

Domestic work Industry in India and Problems Faced by Domestic Workers

Dr. Fulwinder Pal Singh

Associate Professor of Economics cum Principal, SBJS Khalsa College, Satlani Sahib, Amritsar (India)

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 07 September 2018

Keywords

socio-economic conditions, Domestic Help Workers, Exploitation

ABSTRACT

The paper has analysed the relationship of gender and awareness level regarding the realisation of workers about their rights. It observed the working conditions and work life balance of the workers. The paper has also made the comparison of the awareness level amongst workers in different zones of Punjab. Last but not the least; the paper has explored the relationships of the employers and employees in this sector. On the basis of the analysis, it has been recommended to improve the employer- employee relationships, working conditions and improvements in labour legislations. The paper is limited certain conditions such as; it is confined to the state of Punjab; it is limited to working conditions, employment relationships and awareness of the workers. In sum, socio-economic condition of the domestic help workers is not good. They face problems both at home and work place. They have a very massive work load with less compensation. There is no homogeneity in their wage structure and their wages are very low. However, they are compelled to do this job because of lower education or poor financial background. They are exploited at their working place and in some cases, even at their own homes by their own husbands or in-laws. It is necessary to make them aware about the exploitation and inspire them to organize themselves for protecting their rights and also to work for implementation of laws by the government.

The present paper will discuss the background of the domestic work industry. Further it will also put some light on domestic workers around the globe and what is the situation of the same in Indian context. Next part of the paper concentrates on the work and working conditions of the domestic workers and problems faced by the domestic workers at work-place.

1. Introduction

As an international phenomenon, Domestic work is crucial in various countries and their economies. According to International Labor Organization, "Domestic help workers encompass a noteworthy part of the international workforce in informal employment and are among the most exploited groups of workers." Often excluded from the scope of labour legislation, domestic workers work for private homes, usually without evident terms of employment, and remain unaccounted. Child domestic workers remains excluded, currently there are probably fifty three million domestic workers across the world and this number is increasing gradually in developed and developing countries. The major problems the domestic workers have to face are deplorable working conditions, labor exploitation, and abuses of human rights. Domestic workers intermittently confronts very low wages, unreasonably long working hours, enjoy no guaranteed weekly day of rest and are accessible to physical, mental and sexual abuse or restrictions on freedom of movement. Exploitation of domestic workers can partially be associated with the gaps in national labour and employment legislation, and it often imitates the discrimination based on sex, race and caste.

Though all the servants do not work inside home yet all the domestic workers are considered as servants generally. **Domestic work is basically the employment of people for wages in their employer's residence. A domestic worker is any person who is engaged in domestic work within a private household.** Domestic work as different from other

types of labour is described as tasks performed in or for a domestic household. Domestic work covers the tasks such as cleaning, cooking, washing clothes, childcare, nursing the elderly in a private household. It may involve work outside home such as gardening, driving, and maintenance work etc. The Draft National Policy on Domestic Workers also defines domestic worker as recommended by the Taskforce on Domestic Workers. Domestic workers are recruited by either the private agents or contractors or directly by the employers for remuneration paid in cash or in kind. But the family members working in the household are not considered as domestic workers. Because the domestic workers work for more than one employer, the sector remains highly decentralized due to this nature of the work. Most work alone and have no co-workers. Most domestic employers only have one domestic employee. However, some domestic workers are employed by multiple families part time each week – and some may work only a partial day for a given employer every two or four weeks. Most domestic workers are from the marginalized sections of society and a large number of them are migrant workers. Workers work in shifts, part time or full time. They can be skilled as well as unskilled.

There are various types of domestic workers categorized on the basis of number of hours and nature of the employment. The domestic workers can be:

- a) **Part-time worker** are the workers who work for one or more employers for particular working hours per day or performs certain number of

- tasks for each of the multiple employers every day.
- b) **Full-time worker** toil for a sole employer daily for a fixed number of hours normally a full day work and who get back to his home on a daily basis after work.
 - c) **Live-in worker** works for the whole day long for a single employer and also reside on the premises of the employer or in a dwelling provided by the employer (which is close or next to the house of the employer) and does not arrive back to her/his home on a daily basis after work.

The basic challenge faced by surveys of domestic workers is the exact identification and count of domestic workers, and their employers. For the reasons quite apt, it is very difficult to get accurate and reliable data on the size of domestic work. Available data and the statistics are not also very accurate so as to recognize the domestic work as other social communities and personal services.

Many domestic workers perform tasks for households under informal arrangements in exchange for food and shelter that gives the replica of barter system. They may be cousins or relatives and are unpaid, and this is the reason that does not regard themselves as domestic workers. In various communities, domestic work is considered as a part of old social structures and traditions, and thus not recognized as employment. Also, where social dishonor is attached with domestic work, domestic workers would be disposed to identify themselves as domestic workers.

The employer-employee relationship in this industry is a complex one and is viewed as one of domination, dependency and inequality. This is an area of work where the employers and the employees are mostly women. As home is the place of work, relationships between employer and employee are usually not limited to work but formed as large support systems. This nature of domestic work often complicates and confuses the conceptual framework and makes it difficult to understand between family and work. (Ray and Qayum, 2009). Most of the research in India has focused on migration of rural girls and women to cities, their intentions of moving to the city, nature and categories of domestic workers.

The problem of human trafficking of domestic workers means that certain categories of domestic workers are likely to be unknowingly hidden. Very brief information about the size of the industry is available, because many domestic employment relationships are unrecorded and unreported to governmental agencies. There is little information available about the demographics of the employers of domestic workers. Formal unions of domestic workers have been successfully organized in a few countries. Even where domestic workers do not have collective bargaining rights under the law, they are uniting locally, regionally and globally and establishing networks to promote domestic workers' rights. ILO has issued a convention to set global standards for "decent work for domestic workers."

The Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), a significant treaty that sets standards for the treatment of domestic workers, assures that domestic workers are, like

other workers and also entitled to the respect and protection of their fundamental principles and rights at work, and social protection. The convention chalks out a framework of minimum standards regarding protection of human rights, fundamental and other rights at work, employment terms and conditions, Working hours, compensation, Occupational safety and health, Social security, child domestic workers, migrant domestic workers, Private employment agencies, Dispute settlement, complaints and enforcement.

India has not yet ratified the convention. Although unorganized workers Social Security Act, Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna applies to the domestic workers but no proper regulations have been made in this context.

2. Reasons for the growth of Domestic Workers

A domestic worker comprises a huge portion of the workforce, specifically in developing countries, and their number has been increasing all over the world. Domestic work provides economic and social value to individual households and society alike: it plays an essential role in securing the maintenance and functioning of households and the wellbeing of its members; it enables household members to enter and remain in the labor market, it stimulates consumption and consequently contributes to economic growth by generating income for the domestic worker and her or his family.

In the recent past the trend shows that all big cities of country have become the centers to recruit poor women as domestic workers. Due to the unavailability of job in rural or tribal areas, people in large quantity facilitate continuous supply of women workers to metropolitan and other big cities. A major reason for this is a pointed increase of middle class women entering into employment. As the entrance of the middle class women has increased their burden and created imbalance in their work life, so as to reduce their stress they have shifted their burden of household duties by employing domestic workers. There are certain cases where the women are not employed but to maintain their status symbol in society they have withdrawn themselves from household chores. Most of the domestic workers who come from other areas are poor and illiterate. Their illiteracy, lack of current knowledge regarding the urban work life makes them vulnerable to various types of exploitation and abuse.

Domestic work provides excessive economic and social value and makes large contributions to our society. The demand for domestic work has been increased all over the world. Families are facing challenges in meeting the basic needs of their members everywhere. Because more of the women are entering into business and service, it has lead towards spilt families so as to reduce the household duties of the multi-generational families. Ageing and health epidemics like HIV/AIDS and cancer have increased the care demands on families. These are the major factors that are making it more difficult for households to meet the ground level needs of their families. Simultaneously, many countries have not adopted the system to provide leave and public services such as childcare, elderly services and health cover to assist the family related

issues. This subsequently has increased the demand of domestic workers to meet the basic household needs.

The shift from agricultural based economy to manufacturing and service based economy is another factor responsible for increasing the number of domestic workers. It is also linked with the growth of the middle class families in the urban areas, specifically the increase in the number of women working outside their homes and the availability of low-priced domestic labour. Ecological degradation, lack of land, unemployment and poverty can be linked with migration of the people of tribal areas (Kujur and Jha 2008). Migration of girls is also attributed to the transition in the tribal societies as educated tribal girls do not want to work in the agriculture sector. These girls come with other girls from the village, through private recruiting agents, or other organizations to be employed as 'maids' in urban households. With increasing migration of tribal girls, the trend of independent migration of girls has also seen a sharp rise.

This increase in the number of domestic workers is often viewed as 'feminization of labour', a term that has been used in two ways in the last two decades (Menon-Sen 2001). It is used to denote the rapid and considerable increase in the numbers of women in paid work at the first instance. In developing countries, this is accompanied by a move from agriculture to manufacturing and services sector. Secondly, it is accustomed to describe the flexibility of labor for both women and men. This arises from the changing nature of employment where irregular conditions once associated with women's 'secondary' employment have become widespread for both sexes. The elasticity of the jobs embraces informal activities, sub-contracting, part-time and home-based work with little organization of labour through unions. However, in the matter of domestic workers, womanization of labour is used both in terms of an increase in the number of female domestic workers and also the lack of any principles for working conditions and negligible organizing in unions.

3. Domestic Workers around the Globe

As the informal employment is concerned, domestic workers comprises an important part of the world economy and is among the most exploited group of workers. Millions of women and girls across the world are working as domestic workers in private households. They maintain the hygiene, work as chef, care for children and take care of elderly family members. They maintain the hygiene, work as chef, care for children and take care of elderly family member. Regardless of their important role, they are amongst the most exploited and abused workers in the world. They often work fourteen to eighteen hours a day, seven days a week, for wages extremely below the minimum wage. They may be locked inside their workplace and subject to physical and sexual violence. Deplorable working conditions, labor exploitation, and abuses of human rights are major problems facing domestic workers.

According to UN Report 2013, many of the domestic workers across the world are unprotected under general labor laws and are highly defenseless to exploitation which calls the attention of the countries to enlarge social protection to them. If compared to other workers, the situation of the domestic

workers is quite miserable as they are anticipated to work for long hours and could not enjoy their rights as other workers can. Suffered with the lack of rights, the extreme dependency of the workers on an employer and the segregated and vulnerable nature of domestic work can make them open to exploitation and abuse.

According to the ILO report, More than fifty two million people are employed as domestic workers worldwide. While a considerable number are male domestic workers working as gardeners, drivers or butlers, still eighty per cent of them are women. Only ten per cent are covered by labor laws to the same degree as other workers, and more than one fourth are completely debarred from national labor legislation. This discrepancy in conditions translates in long, unpredictable working hours with no fixed and appropriate remuneration for domestic workers, leaving them highly vulnerable financially, as well as mentally and physically. The average hours of domestic workers range from sixty to sixty five per week, largely surpassing the legal limits set by virtually all countries of forty to forty eight hours per week in various countries. The workers who work for full time for their employers and stays at the place provided to them by the employers are more prone to health problems as they have to work for long hours as compared to their other counterparts as most of the time they have to work at night also without any rest. Malpractices, such as physical and sexual abuse, psychological harassment, non-payment of wages, high credit and abusive living and working conditions are due to the lack of knowledge of the local language by the migratory workers.

The huge gap between wages and working conditions of domestic workers as compared to other workers of the organized sector in the same country draw attention towards the need for action at the national level by governments, employers and workers to improve their working lives. The report's findings are measured to act as a standard set against which progress in extending legal protection for domestic workers will be based. It also requires combined actions to be under taken by governments, unions, employers and domestic workers' organizations to bring reforms in this sector at a national and international level.

4. Domestic Workers in India

In India household work has always been considered as below someone's dignity. It has always been the 'duty' of the woman: wife, mother, daughter or sister to do the household tasks and expect no pay. No wonder regarding that the domestic worker is so deliberately underpaid. Working as chef, washing clothes and utensils, childcare are all skilled jobs but they fall under the unorganized sector, with no law to protect rights, no insurance and no pension or gratuity. It means that in case of a dispute with the employer, the worker cannot go to a labor court, as she is not technically recognized as a 'worker'. Since Independence all laws are formulated for the organized sector. Workers range from full-time to part-time workers, skilled and unskilled workers. There is a dire need to address the issues such as no formal contracts ensuring an employer-employee relationship, lack of organization, poor bargaining power, no legal protection, and lack of welfare measures with inappropriate provision for weekly holidays, maternity leave

and health benefits. This lack of regulation has led to innumerable violations of domestic workers' rights, including working hours and the absence of any job security.

Domestic workers constantly speak of the more of the marginalized communities in society. Domestic workers have to face prejudice and bias related to social status is reflected very strongly at the workplace. Domestic work has been rooted deep in the history of India with both men and women working in others' homes often regarded as 'servants'. The rich finds a luxury to employ servants, on the basis of the important aspects such as loyalty, obligation and patronage. Domestic work is the result of the hierarchies of the caste system in India. Lower caste people do the 'Dirty' work of cleaning while other chores such as cooking, washing etc. are done by higher caste workers. Domestic work can simply be regarded as an extension of historical culture where the upper class people use to employ servants. The nature of work as well as workers has been rapidly altering in urban and rural sectors. The area now mainly incorporates women domestic workers who are not recognized as workers and their work remains undervalued. This is predominantly due to the notion of gender inequality associated with housework--value is not given to women's work in their homes, and by large, even paid work in others' homes is not given any value or regarded as work. This is the reason that domestic work is mostly undervalued because it is performed by lower caste. All these confer to the deteriorated status attached to their work, both in their own minds and in society.

In larger context domestic work has to be placed in the context of patriarchy and servitude of women. Patriarchy offers controls of women's mobility, economic resources, productive and reproductive power to men. Both biological and social reproduction is carried out by women in most societies. Social reproduction refers to all the caring and nurturing activities necessary to ensure human survival and maintenance such as cooking, feeding, washing, cleaning, nursing and other household activities. Although these are necessary for human survival, they are never considered as work or profitable in nature and hence are not visible, not recognized and remains unpaid. Usually it is women and girls who execute socially reproductive work all across the world. The endless and repetitive labour provided by them is not acknowledged as valuable work. Domestic work comprehends psychic, physical and emotional aspects, including the work that is compulsory to conserve people and communities (Anderson 2000).

Domestic work is not recognized as 'work' by the Indian government. The state does not value or recognise this work as a contribution to society and the economy. Trade unions and other organizations operating with domestic workers have been pressurizing the state for a change in its policy on domestic work. As in the case of anganwari workers, limited acknowledgment means that the economic value of non-familial care continues to be depreciated. This is compounded by the fact that a workforce of women is constantly available to meet the rapidly growing demand. Women are forced to accept the working conditions due to poverty, lack of options and lack of information about organizing (Palriwala and Neetha 2009).

Most of the female domestic workers, specifically those who dwell in their employer's home, are prone to sexual abuse. Factors such as tasks performed, hours of work, their knowledge, social status, skills, the call for elasticity and other conditions related to labour market determines the wages or wage rates in India. There are controversies over the norms for setting wages. These controversies comprises several perplexing issues such as whether the wage should be time rated or piece rated, should be paid in kind, hourly or weekly, part-time or full time; relied upon size of the house or persons per household, over time; facilities for boarding, include health care and other necessities and number of employers. Inequality is the cause of lower wages for domestic workers in India, and there is a dire need to approve the convention of ILO regarding Domestic Workers to guarantee decent and secure work to them.

Barak Valley of South Assam consists of three districts; namely, Cachar, Hailahandi and Karimganj. In Cachar district of Assam, particularly the area of Silchar town one of the major town of the valley is quite far from the metropolitan cities of India, but it is known for the women domestic labor. Therefore, it mandates the attention towards investigating the social aspects of women domestic labour to understand the scenario of the growing unorganized workforce.

The unorganized sector in India is hereabouts a neglected segment of the economy. In spite of, the passing of the Unorganized Sector Workers Social Security Bill 2008 can be termed as a landmark in the economic history of the nation. National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector had recommended setting up of a financial institution --national fund for unorganized sector called- NAFUS like NABARD in order to provide loans to the unorganized sector at comparatively lesser interest rates and more comfortably. The country urgently requires having a more thoughtful policy towards them as they are contributing significantly to the overall growth of the nation. Even after all the decades of the independent India, Domestic workers are still as a part of unorganized work force remains the most exploited ones.

5. Problems faced by the Domestic Workers

The beginning of domestic labor rooted deep in the society since a long time, and the mockery of the fact is that this segment of the society has been ignored by everyone and from every point of view. They are looked down upon and their personhood is stolen by the rich in the society by meeting out such a low status in the society and by not giving them a just place in the society. They are the most neglected ones in the labor laws. They are treated in a very inhumane way without any respect and human dignity.

For the millions of workers in exploitative domestic work overworked, underpaid, isolated, constantly belittled, often violently punished, sometimes raped, and even pushed to suicide - the recognition and defense of their human and labor rights is an urgent necessity. A new international standard is need of the hour that will formulate standards to socially recognize domestic work as work and regulate the rights and duties of household workers and employers.

Presently, domestic work serves as a readily-available livelihood option for millions of workers. While a significant number of women are working in this sector, it is compulsory to look at the working conditions that exist in this sector. The certain key issues that need to be addressed by the government of India are fixing fair, minimum wages, providing weekly days off and paid leaves, securing them from manual and sexual abuse and ensuring social protection.

Following are the problems faced by the domestic workers discussed in detail:-

• **Unorganized Sector**

Other forms of work are placed in organized sector, but domestic work takes place in households that is unorganized place of work. It is challenging job for the employee of a household sector to gain public acceptance. Despite this, the implementations of labor laws such as minimum wages and regularized work hours, which are significant elements of any kind of work, also remain a challenge. These types of regulations are complex because the nature of domestic work is different as compared to other forms of work. Lacking appropriate means to regulate working conditions in this sector, for example, through contoured job descriptions which could be offered through standard contracts are requirements of the sector. Furthermore, unlike work in an organized sector, domestic work is not regulated by clear and agreed terms and conditions. Implementing the labor laws remains a significant hindrance. This is due to privacy norms do not go well with the idea of entrance of labor inspectors at private households and ensuring regulations as it will enhance further the social problems in a society like India.

Paid domestic workers release the burden of individual households by undertaking household functions and duties in return for wages and compensation. The tasks consists of the childcare and the look for the elderly, working as chef, driving, washing, buying grocery and taking care of household pets, specifically in urban areas. In spite of the benefits this work provides to individual households, domestic workers are usually not considered as workers by society. Tasks performed by them are not considered as work. Domestic workers in India still continue to struggle for dignity and recognition even after independence.

Undoubtedly, the exploitation and abuse that many domestic workers has to face, generates from the non recognition of domestic work as work, from the hidden nature of the workplace and from the informality of the employment relationship. In the case of female domestic workers, it stems in gender discrimination, replacing as it does women's unpaid work in the houses. The tendency to undervalue work performed by women is accentuated in the case of domestic work by its low social status and the myth that no special skills are required to perform it. The unrecognized work and lack of social protection that is feature of domestic work is a prime obstacle in achieving the International Labor Organization's (ILO) goal of decent work for all men and women. Some of the work related problems are such as no special laws to protect the rights of domestic and household workers, no job

description, excessively long working hours and too many things to do in one day, low pay and no overtime pay, limited access to social security, various forms of abuse from some employers - emotional, sexual and physical abuse, most of the physical abuse is from children of employers, some workers face sexual harassment and physical violence on the job, some workers are subject to forced labor, employers not contributing to statutory deductions such as contributions to the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and wrongful dismissal: when a domestic worker is wrongful, one is dismissed. They have no legal means of redress except where the case represents a violation of Minimum Wage Law. Most domestic workers have no job description. More or less all middle and upper class people employ preferably female domestic servants in their households. The domestic work can be categorized as part time work, full time work and Live in workers.

• **Physical and Sexual Abuse**

Physical and sexual abuse against domestic workers is often reported in the media. Various studies and reports also acknowledge that domestic workers encounter discrimination on grounds of religion, caste and ethnicity. Sexual harassment and exploitation by recruiting agents has also been reported. It is needed to point out that most agencies are commercial in nature and do not penetrate on the welfare of workers. With the advent of the placement agencies has not brought about any significant improvement in the condition of the domestic workers (Neetha, 2004 and 2009). Full-time workers are the workers who live in the place provided by employers including government and defense officials. They are provided with small living space are more prone to sexual abuse.

A different tendency in the inconsistent statistics of the domestic worker is the migration of girls from the northeast areas. Those girls primarily work as salespersons but now are progressively joining as domestic workers, working mostly with rich Indians and expatriates. Their ethnic and cultural difference makes them exploited at the hands of the employers.

• **Gender Inequality, Racism and Exploitation**

Domestic work has empowered many women to enter the labor market and benefit from economic autonomy and become self dependant. Despite, this has not changed the notion of gender discrimination. All over the world, household responsibilities and unpaid care work continue to pose forceful barriers to women's participation in labour market. They are also vulnerable to 'racial' stereotyping and isolation because of language problems. Similarly, young girls from Bengal who come to Rajasthan to work are also vulnerable and isolated because of language difficulties.

Despite laws to prevent it, child domestic labor is still prevalent in India. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulations) Act 1986 indexed domestic work in the schedule of "hazards" by means of this, the permissible age for work is eighteen years. Considering the socio-economic conditions in the country, fifteen years of age seems to be permissible but most of the organizations working on the problems allied with and child rights advocate the minimum age of admission to

domestic work eighteen years. The argument is that these children work for long hours and are not given nutritious food and often sexually abused and have no way to raise their voice.

Near about 185, 595 children are employed as domestic workers and in roadside tea and food stalls as per the census 2001 (UNICEF 2007). Employers demand children as they are economical to them. They are often paid very small amount of rupees, three hundred per month for work that finishes within ten hour each day and seven days a week. In some cases, they are also beaten up and sexually abused.

• Human Trafficking

This accumulated number of domestic workers is associated to transfer from agrarian-based economy to a manufacture and service-based economy. The growth of the urban middle class, specifically with the increase in the number of women working outside their homes and the availability of cheap domestic labour are the factors also associated to this fact (Kujur and Jha 2008: 25). Migration of girls is also accredited to the alterations in the tribal societies because educated tribal girls do not want to work in the agriculture sector any more. India has authenticated migration on large scale over the last two decades of girls from tribal. These girls come with other girls from the village to be recruited as maids with affluent, through private recruiting agents, or other. With increase in total migration of tribal girls to Delhi, the tendency of independent migration of girls has also seen an acute rise. All migration is not safe as girls are subjected to be trafficked for domestic work by agents and abused by employers and agents physically, psychologically and sexually. They may also be exploited by means of long working hours and in conditions similar to bonded labour-isolated and solely dependent on employers.

The various dimensions of trafficking can be seen here that children are often brought in from impoverished areas of the country and forced to work as bonded laborers. Many of them are not allowed contact with their families. They reside in their employers' homes without any support system. Different organizations are involved in rescuing such children but the issue of rehabilitation has been a major difficulty and concern. The government has not provided adequate rehabilitation centers and alternatives for families relying on the labor of their children.

• Work life balance and Working Conditions

The impoverished women who enroll in domestic work are often not capable to care for their own families, they have to leave their own children alone for the whole day, and sometimes they also tie the children to their cots (John 2010). While migrating to the cities, they mainly live in the difficult conditions of slum areas. Gradually they begin to work at one or two houses and take up more, depending on their individual capacities, the money they needed and their specific stage of life cycle. Apart from learning the work, they have to learn to adapt the urban ways of living and a culture totally different from their native land.

Palriwala and Neetha (2009) point out that this kind of work is characterized as 'part-time' from the perspective of the employer. For the domestic worker, the actual working hours are the total time spends in all the households' works in is a full day's work. They also pointed out that this type of work may be flexible but is also unstable as workers shift out of the sector, change employers, stop working for a few years due to marriage or childbirth and also have certain issues with their employers. Nevertheless, in terms of working hours, it may be as much or more than a full time worker. The uneven nature of their work, the multiplicity of tasks, a multitude of employers, and the instability of employment pose challenge in creating a database and in attempts to organize them.

The full-timers live with the employer's family. Various studies have concluded that they often have no particular working hours with some working for eighteen hours a day without clear terms of understanding. Some of them do not get any relaxation during the whole day while others may not be given proper food or living space. It is also reported that they face problems like non-payment of wages, no weekly leaves or holidays, verbal and sexual abuse. They do not have any access to any form of assistance when they face verbal, physical or sexual harassment. A significant number of full time workers are employed by recruiting agents who also collect their wages directly from the employers, often keeping a substantial part. Private agents often recruit women in villages and bring them to cities. Some agents offer basic training for a number of days and then send the workers to homes as domestic workers. Some of the agents also send them untrained. There is no organized mechanism to check these agents or their activities. These agencies are not easy to trace as they hurriedly change their identities, locality and contact numbers. They also charge a heavy amount of commission from employers for providing domestic workers. Total working hours and length of service depends upon the satisfaction of the worker as well as the employer. If the women domestic workers are unhappy, they tend to shift the job on their own and if the employer is unhappy with the kind of work done by the women domestic worker or for any other reason s/he may turn off the services of women domestic worker.

Nevertheless, the number of households to be served by part time workers mostly depends on their competence and capability to work. While on the other hand, the full time workers work in a single household for maximum duration of eight to ten hours on every day basis which includes as a part of free time. The employers normally offer them meal only once in a day. Part time workers also ask for one time meal in a day because of the heavy workload. The live in workers stay at employers' houses and they are provided meal twice a day. The live in workers do all works of the employer's households. Not all the women domestic workers are satisfied with their present wage structure. These workers may be divided into two categories by their dissatisfaction over the existing wage structure and desire for change in it. First of all, the women domestic workers who are dissatisfied with their present wage structure and they want increase in the wages for the work they perform for their employers. Secondly, the women domestic workers who are dissatisfied with their present wages but they are not aware about anything about the existing wage

structure. The ill attitude the employers have towards their employees whose service is of great worth and value to them yet they do not want to acknowledge that they need these women domestic service to do every kind of work to them can be seen vividly. Therefore they treat the women domestic workers in an inhuman way.

• Socio Economic conditions

Other factors that influence decisions about wages include the type of tasks performed and the neighborhood. Rates of wages changes according to the task and the socio-economic status of employers. These factors are not formed with keeping the workers welfare but they are made to perform extra work with no additional compensation, specifically during festivals or when employers have guests. As employers can ask workers to leave with no prior notice or financial compensation, therefore it does not provide any security to the domestic workers. (Jagori 2004, Mehrotra 2008, Neetha 2008, Menon 2010). These studies also note that only a few workers get a weekly off; paid leave is often the result of difficult negotiations with the employers. Getting sick leave also depends on the good will of the employer. Instances of workers losing their jobs due to long leave taken at time of childbirth or ill health are often reported. Some also lose their jobs when they visit their villages. Deduction in wages for extra leave is a common practice among employers. Part-time workers are not allowed access to a toilet in the employers' homes.

Many cover long distances from their home to workplace and thereby having no time to cook and carry food with them. They are often not provided with food and stay hungry till they return home where they have to cope with difficult living conditions in slum areas. Some of these work as domestic workers over long period of time with single employer, but have little or no security for their old age. They are not entitled to any old-age pensions, gratuity or bonus. They have no medical insurance and all expenses of illness, hospitalization of self and family are borne by the worker. Neither do they have any coverage for childbirth, injury at work place or loans to build houses or other social responsibilities. The benefits such as loans or grants and others depend on their relations with the employer and the goodwill of the employers.

The remuneration of the domestic workers may differentiate from one region to another. It is established that wage rate in semi-urban areas is comparatively lower than urban areas. The main reason for taking up the job as domestic servant is the economic compulsion. The socio-economic condition of the respondents is not good and their life histories also reveal that they experienced the same condition at their young age. They face problems both at home and work place. At home they do not get the pleasant atmosphere which they need. At work place they have a heavy work load with less remuneration. They want to make a better future of themselves and their children. Though not all the unorganized sector workers yet all the women domestic workers and their children tends to become the poorest people in the world.

• Lack of Awareness and Unionization

Due to lack of education & lack of awareness, lack of unionization, they are left to the employer to treat them like puppets in their hands. These poor, oppressed and neglected people of the society need to be taken care of by the Govt. Though they contribute to the national economy, it is not at all recognized or valued by any one. Only in the absence of their presence their importance is felt, otherwise they are not dealt with human dignity. This segment of the society faces a lot of problems in life both at work place and at their own homes. Therefore, it is right and just that the Government takes initiative to enact certain laws for the upliftment of unorganized labourers in general and women domestic workers in particular. Those who are illiterate and come from poorer section of the society look for some work to earn for their survival. Because the women domestic work has not yet been regarded as work, they do not come under any labor laws. Their work is not recognized under specific labour legislation that is why there is no uniformity in the working conditions of the domestic workers. Even when they are not paid well according their tasks, ill-treated, abused, dismissed etc. there is no law to protect them. They have no social security. As other workers receive after their retirement, domestic workers receive no other benefit. As a result, this section of the society suffers much in the hands of the rich and middle class of the society.

References

1. Anderson, B., & Rogaly, B. (2005). *Forced Labour and Migration to the UK*. Trades Union Congress. Retrieved: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/forced-labour-and-migration-uk>
2. Banerjee, N. (1992). *Poverty, Work and Gender in Urban India*. Occasional Paper no. 133. Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences. Retrieved : [OP_133_Poverty_work_and_gender_in_urban_india.pdf](https://www.csis.ac.in/OP_133_Poverty_work_and_gender_in_urban_india.pdf) (27.24Mb)
3. Bharat J. (2008). *Report on Socio-economic Status of the Women Domestic Workers*. Ministry of WCD, 11-13.
4. Bhattacharya & Shrayana (2010). Need for Domestic Workers in Households in the Current Economic Scenari. *Labour File*, 8(1-3), 31-34.
5. Chandrasekhar C.P. and Ghosh, J. (2011). Public Works and Wages in Rural India, *Macro Scan*. Retrieved: <https://www.nregaconsortium.in/download/articles/jayati%20and%20chandrashekhar%2011-jan-11.pdf>
6. Chandrashekhar C.P, and Ghosh J. (2007). Women Workers in Urban India. Macro scan. Retrieved: http://www.macrosan.org/fet/feb07/fet060207Women_Workers.htm
7. DWRC. (2010). *Domestic Workers Legislation: A Way Forward*. JAGORI, Ahmedabad: Signate G-Press, DWRC.
8. ILO 'Ratifications of C189 (2011). *Domestic Workers Convention*.
9. Jagori (2004). *Rights and Vulnerabilities. A Research Study of Migrant Women Workers in the Informal Sector in Delhi*. Jagori, New Delhi. Retrieved :

- <http://www.jagori.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/migration-final-report.pdf>
10. John K. (2010). Domestic Women Workers in Urban Informal Sector. *National Monthly Refereed Journal of Research in Arts & Education*, 2(2).
 11. Kujur, Joseph Marianus and Vikas Jha (2008). *Tribal Women Domestic Workers in Delhi*. Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.
 12. Low Pay Commission (2013). *National Minimum Wage: Low Pay Commission Report 2013* (Vol. 8565). Government of U.K.: The Stationery Office. ISBN: 9780101856522. Retrieved: www.official-documents.gov.uk
 13. Mehrotra T. S. (2010). *A Report on Domestic Workers: Conditions, Rights and Responsibilities*. New Delhi: Signate G Press.
 14. Mehrotra, T. S. and Mewa B. (2008). *Rights and dignity: Women domestic workers in Jaipur*. Jagori. New Delhi. Retrieved: http://www.jagori.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/cover_jaipur_report_english.pdf
 15. Menon S. B. (2008). Swept off The Map: Surviving Eviction and Resettlement in New Delhi. *Indian Streams Research Journal*. New Delhi: Yoda Press. ISSN : 2230-7850
 16. Neetha, N. and Palriwala R. (2011). The Absence of State Law: Domestic Workers In India. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 23(1), 97-119. ISSN: 0832-8781.
 17. Neetha, N. (2009). Placement Agencies for Domestic Workers: Issues of Regulation and Promoting Decent Work. Prepared for International Labour Organisation, New Delhi and presented at the *National Consultation with the Civil Society on Domestic Workers Issues*, 15-16 July, ILO, New Delhi.
 18. Neetha, N. (2008). Regulation Domestic Work. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(37). ISSN 0012-9976
 19. Neetha N. (2005). Workers: Profile and Emerging Concerns. *Labor file-A Bimonthly journal of labour and economic affairs*. Retrieved: <http://www.labourfile.org/Current Article Details.aspx?id=521>.
 20. Neetha, N. (2004). Making of Female Breadwinners Migration and Social Networking of Women Domestic in Delhi. *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 24, 1681-1688, ISSN 0012-9976 Retrieved: http://www.idwfed.org/en/resources/breadwinners-migration-and-social-networking-of-women-domestics-in-delhi/@@display-file/attachment_1
 21. Neetha, N. (2003). *Migration, social networking and employment: A study of domestic workers in Delhi*. NLI Research Studies. No. 37. NOIDA:V.V. Giri National Labor Institute.
 22. Nazneen Kanji and Kalyani Menon Sen (2001). What Does the Feminisation of Labour mean for Sustainable Livelihoods? Paper presented in *World Summit on Sustainable Development, London: International Institute for Environment and Development*.
 23. Palriwala, Rajni and Neetha Pillai (2009). Paid care workers in India: Domestic workers and Anganwadi workers. Geneva: unpublished report UNRISD. Retrieved: http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFrame?ReadForm&parentunid=0C1833CF97AC0B21C12575CC004FB067&parentdoctype=paper&netitpath=http://www.unrisd.org/unpublished_/2005gd_/indiarr4rev/
 25. Ray, Raka and Qayum, Seemin (2009). *Cultures of Servitude: Modernity, Domesticity and Class in India*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press (in India, Oxford University Press, 2010)
 26. Sankaran, T.S. (2010). The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act 2008—A Critique. *Lawyers Collective*.
 27. Secretariat, R.S. (2011). *Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment Bill (2010)*. New Delhi: Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development.
 28. The Task Force Report (2011). *Realizing Decent Work*. Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.
 29. UNICEF (2007). Retrieved: www.unicef.org/india/child_protection_2053.htm
 30. United Nations Development Programme (2013). *Human Development Report*. Canada: Gilmore Printing Services Inc. ISBN: 978-92-1-126340-4.
 31. Rani, Ekta (2018). "Domestic Help Workers, Their Relationship and Realization of their Rights: An Empirical Study" A Dissertation of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Management.