

A Study of Real life Stories of Female domestic workers in Chandigarh

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Abstract

Vimla Devi, who resides in a small house at Maloya, a suburb, on the outskirts of Chandigarh begins her day early morning preparing meals for her family and looking after her own house. Minutes later, she picks up a local bus to reach Sector-34, and then walks half a kilometer to reach her workplace by 8.30 am. Thereafter, she gets engaged in all domestic tasks, including washing utensils, floor cleaning, washing clothes, cooking, etc in 4 to 5 households daily. This has been her routine without taking any sick leave. She gets merely two or three days off every month. Looking at the working conditions, not only is it informal, but also involves hard manual labor, vulnerable and unhygienic environment. All this hard work fetches her merely Rs.4000 a month, without any social security benefits, provident fund and negligible job security.

Women domestic workers are the breadwinners for their families in India. In the absence of an effective national policy, domestic workers are openly exploited. Several studies reveal that they are subjected to discrimination on grounds of religion, caste, and ethnicity. This study employs a descriptive approach that was conducted among 50 female domestic workers in Chandigarh. Main purpose of the study is to know the socio-economic conditions of women domestic workers and the reason which led them to adopt this sector. This paper reveals that domestic servants mainly belong to scheduled caste and it is because of illiteracy, poverty, alcoholic partners and parents, that they are bound to do domestic work. 62% of the respondents belong to above 35 years age group, 38% of the respondents belong to 16-35 years age group. 66% of the respondents are married and most of them preferred domestic work.

Keywords

Women, domestic workers, society, exploitation, story telling.

1. Introduction

It is a known fact that millions of women have been working as domestic workers in middle and upper-class Indian households. According to Domestic workers Welfare and Social Security Act 2010 u/s 2(f), "Domestic Worker" means, "a person who is employed for remuneration whether in cash or kind, in any household '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*¹ and includes a *Replacement worker*²."

Domestic work in India is in great demand and most of these domestic workers are "women" who often hail from marginalized sections of the society, also a large number of these workers are often migrants from other states. There are various factors aiding in the growth of domestic workers such as, increase in the number of nuclear families, increase in the number of women working professionally, growing urbanization, lack of education, low economic condition, etc.

2. Main objectives of the study

- To understand the living conditions of women domestic workers.
- To examine the basic socio-economic characteristics of domestic workers.
- To know the problems and issues pertaining to their workplace.
- To study their aspiration regarding their families.
- To investigate the compulsion which leads them to adopt this work.

¹*Household and allied work* includes but is not limited to activities such as cooking or a part of it, washing clothes or utensils, cleaning or dusting of the house, driving, caring/ nursing of the children/ sick/ old/ mentally challenged or disabled persons.

²*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.

3.Method of the study

A descriptive survey method was used in this study, which was designed to get a comprehensive account of the immediate and current socio-economic status of all the sampled respondents working as part-time female domestic workers within the limits of Chandigarh. All the relevant data utilized for this study was through primary sources. However, wherever necessary, data from secondary sources has also been used. Data being used in this study has been both qualitative and quantitative in nature and has been collected from randomly selected respondents through a structured questionnaire, field observation, personal interviews, and document analysis. Secondary data including international and national reports concerning the study, published research papers, various journals, books, census data, and other government or non-government documents had been retrieved in order to review the overall situation of the respondents. The quantitative data from the collected questionnaire was further tabulated, analyzed and interpreted.

4.Domestic work and Nature of the Services provided

'Domestic Workers' has been defined in several forms by academicians, statistical experts, and international scholars. No doubt, it is complex to define domestic workers, in general, due to multiple works being undertaken by them and job profiles of domestic workers are also not well-defined in any legal sphere. In general parlance, the term domestic worker can be defined "as a person who is or has been engaged on a full or part-time basis and has been engaged in undertaking various domestic household services in return for remuneration payable in cash or benefits, for a fixed duration". International Labour Organization (ILO) defined domestic workers as "any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship" in its "Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)". Work performed for single or multiple households include cleaning, cooking, washing and ironing, taking care of children, or elderly or sick members of a family, as well as household, pets, gardening, guarding the house and driving for the family. While defining the Domestic Workers, the ILO considered three main principles; namely, *Types of Tasks Performed, Place of Work and Employer* which is described as below;

- a) **Types of task performed:** Domestic workers usually render those types of household jobs or services which remain oriented towards daily household activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing of utensils and clothes, child/old care, driving, gardening, gate and housekeeping etc and majority of these tasks are predominantly performed within the premises of employer's private household.
- b) **Place of work:** The workplace of these workers usually remains confined to individual private households. Such workplace is quite different as compared to other conventional work-places like an office or industry plants. This unconventional workplace has always played a pivotal role in defining domestic workers.
- c) **Employer:** Job profile of any worker is also characterized by its employers. In the case of domestic workers, it has been quite different as their employers are dominantly private individuals or families which exclusively employ them to work for the household work. This case may be dissimilar to other types of employers likewise in other categories of workers.

In many other countries, Domestic Workers have been included under the category "personal social and community services" (category-9) under the realm of National Industrial Classification (NIC) in India which states that any employed person performing household services in private households is usually considered as a domestic worker. The Draft National Policy on Domestic Workers as recommended by the Taskforce on Domestic Workers provides a definition of a domestic worker as: "a person who is employed for remuneration whether in cash or kind, in any household through any agency or directly, either on a temporary or permanent, part time or full-time basis to do the household work, but does not include any member of the family of an employer".

As per Domestic workers Welfare and Social Security Act 2010 u/s 2(f), "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*³ and includes a *Replacement worker*⁴."

³*Household and allied work* includes but is not limited to activities such as cooking or a part of it, washing clothes or utensils, cleaning or dusting of the house, driving, caring/nursing of the children/sick/old/mentally challenged or disabled persons.

⁴*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.

On the basis of the above statements, Domestic Workers can be broadly defined as workers who perform a multitude of domestic tasks within a single or multiple private household in exchange of cash or kind. However, while interpreting this definition, it should be considered that the degree of specialization or skills for a specific task of these workers remains an indifferent factor. This paradox can be displayed by an example that "If any cook would work in a household, he/she would be called as a Domestic Worker; however, if he or she would work in the same capacity at any other place such as eating joint, hotel or any restaurant, apparently he would be identified as a cook or chef". This means that while defining domestic workers, the skills of any of these workers had not been taken into consideration. Such indistinctness had virtually affected the policy makers and researchers while addressing the problems of domestic workers. In the wake of such ambiguities, various researchers, labour forums and policymakers have stressed on chalking out a well-defined definition of domestic workers which would cover all aspects concerning their jobs and eventually, it would be crucial for designing suitable policies for addressing the issue of these workers.

5. Classification of Domestic Workers

Domestic workers have been generally categorized into two main categories i.e. Live-in or Full-time workers and Live-out or Part-time workers depending upon the nature of engagement, living place and working hours. These classifications are examined as below;

- 1. Live-in or Full-time workers:** These are those workers who work full time for a single employer, besides, they stay in the premises of their employer or in a dwelling provided by the employer (whichever is also close or next to employer's house) and since they live with their employers, they cannot return to their home daily after work."
- 2. Live-out or Part-time workers:** These are those workers who work in one or more households for a specified number of hours per day. They perform specific tasks daily at each workplace. After work, they return to their houses every day.

On the basis of this classification, whether full-time or part-time, *Place of Residence* of worker has remained a significant factor which differentiates these two divisions of domestic workers. Since the place of living of full-time or live-in domestic worker has been the employer's house, they remain available for work round the clock, as per the requirements of the employer⁵. On the other hand, part-time or live-out workers undertake the same tasks in multiple employers' households. However, it may be considered that they are 'part-time' from the point of view of an employer but not from that of the worker. This is so because many of them have been working in multiple households throughout the day and may return to their own residence only during night. This has led to a misconception about this specific group of domestic workers as whether they are part-time or full-time workers. Such confusion and uncertainty has adversely affected all efforts for ensuring legal and social security framework for them.

Table 1:Socio-Demographical status of respondents

S. No.	Socio-demographical Factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Age	16- 25 years	7	14
		25-35 years	12	24
		35-45 years	20	40
		45-60 years	10	20
		above 60 years	1	2
		Total	50	100
2	Marital Status	Married	33	66
		Unmarried	3	6
		Divorcee/Separated	3	6
		Widows	11	22
		Total	50	100
3	Education	Illiterate	31	62

⁵ According to Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act 2010, *Employer* means any person, authorities, management that engages the domestic worker to do any work in a household whether part time or full time either directly or through any other person or agency and who has an ultimate control over the affairs of the household and includes any other person to whom the affairs of such household is entrusted and in relation to contract labour, the principal employer.

		upto Primary	11	22
		up to Middle	6	12
		up to Secondary	2	4
		Total	50	100
4	Caste	General	4	8
		Scheduled castes	44	88
		Other Backward Castes(OBCs)	2	4
		Total	50	100
5	Religion	Hindu	47	94
		Muslim	1	2
		Sikh	1	2
		Christian	1	2
		Total	50	100
6	Proportion of Migrants and reason for migrating from native place	Marriage	16	32
		Better livelihood Options	15	30
		Water problem	1	2
		Prosperous Living	8	16
		Parental migration	2	4
		Native to Chandigarh	8	16
		Total	50	100

Table 1 provides the demographic characteristics of the sample of women domestic workers. Majority of women in the sample are married, i.e. 66%. 64% of women belong to the age group of 24 to 45 years. Women domestic workers are not well educated with 62% of the women being illiterate and only 4% of them being educated up to Secondary level. Women domestic workers belong to Hindu religion and Scheduled castes dominate the sample with 94% and 88% respectively. Women domestic workers from Muslim, Sikh, and Christian are negligible in number with 2% each, General and OBC have 8% and 4% share in the sample.

84% of women involved in the domestic works are migrants and the main reason behind the migration is marriage and better livelihood options. 16% of the workers are native to Chandigarh.

Table 2: Basic Living Conditions of the respondents

S. No.	Living Conditions Factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Place of Residence	Slums	29	58
		Rehabilitated/ Pucci Colonies	21	42
		Total	50	100
2	Ownership of Current House	Owned	37	74
		Rented	13	26
		Total	50	100
3	Type of House	Semi-Pucca House	29	58
		Pucca House	21	42
		Total	50	100
4	Basic Facilities in House	Electricity	49	98
		Drinking Water	23	46
		Kitchen	23	46
		Latrine	21	42
		Pucca Lane	26	52
		Drains/ Sewer	22	44
5	Fuel Used for Domestic Purpose	LPG	38	76
		Kerosene	6	12
		Wood	6	12
		Total	50	100
6	Household items in Respondents House	Television	42	84
		Scooter/ Motor Cycle	12	24
		Refrigerator	26	52
		Washing Machine	12	24
		Mobile Phone	47	94
		Sewing Machine	11	22
		Bedding Item	37	74
		Sofa Set	2	4
		Pressure Cooker	46	92
		Fans/ Cooler	43	86
		Wall Clock	31	62
		Chairs/ Tables	31	62
		Bicycles	33	66
7	Sources of Drinking Water	Piped/ Tap Water	41	82
		Hand Pump	8	16
		Water Tanker	1	2
		Total	50	100
8	Location of Sources of Drinking Water	Within Premises	23	46
		Outside Premises	27	54
		Total	50	100
9	Electric Meter	Yes	40	80
		No	9	18
		NA	1*	2
		Total	50	100

*respondents do not have power connection in their house.

Table 2 indicates that 58% of the families live in slums and 42% are residing in rehabilitated or Pucci Colonies. The ownership of houses stands at 74% which saves them from the economic hardship as they didn't have to pay any rent. These houses further defined as *Pucca house*⁶, *Katcha House*⁷ and *Semi-Pucca house*⁸ having basic facilities like electricity in 98% and pucca lane in 58% of the households; more than half of the households are lacking in the facilities like drinking water (54%), kitchen (54%), latrine (58%), and drains/sewer (56%) etc.

This indicates that left-out 58% of the women domestic workers and their families were still practicing open defecation or using community mobile lavatories. Three main sources of drinking water supply have been identified i.e. piped or tap water (82%), hand pumps (16%) and water tanker (2%); majority of the households have been using piped or tap water for their domestic and drinking purposes, which is a positive inclination since quality of piped/ tap water is far safer than other sources of water.

Since all the respondents were women domestic workers, they have the responsibility to perform activities such as cooking, boiling water, lighting, and heating in their houses. Thus, information on this indicator was assessed and it is evident that the majority of them were using LPG as their energy source with 76%; remaining 24% were using wood and kerosene in equal proportion.

The above table also reveals that mobiles (94%) have been the most common assets available in the house, followed by television (84%). Other durable goods found were bedding items (74%), pressure cooker (92%), cooler and fans (86%), wall clocks and chair-tables (62%) and refrigerators (42%) in the household. As a means of transport is concerned, only 24% of the households having Scooter/Motorcycles; however, 66% of them owned Bicycles.

Table 3: Socio-economic status of the respondents

S. No.	Socio-economic factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Family Size	Up to 4 Members	21	42
		5 to 6 Members	21	42
		More than 6 Members	8	16
		Total	50	100
2	Total Monthly Household Income	₹ 0 to 10,000	25	50
		₹ 10,000 to 20,000	21	42
		₹ 20,000 to 30,000	4	8
		Total	50	100
3	Holding a Bank Account	Yes	37	74
		No	13	26
		Total	50	100
4	Savings	No Savings	32	64
		Up to ₹ 1,000	11	22
		₹ 1,000 to 3,000	6	12
		₹ 3,000 to 5,000	1	2
		Total	50	100
5	Availed any Loan	Yes	18	36
		No	32	64

⁶*Pucca house*: A pucca structure is one whose walls and roofs are made of pucca materials such as cement, concrete, oven burnt bricks, hollow cement/ash bricks, stone, stone blocks, jack boards (cement plastered reeds), iron, zinc or other metal sheets, timber, tiles, etc.

⁷*Katcha house*: A structure which has walls and roof made of non-pucca materials is regarded as a katcha structure. Non-pucca materials include un-burnt bricks, bamboo, mud, grass, leaves, reeds, thatch, etc.

⁸*Semi-pucca house*: A structure which cannot be classified as a pucca or a katcha structure as per definition is a semi-pucca structure. Such a structure will either have the walls or the roof but not both, made of pucca materials.

		Total	50	100
6	Reasons for Availing Loan	Children Education	1	5.56
		Health Treatment	1	5.56
		House Repair/ Renovation	3	16.67
		Marriage	5	27.78
		Family Emergencies	8	44.44
		Total	18	100
7	Outstanding Loan	Yes	4	8
		No	46	92
		Total	50	100
8	Sources of Loans	Institutional	3	16.67
		Non-institutional	15	83.33
		Total	18	100
9	Awareness on PMJDY	Yes	21	42
		No	29	58
		Total	50	100

Analysis of the above table demonstrates that 58% of the total women domestic workers had five or more persons in their respective families. Apparently, there is negligible change in the mindset of underprivileged sections of the society who are not concerned about their increasing family size corresponding to meager income of the family which is low; the majority, i.e. 92% of the households from all sources is earning less than Rs.20, 000 per month. It resulted in a negative trend among the household with regards to their approach towards monthly savings out of their monthly income. Total 26% of the households do not even hold a bank account, and nearly two-thirds (64%) of the households did not even save a penny from their monthly income; only 2% household, i.e. only one household is saving more than Rs. 3,000 per month.

Data reveals that about two-thirds of the households (64%) did not serve any loan whether it is institutional or non-institutional. Remaining 36% who availed loans, used informal or non-institutional credit facilities such as money lenders, family friends, relatives etc. Major reason to avail the loan is identified as family emergency which has been observed in 44% of the households; another major reason identified is marriage with 28% of the households availing the loan.

Households are not aware about the government schemes, the data observed for PMJDY⁹; 58% of the household were unaware of the scheme, remaining 42% were aware only about its basic objective and did not know anything in detail.

Table 4: Expenses and health of the respondents and their family

S. No.	Factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Profession of Respondent's Husband/ Father	Sweepers/ Cleaners	43	86
		Daily Wage Labourer	3	6
		Rikshaw Puller	1	2
		Vegetable Vendor	1	2
		Motor Mechanic	1	2
		Not Working	1	2
		Total	50	100
2	Drug Abuse & Anti-Social Habits	Cigarette/ Tobacco	36	72
		Alcohol	42	84

⁹PMJDY: Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

	of Husband/ Father	Addiction to Opium/ Poppy Husk	11	22
		Addiction to Synthetic Drugs	1	2
		Gambling	13	26
3	Monthly Expenses on Household Rent	No Expenses*	37	74
		₹ 300 to 1,000	3	6
		₹ 1,000 to 3,000	8	16
		₹ 3,000 to 5,000	2	4
		Total	50	100
4	Monthly Expenses on Children's education	No Expenses	22	44
		₹ 80 to 200	3	6
		₹ 200 to 600	6	12
		₹ 600 to 1,500	10	20
		₹ 1,500 to 2,000	9	18
		Total	50	100
5	Monthly Expenses on Food items	₹ 500 to 2,000	24	48
		₹ 2,000 to 3,500	11	22
		₹ 3,500 to 5,000	9	18
		₹ 5,000 to 7,000	4	8
		₹ 7,000 to 10,000	2	4
		Total	50	100
6	Monthly Expenses on Electricity and Water	No Expenses	9	18
		₹ 200 to 500	16	32
		₹ 500 to 1,000	19	38
		₹ 1,000 to 1,500	6	12
		Total	50	100
7	Monthly Spending on Medical Facilities	No Expenses	25	50
		₹ 100 to 500	13	26
		₹ 500 to 1,000	8	16
		₹ 1,000 to 1,500	4	8
		Total	50	100
8	Monthly Spending on LPG and Kerosene	No Expenses	5	10
		₹ 50 to 500	11	22
		₹ 500 to 700	25	50
		₹ 700 to 1,500	9	18
		Total	50	100
9	Monthly Spending on Social events	No Expenses	36	72
		₹ 50 to 200	2	4
		₹ 200 to 500	4	8
		₹ 500 to 1,500	8	16
		Total	50	100
10	Types of Ailments suffered	No Ailments	42	84
		Thyroid	2	4
		Kidney Stone	1	2
		Spine Pain	1	2
		Diabetes	4	8
		Total	50	100

11	Types of Medical Facilities Availed	Government Facilities	28	56
		Private Facilities	4	8
		Chemist Shop	18	36
		Total	50	100
		Total	50	100

*owned house

The above table shows the factors responsible for women adopting domestic work. Data explained that 86% spouse/father of the women domestic workers are engaged in services like sweeping/cleaning jobs which shows that domestic women and their husbands/father pursue the same profession. Very high proportions, i.e. 84% of worker's husband/father consume alcohol regularly whereas 72% of them use a cigarette or other tobacco products.

Other reasons include expenses in the household such as rent, children's education, food items, electricity and water, medical facilities, domestic fuel, and social events. A major portion of the expenses for 70% of the households occurred for food items, and electricity and water are in the range of ₹ 500 to ₹ 3,500 and ₹ 200 to ₹ 1,000 respectively.

Households share of expenses are very negligible for rent and social events as only 26% and 28% of the households have spent their income on rent and social events respectively; they are spending ₹ 80 to ₹ 2,000 for rent and ₹ 50 to ₹ 1,500 for social events. Spending on domestic fuels like LPG and Kerosene are in the range of ₹ 50 to ₹ 1,500 and the majority, i.e. 68% of the total households are spending in the range of ₹ 500 to ₹ 1,500.

Spending on the medical facilities occurred by only 50% of the families, which is also in the range of ₹ 100 to ₹ 1,500. Only 8% of the families are able to avail the private medical facility and remaining families are using Government facilities and chemist shop with 56% and 36% respectively. More than three-fourths, i.e. 84% of the families responded that they have never suffered from any kind of diseases and only 16% have been suffer with ailments like Thyroid (4%), Kidney stone (2%), Spine pain (2%), and Diabetes (8%).

Table 5: Children's schools and access to the credit and financial services

S. No.	Factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Number of Children	1 to 3	34	68
		4 to 5	8	16
		Up to 6	1	2
		None	4	8
		NA	3*	6
		Total	50	100
2	Children attending Schools	Yes	31	62
		No	12	24
		NA	7	14
		Total	50	100
3	Type of School Facility	Government School	28	90.32
		Private School	3	9.68
		Total	31	100
4	Ownership of Ration Card	Yes	37	74
		No	13	26
		Total	50	100
5	Types of Ration Card	Below Poverty Line (BPL)	21	42

		Above Poverty Line (APL)	16	32
		No Card	13	26
		Total	50	100
6	Receiving any Pension	Yes	7	14
		No	43	86
		Total	50	100
7	Aadhar Card	Yes	42	84
		No	8	16
		Total	50	100

*respondents were unmarried.

Table 5 shows the families' aspirations of the domestic workers with factors such as number of children in the family; how many of them are attending schools; whether joining government school or private school, and availability of government facilities like ration card, pension, and Aadhar card. There are 68% of the families having 1 to 3 children, and 62% of the total go to schools; thus, nearly a quarter of the children were not attending the schools. More than 90%, i.e. 28 out of 31 go to government schools and less than 10 percent can afford private schools. Only 14% of the families receive pension. Others majorly depend upon the facilities associated with ration card and Aadhar card; 42% of the families have *BPL ration card*¹⁰, 32% of them have *APL ration card*¹¹ and total 84% of the families have Aadhar card.

Table 6: Condition and Problems at workplace to the respondents

S. No.	Factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Number of Households in which Respondents work	1 Household	7	14
		2 to 3 Households	25	50
		4 to 5 Households	12	24
		upto 6 Households	6	12
		Total	50	100
2	Daily Working Hours	1 to 3 hours	7	14
		3 to 6 hours	25	50
		6 to 8 hours	12	24
		8 to 10 hours	6	12
		Total	50	100
3	Nature of work, performed in Total Households	Brooming/ Cleaning	48	96
		Cleaning Utensils	36	72
		Washing Clothes	22	44
		Cooking	10	20
		Dusting	12	24
		Child/ Elderly Care	6	12
4	Type of Work performed by Respondents in each household	Brooming/ Cleaning and Cleaning Utensils	35	70
		Brooming/ Cleaning, Cleaning Utensils and Washing Clothes	20	40
		Brooming/ Cleaning, Cleaning Utensils, Washing Clothes and Cooking	11	22

¹⁰*BPL Ration Card*: Below poverty line cards are being issued to such families which have the income of less than ₹ 300.91 per capita per month.

¹¹*APL Ration Card*: Above Poverty Line ration cards are issued to the public men, who are not covered with BPL ration cards.

	Brooming/ Cleaning, Cleaning Utensils, Washing Clothes, Cooking, Child/ Old Care Taker	3	6
	Cleaning Utensils, Washing Clothes, Cooking, Dusting, Child/ Old Care Taker	3	6
	Washing Clothes, Cooking, Dusting, Child/ Old Care Taker	3	6
	Cooking, Dusting, Child/ Old Care Taker	3	6
	Dusting, Child/ Old Care Taker	5	10
	Washing Clothes and Cooking	6	12
	Washing Clothes, Cooking and Dusting	4	8
5	Problems Encountered	Misbehavior/ Harassment	22
		Routine Scolding/ Shouting	9
		Wage deduction in case of damage of household items	11
		Wage deduction in case of Employer is out of town	13
		Scolding in case of late arrival at household	31
		Delay in Payment	6
		Use of abusive language/ Maltreated	6
		Suspicion over loss of money or household items	7
		Physical/ Sexual Abuse	0
		No Problem	8
6	Monthly Earning from all households	₹ 500 to 3,000	21
		₹ 3,100 to 5,000	15
		₹ 5,100 to 7,000	6
		₹ 7,100 to 10,500	8
		Total	50
7	Type of Benefits availed from employers	Free Meals	32
		Gifts on Festivals	15
		Bonuses & Rewards on Auspicious occasions in employers' households	28
		Weekly Holidays	35
		Clothes and other Household items	19
8	Distance covered by respondents from home to place of work	upto 5 Km.	11
		5 to 8 Km.	30
		More than 8 Km.	9
		Total	50

9	Monthly Expenses on transport	No Expenses	32	64
		₹ 100 to 300	7	14
		₹ 300 to 600	7	14
		₹ 600 to 1,000	4	8
		Total	50	100

The above table highlights the working conditions of women domestic workers. Eighty-six percent of the total women domestic workers provide services in more than one household, 50% of them were working in two to three different private households on the daily basis. Whereas nearly a quarter (24%) of them were working in four to five households which are quite high in terms of volume of work performed and working hours. rooming and cleaning were the most rendered domestic services as nearly all the domestic workers (96%) were undertaking these two types of work. The second most favored service being provided was cleaning utensils as 72% of them were performing this service.

There are many problems encountered by the women domestic workers like misbehavior/harassment, routine scolding/shouting, wage deduction and delay in payment on various reasons, abusive language and maltreatment. Scolding on late arrival at workplace and misbehavior/harassment are the common problems faced by 62% and 44% of the workers respectively.

72 percent workers are earning under the range of ₹ 5,000 per month and about 64% are also benefitted with free meals at the workplace, but the income implies that they are compelled to live under acute financial crunch and inadequacy of funds within their families. The distance of the workplace for a majority of the workers is in between 5 to 8 km. with 60% of them covering the distance on daily basis. To save on extra expenses, about 64% of the workers used to cover the distance between house to the workplace by walking or have their own vehicle and do not have to incur any expenditure on transport.

6. Conclusion

The present study has tried to explore various aspects of socio-economic dimensions relating to female domestic workers in Chandigarh. It has also tried to encompass their issues and concerns about their employment pattern while working as "part-time female domestic workers" in order to have an in-depth insight into their lives as an urban poor migrant worker. Data and outcomes have pointed out various problems, troubles, shortcomings, deficiencies, and their struggles to meet both ends while living in the most deprived corners of the city. Results have portrayed a different class of urban working women i.e. *domestic workers*, who have remained neglected and sidelined from promising job aspects. These outcomes have been quite indistinctive in the backdrop of Chandigarh who has been continuously topping the chart in terms of highest per capita income and other such economic indicators relating to prosperity and economic well-being in the country. A striking issue that emerged is that there is an abundance of prosperity among local residents on one hand, and strata of weaker section of people on the other hand who also co-exist in the same area but are confined to leading an awful life, which is full of hardship and little scope of progress for their future.

Moreover, society has never given them their due recognition as productive workers in spite of their incessant services to the society and local economy. Such pathetic treatment is reflected by their pitiable working conditions and remuneration in exchange for their rendered services. Due to these factors, domestic workers are compelled to live on the fringe of social order.

The study has clearly outlined that domestic work has remained the last alternative for poor migrant females. Majority of them belong to the scheduled castes and other marginalized sections of society, this is so because domestic work has been deeply associated with menial and dirty work. The outcomes also brought out the fact that majority of these workers are less educated and skilled. Thus, it became very obvious for them to opt for domestic work since it does not have any pre-requirements. These workers are fully aware that abundant wealthy prospective employers are within their reach, in their native city.

Undoubtedly, the growing importance of domestic work in new economic order has, significantly, created quite a surplus of cheap laborers in form of domestic workers. However, factors like lack of promising entitlements, fragile job security, absence of a legal contract with employers, unprecedented working hours, zero social security and absence of effective legal framework have adversely affected lives of these helpless workers and their families. Above all, efforts made by law enforcing agencies and NGOs have made a little or negligible impact to change present critical scenario of these workers.

Overall, this present study, after exploring vicious circle of their lives as part-time domestic workers, has discovered that they have quite less possibility to escape from clutches of chronic poverty which is deeply entrenched in their family roots. In fact, it is our society which has to play a prominent role in freeing them from their pathetic conditions and changing the attitude towards them. This section of workers, needless to say, quite urgently needs a well-defined set of regulations in order to protect them economically, physically and psychologically. These proactive manners in terms of flexible institutional provisions in a regular and sustained manner would significantly change their social and economic life which would be reflected in their future generation. It would also help them in achieving a prosperous and dignified life.

7. Suggestions

- Registration of all Domestic Workers should be made mandatory in order to give them due recognition and bring them into the mainstream of workers and enable them to avail certain benefits from their employers as well as government. It will also help in preparing a conclusive database of them;
- Devise a mechanism to calculate their minimum wages and working hours which would eventually be helpful in getting them a respectful earning as well as a dignified working environment;
- A Legal paper contract between workers and employers should be made necessary to protect them within a highly personalized working place;
- Focus should be given on laying down a comprehensive set of rights and entitlements which would resolve the issues of remuneration and working conditions;
- Initiatives should be taken to cover these workers under social security umbrella and insurance benefits in order to protect these vulnerable sections of workers;
- Entitlement to Maternity leave and regular holidays;
- Law enforcement agency should ensure the enforcement of proper labour laws and protection of human rights which complies with the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers.
- Undertake regular public information campaigns to inform domestic workers of their rights and responsibilities under prescribed laws and regulations.
- Regularly inform their employers of their rights and responsibilities;
- Spread awareness among domestic workers about the importance of their work;
- Sensitize and create awareness among employers of domestic workers about the significance of domestic workers and penalties or punishments they could face for maltreatment of domestic workers;
- Promote decent work for domestic workers so that they could not only enjoy their work but also lead, without any financial hardship, a dignified life.;
- Spread awareness among domestic workers to join labour union or such organisation which would provide an ideal platform to raise their concerns and issues;
- Spread informal adult education programmes for those female domestic workers, who dropped out or had least attended any formal educational institute;
- Create an emergency helpline number in case of any abuses of any form through the hands of employers;
- Establishment of a network of NGOs specifically working for the betterment of the domestic workers;
- Establish an outreach programme within existing labour associations to organize domestic workers in a protective manner to raise their concerns.

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