



International Journal of Home Science

ISSN: 2395-7476
IJHS 2019; 5(2): 266-269
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www.homesciencejournal.com
Received: 01-03-2019
Accepted: 05-04-2019

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Working condition of female domestic worker at workplace

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Abstract

Domestic work is dominated by female workers. The strong preference for nuclear families has resulted demand of domestic workers. Domestic workers were received low wages, faced discrimination and highly exploited at workplace. Moreover employers did not give extra pay for extra work. Domestic worker had no support system and society to fight against their exploitation. This study was conducted to assess working condition of domestic worker at workplace in Udaipur region. Primary data was collected with help of face to face interview schedule. This study concluded that domestic workers discriminated at their workplace on the basis of caste. They had no power to bargain for more wages and paid leave in month and no courage to leave the work due to poor financial condition.

Keywords: Domestic workers, working condition, discrimination

Introduction

Women are the integral part of society though man and women both are equally important for social structure of the system. In modern times, Women also started earning for family and she is holding various positions in every sector. But women belonging to poor families are forced to join unskilled, low productive and unsafe jobs to support their family, due to unemployed husband or absence of male bread earner in the family. Poor financial conditions push them to enter in unorganized sectors. This sector stands for fragmented and scattered work. Nature of employment is temporary, seasonal and often change in employment are characteristic of unorganized sector. There is no fixed employer and employee relationship, getting lesser wages than minimum wages. Further, this sector is widely untouched with no protection laws and no official records of workers work situations.

Women have shown eminent participation in the labor market of India. Women cover the half of the population of India. Her participation in labour market cannot be neglected which is increasing over period of time from 19.67 percent in 1981 to 22.7 percent in 1991 and further to 25 percent in 2001 (Siva prakasam and Suriakala, 2003) ^[8].

In the decade after liberalization, there is nearly 120 per cent rise in the number of domestic workers in India (Saldanha, 2017) ^[7]. Despite of its growing in number, domestic workers in most countries remain largely unrecognized, undervalued and almost poorly regulated. Generally, Domestic Workers come from the vulnerable communities and the backward areas (Gothoskar, 2005) ^[3]. Majority of them are poor, illiterate, unskilled and do not understand urban labor market. Since most domestic workers are women (and often migrant women), they are even less likely to be in a position to organize and demand their rights collectively. It is usually perceived as something less than regular work by both employers and the workers themselves, and contracts are usually determined bilaterally in conditions of unequal bargaining power without strong awareness of either labor market conditions or the legal rights of the workers. Similarly Poongodi (2012) ^[6] reported that women face instability in work, the less paid and discriminated at workplace. There is virtual absence of enforcement of protective labor legislation.

An overview: working condition of female domestic worker

Domestic workers are the largest sector of working women in India and hold largest share of labour in informal economy of the country.

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It was reviewed that Domestic workers are particularly vulnerable group of society. Baboo and Panwar (1989) ^[1] emphasized that maids in Haryana have miserable life. They were getting low wages, working for long hours, changes in nature of job, low prestige and lack of freedom in their workplace. They had lack of coordination with their children and families due to which children feel neglected. Their job is fragmented and they had lack of education and low bargaining capacity. Due to which most of them had low socio-economic status and experience financial issue in their life. Hazarika, *et al.* (2002) ^[4] studied the basic characteristics of domestic worker, socio economic condition along with problem faced by workers at workplace and home. This study was conducted in five areas of Mumbai with 50 sample size and interview techniques was used to collect the information related to socio economic condition and problems of the workers. The findings of the study revealed that more than fifty percent were migrants and 64 per cent were either illiterate or primarily educated. Researcher found that 80 per cent were not satisfied with their present salary and expecting more for their work. It was reported that women were suffering from family life imbalance and their husband were not supporting them. It was concluded that socio-economic condition of the women was bad and they were struggling with problems at both workplace and home.

According to Kundu 2007 ^[5], mostly female domestic workers were hired in private houses. Their work still remains acknowledge as a legitimate form of work in India. The conditions of work and rights of Kolkata female domestic workers were investigated and study was a conducted at micro-level. It was reported that majority of the respondents are young married women. They belong from distant places and family members had unstable job along with low income. Respondents prefer domestic work as part time job to supplement their family income. Engel's ratio depict that full-time domestic worker's standard of living was better compare to the respondents engaged in part time domestic work. Study revealed that domestic workers were not getting any pay for overtime work as well as they was deprived of timely payment of salaries and public holidays. It was found that condition of domestic worker is very bad. None of them were cautious about their situation, moreover West Bengal Government also not concerned about them and they were not getting benefit of the State-assisted Scheme of Provident Fund for unorganized workers.

Bharat Jyoti (2008) ^[2] explored the sociological factors which are the reason behind to migration of women to urban centers to work as domestic worker. Moreover the job profile, employer-employee relationship, job satisfaction and job security of the women domestic worker has also been studied. The sample size of the study was 150 and study been conducted in five major districts of Orissa. Sample slums were selected by two stage random sampling technique. Findings of investigation revealed that One third of the DW is landless and two-third having less than 1 acre land. Majority of them reported that need to survive and lack of employment opportunity at their place were major factor to migrate. Researcher suggested that there is need to take necessary steps for them to ensure job security and safe working condition of domestic women worker.

It was reviewed that most of the domestic workers were low paid, faced discrimination at workplace, no facilities at workplace and treated awfully by employer. So keeping this in mind study was conducted with following objectives:

- To assess working condition of domestic worker at workplace

Material and Methods

Study is exploratory in nature and seeks to identify the problems and challenges faced by domestic workers at their workplace. The present study conducted in Udaipur region with 400 sample size. Domestic workers who were registered in National Domestic workers movement were selected with sample random sampling. Primary data was collected with help of face to face interview schedule.

Result and Discussion

In this interview schedule number of household respondents working, paid holidays, monthly income, facilities at workplace and work appreciation was assessed to find out the working condition of domestic worker at workplace was assessed.

Working in no of house

Majority of respondents reported that they were entered into this field due to lack of education no higher skill to get decent jobs. They were getting low wages so they have to work more than one households. Review elicited that most of the domestic workers were working in more than one house. Similar trend was observed in present study. It was found that 54.25 per cent were working in 3-4 houses and 45 per cent were working in 1-2 houses. Only 0.75 per cent was working in 5 and more than 5 houses. Respondent reported that working in more than 5 houses was difficult as working hours were limited and most of the employers demanded domestic workers at similar time period of the day either in morning hours or evening's hours.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents

S. No	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Working in no of houses			
1.	1-2	180	45
2.	3-4	217	54.25
3.	5 and more	3	0.75
Paid holidays (Per month)			
1.	2 days	199	49.75
2.	3 days	121	30.25
3.	4 days	80	20
Monthly income			
1.	Less than Rs 2001	125	31.25
2.	Rs 2001-4000/-	212	53
3.	Rs 4001-6000 /-	49	12.25
4.	Rs 6001 and more	14	3.50
Total		400	100

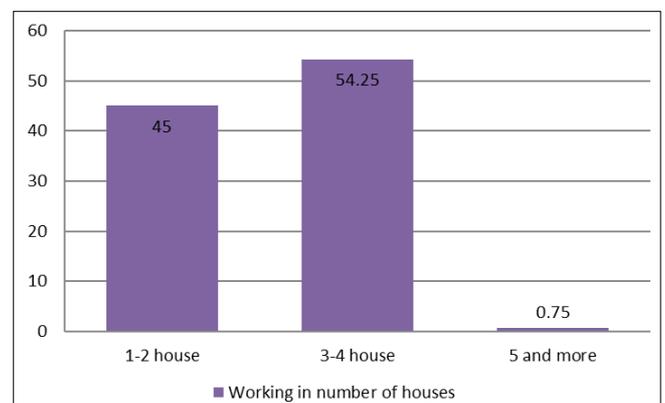


Fig 1: Percentage distribution of the respondents on the basis of working in no of houses

Paid holidays

It was found that 49.75 per cent respondents got two days paid holiday followed by 30 per cent getting 3 days holiday and only 20 per cent getting 4 days holiday in a month. They

reported that if they took more than 2-3 days holiday in a month than their employer deduct money from their salary. Some of them also expressed that occasionally they can get more holidays up to 6-7 days without deducting their salary.

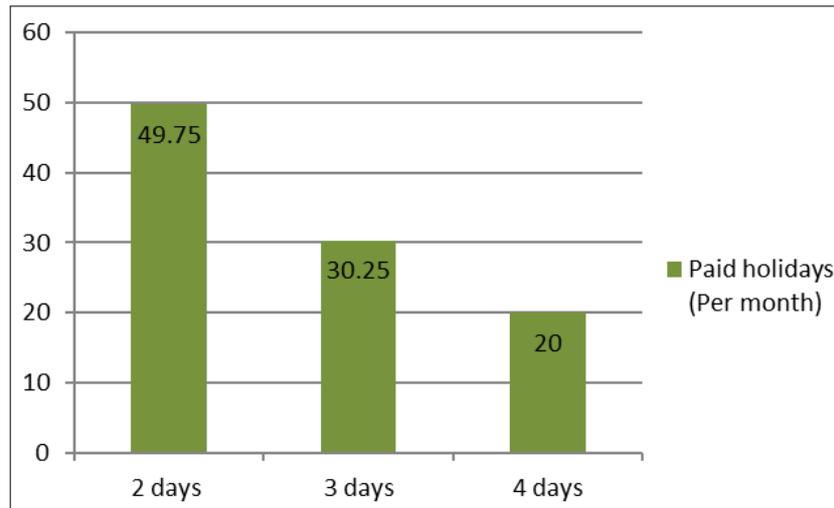


Fig 2: Percentage distribution of the respondents on the basis paid holiday (Per month)

Monthly income

It was observed that 53 per cent were getting Rs 2001- 4000/- per month from domestic work, 31 per cent were getting less

than Rs 2000, 12 per cent were getting Rs 4001-6001/- and only 3.5 per cent respondents were getting more than Rs 6000 per month.

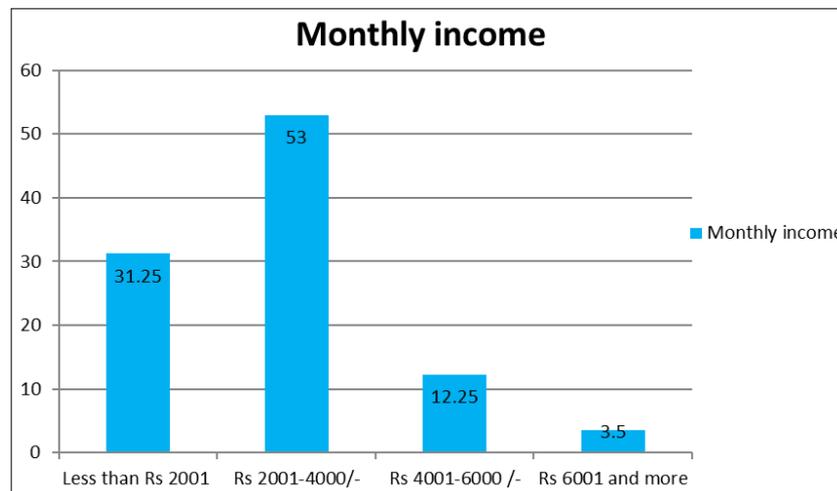


Fig 3: Percentage distribution of the respondents on the basis monthly income

Facilities at workplace

Workers have right to get facilities at workplace from the employer. Organised sector and industries provide various facilities to their workers but workers involved in unorganized sector/ work are not facilitated by the employer, even though they need some basic facilities at workplace specially women workers.

Table 2 elicit that 58.75 per cent respondents were not allowed to wear their slippers inside the house. Few of them reported that they did cleaning task in home with bare foot even in extreme cold weather. However 41 per cent expressed that their employer provided them separate slippers to work in the home.

Review elicited that domestic workers faced discrimination and treated awfully at workplace. Similarly present study also depicted that the workers experienced discrimination as 60 per cent respondents reported that they had separate utensils for drinking at workplace, 55 per cent were not allowed to take drinking water by themselves. Respondents reported that they were belongs to lower caste that's why they were faced discrimination at workplace.

It was also reported that 52.5 per cent were never served fresh food from employer, followed by 45.5 per cent getting it sometime and only 2 per cent were served fresh food in the employer's house. Further 70 per cent respondents reported that they sometime get left over food followed by 27.75 per cent who said they are always offered leftover food.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents about facilities at work place, N=400

S. No	Facilities at work place	Always	Sometime	Never
1.	Allow slippers at workplace	165 (41.25)	-	235 (58.75)
2.	Keep Separate utensils	240 (60)	-	160 (40)
3.	Allow to take water by yourself for drinking	179 (44.75)	-	221 (55.25)
4.	Offer fresh food	8 (2)	182 (45.5)	210 (52.5)
5.	Offer leftover food	111 (27.75)	281 (70.25)	8 (2)
6.	Warm water in winter	206 (51.5)	8 (2)	186 (46.5)
7.	Allow to use washroom	102 (25.5)	-	298 (74.5)

Work appreciation

Appreciation play key role for motivating employee at their workplace. Studies have shown that appreciation at workplace is directly affecting the employee job satisfaction thus it improves their productivity. Domestic workers were less appreciated by their employer. Their job considered as thankless job. Majority of them complain that they were never get appreciation in any forms at their workplace.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents about work appreciation, N=400

S. No	Particulars	Yes	No
1.	Extra Pay for Extra work	29 (7.25)	371 (92.75)
2.	Gift During Festival Days	291 (72.75)	109 (27.25)
3.	Annual Increase in wages	-	400 (100)

Data depict that more than ninety per cent respondents did not received extra pay for extra work whereas only 7 per cent received extra pay for extra work. Some of the respondents reported that they usually did extra work at workplace without getting any appreciation. More than seventy per cent respondents reported that they received gifts but only on Deepawali/ Eid and 27 per cent denied about receiving any gifts during festival. It was found that none of them get annual increase in their wages. Some of them reported that they get raised in wages once in 5 to 6 years which may or may not be sure.

Conclusion

Domestic workers are economically vulnerable section of the India. They were discriminated at their workplace on the basis of caste. They had no power to bargain for more wages and paid leave in month and no courage to leave the work due to poor financial condition. They must be treated decently at their workplace and government must develop necessary measures to protect their right at workplace. There is need to encourage the formation organization and unions of domestic workers to safeguard their rights.

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