

Socio-economic conditions of women domestic workers in Mangalore city

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Abstract

The women domestic workers are most essential informal working group and they are “silent-workers” in urban society. In India as in other countries, domestic workers are often not viewed as “real” workers. Historically unappreciated, the work continues to be seen as little worth. Domestic workers often face psychological abuse, economic and emotional exploitation, as well as severe physical, sexual, verbal assault, bondage labor and some of them were literally imprisoned in the employers’ house. India’s large force of domestic workers or servants, as most people call them – remain unseen, undervalued and denied rights that all workers deserve. The present study is attempted to examine the socio-economic background of the women domestic workers and explore the present situations. A descriptive study was conducted among 50 women domestic workers in Mangalore city of Karnataka State. The 56% of respondents belong to above 30 years age group, 42% of respondents are belonged to 21-30 years age group. The 68% of the respondents are married and it shows that most of the married workers only considered for domestic work. Thus we can say that the education and self-help group movement has created socio-economic conditions of the women domestic workers in Mangalore city.

Keywords: Women, domestic worker, social and economic situations

Introduction

Domestic work is largely considered as a feminine work and it has been in great demand. The majority of domestic workers are from the marginalized sections of society and a large number of them are migrant workers. Increased nuclear family system, labor force participation of women, growing urbanization, lack of education and low economic conditions are the primary reasons for the exponential growth of this sector.

According to the Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act 2010 ^[1] “Domestic Worker” means, a person who is employed for remuneration whether in cash or kind, in any house hold ‘or similar establishments’ through any agency or directly, either on a temporary or contract basis or permanent, part time or full time to do the household or allied work and includes a “replacement worker” who is working as a replacement for the main workers for a short and specific period of time as agreed with the main worker.

Domestic work and Nature of the service

Most familiar type of domestic work done by part time workers and they perform variety of household services from providing care for children and elderly dependents, sweeping, washing dishes, and washing clothes dusting, folding clothes cooking and other form of work. Only in a small percentage of households included washing bath rooms, making dough and rotis, preparing tea, chopping vegetables, laundry and ironing clothes and etc.

The term domestic service is difficult to define, as the duties of domestic servants are not so well defined. In common parlance, the term is defined as a person who is engaged in part time or full time domestic work in return of remuneration payable in cash or kind for a fixed period. The term of employment may be expressed or implied. Domestic service is becoming a major and growing informal sector activity in the

urban areas, especially in big cities. It is one of the informal sector activities where the conditions of work are disgusting with long working hours, low pay and absence of job security. The modern system of domestic work is an outgrowth of the system of slavery, though its nature, function and relation have undergone considerable changes over time, though the character of the industry did not change much, certain temporal and spatial distinctions could be traced (Ramadevi. K. 2015) ^[2].

Types of domestic worker

Types of domestic workers, based on the hours of work and nature of employment relationship:

The domestic worker can be:

- **Part-time workers:** The worker who works for one or more employers for a specified numbers of hours per day or performs specific tasks for each of the multiple employers every day.
- **Full-time workers:** The worker who works for one or more employs for a specified number of hours (normal full day work) and who returns back to her/his home every day after work. More or less all middle and upper class people employees’ preferably female domestic worker servants in their household’s.
- **Live-in workers:** The worker who works full time for a single employer and also stays on the premises of the employer or in a dwelling provided by the employers (which is closed or next to the house of the employs) and does not return back to her/his home every day after work. They are engaged in all domestic work ranging from housekeeping, washing clothes, cooking, caring baby, children and elderly and etc.

Domestic workers are vulnerable and open to exploitation. The employment status of a domestic worker is always insecure. There is no legal contract between the employer and

the employee, though at the time of taking decisions about the monthly salary, it is decided through bargaining between the employer and employee. It always happens prior to joining the job when the bargaining power of the employee and the employer is not the same.

The working hour of domestic workers are not fixed. They may vary anywhere between 3 to 15 hours. The work may be continuous or in installments, spread over time. The working hours depend on the demands and requirements of the employers. The wages of domestic works are abysmally low when compared to other categories of the workers even within the informal sector, considering the amount of time, effort and labor that goes into domestic work. Very often, wages are added along with food and clothes and the logic given by the employer is that the monetary value of these taken together would amount to a value equal to (in monetary terms) the efforts put in by the worker. Domestic worker rarely get leave. They are expected to put in extra work or effort on festive occasions or when there are guests to be entertained in the employer’s home.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Socio-demographical status of the respondents

S. No.	Socio-demographical factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Age	18-20 years	1	2%
		21-30 years	21	42%
		Above 30 years	28	56%
		Total	50	100%
2	Religion	Hindu	33	66%
		Christian	10	20%
		Muslim	7	14%
		Total	50	100%
3	Education	Primary	18	36%
		High school	14	28%
		P.U.C	18	36%
		Total	50	100%
4	Language known	Tulu	15	30%
		Kannada	18	36%
		Hindi	7	14%
		Any other	10	20%
		Total	50	100%
5	Marital status	Married	34	68%
		Unmarried	11	22%
		spirited	3	6%
		widow	2	4%
		Total	50	100%

The above table specifies that out of 50 respondents, 56% of respondents belong to above 30 years age group, 42% of respondents are belongs to 21-30 years and only 2% of respondents are 18-20 years age group. It can interrelated that the majority of respondents are belongs to the age group of above 30 years. That may be because above 30 ears age group women are more comfortable to make domestic work. The majority of the respondents’ i.e. 66% of the respondents are Hindu and it is cleared from the above analysis, the majority

Objectives of the study

- To study demographic profile of the women domestic workers in terms of their age, marital status, education and etc.
- To understand the socio-economic background of the women domestic workers.

Method of the study

Methodology is a system of procedure and principles that guides systematic investigation about the problem. A method is way of approaching the problem in order to find out the truth involved in a problem. Certain ordered steps called a method. The present study focus on the socio-economic condition of women domestic workers with special reference to Mangalore city. It helps to know the problems of women domestic workers and their living condition and to overcome from the problems and to lead a good life. The researcher has selected descriptive research design and it described the domestic workers characteristics and their situations.

of women domestic worker are from Hindu religion. All respondents are educated and majority have completed primary and P.U.C. level education. The 36% of respondents were known the Kannada language and 30% of them known the Tulu language and it is illustrates that the majority of the domestic workers are local people. The out of 50 respondents, 68% of the respondents are married and it shows that most of the married workers only considered for domestic work.

Table 2: Economic status of the respondents

Sl. No.	Economic factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Monthly income	Bellow-1000	1	2%
		1000-3000	12	24%
		4000-6000	30	60%
		6000-Above	7	14%
		Total	50	100%
2	Types of ration card	APL	8	16%
		BPL	42	84%
		Total	50	100%
3	Income sufficient to lead family	Yes	20	40%
		No	30	60%
		Total	50	100%
4	Habit of saving	Yes	38	76%
		No	12	24%
		Total	50	100%
5	Membership of self-help groups	Yes	29	58%
		No	21	42%
		Total	50	100%

The above table indicates that the majority i.e. 60% of respondents has from Rs. 4000-6000 monthly income range and it shows that the domestic workers salary is very low. The 84% of the respondents were belongs to the BPL ration card because most of the domestic workers are living under the below poverty line. The 60% of the respondents said that their income is not sufficient to lead their family in at present; it indicates that the women domestic workers income level is very low compared to the other work. The 58% of respondents are had membership of self-help groups and know about the importance of saving habit for the future survival.

Suggestions

- It was found in the study that 58% of respondents had membership with self-help groups. The Women domestic workers should actively take part in self-help group and they should be educated on their rights.
- The Domestic workers should build their own organization and committees in local level and it is helpful to share their feelings, opinion, knowledge and saving the money.
- Women domestic workers should have their union to respond them at various levels and to secure the support of the wider labor movement and them each one should be registered with issues of identity card.
- Owner should provide adequate wages in relation to work performance by the women domestic work and the owners understand the domestic workers specially women domestic workers problems and issues.
- Public awareness should be raised regarding the vulnerabilities of women domestic workers and their social security.
- The government should notify minimum wages for domestic workers and issues has wages structure, working conditions and leaves to address through legislation.
- Government should implement program for the betterments of women domestic worker. A comprehensive central legislation specifically designed to meet the working condition of domestic can ensure the end of exploitation of domestic workers.

Conclusion

Women domestic workers are economically disadvantaged group and Domestic work is the major growing informal sector activity largely occupied by women. Women from certain areas or regions with specific socio economic background are found to be concentrated in this occupation. There no uniformity in the domestic workers’ wages structure and it is very wages they are getting. These are increasing inequality and development discrimination among the urban livelihood and new life style patterns of living in the urban middle class.

Lack skills and alternative employment opportunities, dependence on placement agencies are challenges of women domestic worker and makes domestic workers vulnerable to various explorations. Low pay, absence of job security, long working hours are low social status define the occupation.

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