

Problems of Female Domestic Workers in Bangalore City

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Abstract

Female domestic workers are the part of unorganized workforce of India. This trend of keeping females as a domestic worker has increased day by day this could be because of lack of education, Unemployment and lack of other Vocational skills. This study highlights the “Condition & problems of female domestic workers” which basically focuses on the “condition of work” & “working conditions” and problems related to health, wages, work security, family related problems because of work, mental, physical & sexual harassment at workplace. The study also reveals the awareness of the respondents about the Governmental Organizations (GO’s) & Non Governmental Organization (NGO’s) working for their welfare. The results and discussion part gives a clear picture of the “Condition & Problems of the female domestic workers of that area”. The suggestions given in the study can be cited to improve the conditions of Female domestic workers in India.

Keywords: Education, Health, Wages, Work security, Sexual harassment, NGO’s

Introduction

Female domestic workers are a neglected group among the unorganized sector. For decades they have been exploited and only in recent years NGOs are taking up the cause of women domestic workers. This study is on the living condition and problems of woman domestic workers. Domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses with respect to their working conditions. They often work for excessively long hours, with little to no pay, and with almost no access to social protections. Globally, on average, 30% are excluded from labour legislation, but a much greater number do not enjoy de facto minimum protection at work. To promote improved and equal working conditions for domestic workers, the International Labour Organization (ILO) carries out policy advisory services for national constituents, technical assistance projects at country-level, research and knowledge development, and policy advocacy campaigns. Critical areas addressed include policies and programs regarding working time of domestic workers that safeguards their health and safety, work-family balance and adequate rest; wage protection including minimum wage, and employment practices that shape terms and conditions of employment of domestic workers.

India's workforce comprises nearly 92 per cent in the unorganized segment, with the entire farm sector falling under the informal category, while only one-fifth of the non-farm workers are found in the organized segment. Estimates suggest that in the non-farm sectors, as we move up the income ladder, the share of the informal sector gradually declines. However, as are as the agricultural sector is concerned, irrespective of economic class, the share of the unorganized workforce remains flat. Further analysis reveals that the coverage of social security schemes has been extremely sparse among the economically and socially vulnerable sections (Joddar and Sakthivel, 2006).

They are unorganized workers; there are no labour laws to protect them or to set out their service conditions. Lacking unionization, they are left to the mercy of the employers. There are no laws to fix their wages; they have no basic rights, no amenities or social security, not even leave or a paid holiday as in any other jobs. They are also denied rights to health care, education, justice, human dignity and respect of all unorganized labour, the domestic worker is closest to us in our homes. Where better then to sow the seed of humanism, human dignity and respect than to start it at home it, even for those of us who do not have a domestic worker, surely we have known or heard of the plight of domestic workers. Domestic work has become more 'feminize' over time.

Statement of the Problem

Women domestic workers face several problems in their personal and occupational life. They work for long hours and are poorly paid. They don't have job security. If they take leave even for genuine reasons, they may lose their job. Some of them work in more than 2 houses and they become sick. Women Domestic workers have health problems like respiratory disease, body ache and skin disease, due to their occupational life. Their family life is marked by family conflicts poverty and debts. This study highlights these issues.

Review of Literature

Kalayaan (2006) Migrant domestic workers have the legal status of workers in the United Kingdom (UK) - and are entitled to rights such as the minimum wage, time off, etc. Yet, of more than 300 workers registered with, 43% of workers reported not being given their own bed, 41% were not given regular meals, 70% were given no time off, 61% were not allowed out of the house without their employer's permission. In addition, 10% reported sexual abuse, 26% physical abuse and 72% psychological abuse at the hands of their employers. Many workers were paid as little as 50p an hour, were made to work up to 16 hours a day, and were on constant call to their employers.

Kumbetoglu, (2005) parallel to the studies and research on the new international migration flows, the impact of the feminization of migration and globalization of domestic work are generally under-researched fields in migration studies in Turkey. Although there are some ongoing research studies, there are only a few published works on this topic Lutz (2005) there is strong evidence that the demand for paid domestic work has started to increase all over the world. As Lutz stated, "domestic workers can be found working for dual earners, middle class families and single people, for double or single parents, for young urban professionals as well as for the elderly and invalid".

Lutz (2005) in most of Europe, domestic workers have been disappearing since the beginning of the 20th century, and particularly after World War II. Deshingkar et al. (2006) child migration from Purnia, Madhubani and Sitamarhi 45 districts in Bihar to towns in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar for work in "dhabas" has been on the increase over the last 10 years. These are mainly children from SC families and they migrate for 8-9 months a year. They are paid Rs.500-1500 a month with food. Often the payment is given directly to the parents as an advance and the child repays the debt. Shah (2006) Shah's research on migration to brick-kilns from Jharkhand shows that migration gives young men and women the opportunity to pursue amorous relationships away from social restrictions in the village.

Samal (2006) Research on seasonal migration conducted under the Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project in two villages in Mahabubnagar district and two villages in Ananthapur found that most households did not save much but some did accumulate wealth and one of the major factors leading to the accumulation of assets was the repetition of migration to the same destination. Long-term migration to places like Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore enabled migrant households to accumulate because of the relatively higher wages and absence of middlemen. Migrants were predominantly from the lower social strata of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Backward Classes (BCs) (95 per cent). They were mainly illiterate, landless laborers and marginal farmers.

Need of the Study

The study needs to be done for the following reason-

- Studies are conducted in perspective of other cities in India but no such studies are conducted in Bengaluru city. So the Researcher being a Social work Student feels the need to conduct this study.

Objective of the Study

- To Study the Socio- Economic background of the Female Domestic Workers (FDW).
- To Study the condition of the female domestic workers of Bengaluru City
- To find out the Problems of Female Domestic Workers
- To analyze the role of GO/NGO for the welfare of female domestic workers.

Research Methodology

The present research study has been designed in descriptive framework. It tends to describe the problems and conditions of female domestic workers. The Researcher has selected Bengaluru City. The universe of the study comprises of female domestic workers of Bengaluru City, India. The Single Female Domestic Workers constituted the unit of analysis. The Researcher has used Purposive Sampling because it was convenient for her and she used it because of time limit. The sample size constituted of 100 respondents. Primary data were directly collected from the respondents with the help of structured interview schedule during April 2015 to May 2015. The Secondary data was collected from the related books, journals, International report & Internet and from the studies which have already been conducted. The data were collected by using structured interview schedule. The Schedule consisted of V parts. Besides this, the tool of Case Study and group discussion were also used. The Interview schedule consisted of questions related mainly to different aspects of the Female Domestic Workers.

Result & Discussion

India constitutes of 92% of Unorganized Workforce within that 4.2 million Females are involved in domestic work according to the report of National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) (2004-2005). This Study is an effort to highlight the Condition & Problems of Female Domestic Workers of Bengaluru City. Research Design & Purposive sampling has been used & 100 Respondents were interviewed through a structured Interview Schedule. This brought out the following findings.

Findings

- Among the respondents of Bengaluru, 37% of females between the age of 19-29 yrs & 30-40 yrs were engaged in domestic work and 11% females between the age of 41-51yrs were into this work, 9% females of age of 52yrs & 60 above were also in this work and even 6% females below 18 are also involved in this work.
- The present study illustrates that 64% of females were Schedule Caste, 23% are those who were of Other Backward Class, and 12% are ST and 1% are those who do not belong to any Caste.
- A vast majority FDWs that is 76% was hindu, 14% were Muslim, 9% were Christian and others were 1%.
- Among the respondents of Bengaluru, 42% of Married females, 32% of Unmarried females, 16% of Widow females, 5% females were those who were either divorced or their Husband left them
- Regarding the educational status of the respondents, 38% of female domestic workers were Illiterate, 30% female domestic workers have done secondary schooling, 20% have done their primary schooling, 10% of done their high schooling and 2% were those who were fully literate.
- According to the study, 75% of female domestic workers belonged from nuclear family, 14% belong to joint family, remaining 10% of the female domestic workers were from the others types of families (Broken families) and really negligible 1% does not have a family only.

- In terms of occupation, respondent's head of the family's occupation was mostly the Female domestic work which was 22%, 14% was the driving, 11% were the labours, 5% were carpenters, 4% gardeners and electrician, 3% were Rickshaw pullers, Tailors, Cook and Auto drivers, 2% were tempo driver, security guard and painter, others were 1%.
- The Study shows that 70% respondent's head of the family Income was 3000 Rupees & above monthly, 14% head of the family's Income was around 2000Rs-3000Rs monthly, 12% do not generate any income, 3% earn around 1000Rs-2000Rs and 1% earn below 1%.
- In terms of Income of the respondents, 47% of female domestic worker's Income was around 2000Rs-3000Rs, 45% of female domestic worker's Income was above Rupees 3000, 8% Respondents Income was around 1000Rs to 2000 Rupees.
- A vast majority of 77% of female domestic workers did not migrate and 23% female domestic workers did migrate.
- The study shows that the housing condition of FDW was 40% respondents had own houses, 32% were staying in Rented house, 15% were staying in slum whereas 13% were staying in residence provided by the employer.
- According to the present study, 71% of respondents had toilets in their house & 29% respondents did not have toilet at home.
- Duration of involvement of FDWs in the work of 44% respondents were engaged in domestic work since 15yrs, 25% since 5-10yrs, 21% respondents were engaged since 10years and more and 10% were working since below than 1 yrs.
- 48% respondents were working 5-10 Hours, 42% were working 1-5 Hours, and 10% were working 10 hours and above that.
- In term of nature of work of respondents 55% respondent's nature of work was that they were doing the washing of utensils and sweeping & mopping, 20% respondents were doing all works mentioned in the table, 8% were only doing the cooking, 4% were doing the washing of utensils & cooking as well, 3% were doing sweeping & mopping, 2% were doing the washing of clothes & cooking, 2% were those who only did the washing of clothes, 1% washing utensils & cooking, 1% was the ones who did the sweeping, mopping & washing clothes.
- According to the present study, 57% of respondent's wages/payment were decided on the mutual consent of the employer and respondent, 11% on the basis of nature of work, 9% Mutual consent and family size, 8% on the basis of family size, 7% had their own fixed charges, 3% decide on mutual consent, nature of work & family size, 2% on the basis of family size and nature of work & others, 1% mutual consent and nature of work.
- A vast majority 81% of the respondents was getting extra payment & 19% were not getting.
- Nearly 90% of the employers were giving incentive/bonus/rewards on festival, and the 13% employers were those who were not giving incentive/bonus/reward. □ 76% respondents were getting leaves and 24% were not getting leaves.
- 61% employers were not deducting money & 15% employers deduct money for certain reason. (Breaking things or for taking leaves etc.)
- In term of behavior of employer towards the respondent, 48% employer did not react towards the respondent's mistake, 24% employers used to shout on the respondent, 16% employers used to scold the respondent, 9% employers used to abuse the respondent, 2% used to shout and scold & 1% used to beat the respondent.

- Vast majorities (82%) of the FDW were getting refreshment at employer's place & 18% respondents did not get refreshments at employer's place.
- 36% respondents were working in one house more than 1-2yrs, 27% respondents were working more than 2 years, 24% were working 6months-1year & 13% were working below 6 months.
- Nearly fifty percent (43%) respondents covered 3 houses in a day, 21% respondents covered 4 or more than 4 houses in a day, 19% cover 2 houses in a day & 17% cover 1 house in a day.
- In the Study area the majorities (72%) of the respondent were satisfied with their work & only 28% were not satisfied with their present domestic work.
- In terms of the health problems of the FDW. 42% respondents reported that they do not have any health problems, 41% had other problems (cold, cough & fever etc.), 10% had skin problems & only 7% had Respiratory diseases. Majority of the FDWs had health expenses & only 25% did not have any health expenses.
- Nearly ninety percent (87%) respondents reported that they were allowed to work during menstruation days without any restrictions by the employer.
- In term of termination of the FDWs 63% respondents were given reason for termination from work & 37% respondents were not given reason by the employer for termination from work.
- 68% Respondents were harassed at employers' place & and 32% Respondents were not harassed. (Harassment like teasing or unnecessarily torching)
- Regarding the harassment of FDWs, 77% employers did not harass the respondent in any form & only 23% were being sexually harassed, out of that 23% respondents, 13 % offered money to the respondent for Sexually harassing, 10 % did not offer money for sexually harassing, and out of that 23% respondents only 14% did not offer anything and 9% offered drinks and edibles.
- In terms of the behavior and attitude (reactions) of respondents own family members towards FDW. More than fifty percent (52%) respondent's family did not react, 23% behaved badly, 15% behavior was good & 10% respondents did not have a family.
- Cent percent of respondents were not aware about any acts/legislation of their protection of wages. Similarly, the respondents were not aware about any scheme/programs for the welfare of female domestic workers.
- Cent percent The Respondents were also not aware of any department of Govt. of Uttar Pradesh which works for the welfare of the female domestic workers.
- The present Study reveals that all respondents of the study area were also not aware of any NGO'S/GO'S working for the advocacy of the female domestic workers.
- In terms of suggestions to improve the condition and solve the problem, 34% respondents suggested that Proper, humane and respectful treatment by the employer should be given to them, 22% suggested that payment should be given on time and payment should not be deducted when the respondents get sick, 14% respondents suggest that their work should be respected, 13% suggested that government schemes should come to fix the wages and work limit, 8% suggested amenities like warm water in winters for mopping and washing utensils should be provided and washroom should be provided to ensure comfortable working environment and 6% suggested that termination should be informed in advance.

Conclusion

- The present Study shows that the involvement of married females in domestic works was more than other categories like widow, divorced & unmarried. This study also indicates that female is responsible for domestic work still today.

- FDW's are coming from illiterate backgrounds so the present study also evident that unorganized workforce comprises of people of illiterate background, although the females of all the educational status are into this work.
- Involvement of the Hindu females of weaker and vulnerable section of the society are more in numbers in domestic work although this study also evident that after a lot of efforts made by the Govt. the condition of weaker and vulnerable section is same till today.
- For improving present living conditions in urban areas, females of nuclear families and weaker sections of the society are more involved in domestic work than joint families.
- The present study is a positive indicator of women empowerment in weaker sections of the society, because mostly the respondents were the bread earners and were even heading the family.
- Study also indicates that females of below poverty line (BPL) families are more engaged in domestic works. So it is a clear indicator of poor living conditions of the unorganized sector of the Indian society.
- FDW'S were inspired of other domestic workers to get involved in this work.
- The study indicates that there are no fixed working hours in a day so their wages/payment are also not fixed like other unorganized sectors. Study also reveals that Minimum payment of wages Act is not effectively implemented by the Govt. in Unorganized sectors of India, So the practice of deciding wages on mutual consent is still being practiced.
- No existence of national level of Rules & Regulations for female domestic worker. Their work limit is also not decided.
- Due to lack of social security measures, if something wrong occur during work employers and Govt. is not ready to take any responsibility of families of domestic workers.
- This study also reveals that there is no provision of protection for the families of Unorganized Sector (FDW) in Uttar Pradesh.
- Breaks during work, leaves in month & deduction of money from their salary also depends on the employer, it is common practice in unorganized sector in Uttar Pradesh.
- The employers are providing refreshments but in average of that they take extra work from them or give less wage/payment in the ratio of that.
- There are no limitations of the employer's behavior towards the respondent.
- The Practice of giving termination notice in advance is not in practice in unorganized sector so in the field of domestic work of study area the employer can easily terminate the FDW anytime.
- The extra payment for extra work & Incentive/Bonus/Reward is dependent on the mercy of the employer and not on the performance of FDW's
- The Study also reveals that, FDW'S wash the utensils for the employers but for them their Utensils are separated by the employer, similarly they clean the whole house but for them, they are given floor to sit & rest. This study is giving the evidence of existence of a very inhuman behavior like unouchability.
- It is a drawback of Unorganized sector in Uttar Pradesh that the employers of unorganized sectors are not providing proper working conditions so the study also reveals that due to unfavorable working conditions at work place the FDW were suffering from many seasonal diseases.

- Women in Indian Society are not safe either in family or other places (including work place in organized/unorganized Sector). The present study also reveals that it is continuous practice in Indian society therefore the FDW's are also the victims.
- This Study also reveals that being the bread earners of the family even though they are exploited they are unable to do take any action against it.
- The Unorganized workforce of Indian Society come from the weaker and vulnerable section of the society, mostly from Schedule caste & Schedule tribe due to poor economic condition their educational status is also low so they are unaware of their Rights. In the present study FDW also come from poor socio-economic backgrounds they are unaware of any welfare programs, social security measures, Act/legislation working for their welfare they were also unaware of NGO'S working for their welfare
- The basic challenges of Unorganized sector are similar to FDW's like favorable working conditions, minimum wage, payment of wage on time, deduction, leave, dignity of the workers In the light of these conclusions the following suggestions can be cited to improve the conditions of Female domestic workers in India.

Suggestions

In the light of these conclusions the following suggestions can be cited to improve the conditions of Female domestic workers in India.

- Proper arrangement of Formal/Informal classes for improving the educational status of FDW should be organized by the Govt. & NGO'S.
- Due to poor economic conditions FDW's are involved in this work so proper skill development programs for them should be organized by Give. & NGO'S. □ Domestic work should be recognized as other professions.
- In Indian Society a larger workforce comprises of unorganized sector which is 92% and out of that 92%, 4.2 million females are engaged in domestic works, so keeping this population in mind national level policy, legislation & schemes should be formulated by the Govt.
- Minimum Wages Act should be executed effectively in the field of domestic work by GO'S & NGO's so their labor of FDW's are not exploited.
- Condition of work & working condition of FDW can be improved by the initiatives of Professional Social workers, civil society organizations, Govt. Organizations, Social activists, bureaucrats, policy makers, legislatures & political leaders.
- The harassment of FDW should be covered by The Sexual harassment at workplace Act.
- Central Social Welfare Board and National/ State Commission for Women should take initiative for improving the conditions and solving the problems of FDWs.
- The advocacy of FDWs should be done so that they themselves take initiatives for improving their conditions.
- International/National/State/Local NGO'S should come up for protection of human rights and increasing the level of awareness in FDW and should play a role of "Watch Dog" in the Society.

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