workers was normal, only few employers cut their salary at any loss.
- The average hourly wage rate of domestic workers was found to Rs. 18.51 which is nowhere near the government recommended minimum wage of Rs. 36.70 per hour for unskilled works (Labour department of Punjab, Chandigarh w.e.f. 1.9.2017).

Conclusion: The study has concluded that domestic workers were illiterate and their economic condition was vulnerable. They work for long hours at low wage without any public holiday to fulfill their economic liabilities. Most of them were single earning hand as their husband did not work. They are also beaten by their husband. They have no job security and annual increments even after long years of work with same employer. The job security, increments and rest at work depends upon mood of employer. They have no maternity leave. They are deprived of basic facilities as laid down by labour standards.

Based on finding present study has given following suggestions.

1. Better legal framework is required.
2. The domestic workers should be covered under minimum wage act.
3. There is a need of setting up formal domestic workers unions, which can look after their interest.

4. The domestic workers should also be provided annual incremental benefits and minimum leave facility.
5. Need of government intervention through awareness programmes.
6. Government should frame free legal cell along with association of NGOs to avoid the exploitation of female domestic workers.

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