
Socio-Economic Status of Women Domestic Workers in Madurai City

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Abstract

Women workers In India constitute one third of the total workforce. Majority of these women are engaged in the un-organized sectors such as agriculture, construction, domestic services etc. The overwhelming majority of domestic workers are women and girls. This study is empirical in nature and provides information about the profile, nature, working and living conditions of women domestic workers. The female domestic workers surveyed are the part time and full time workers who serve one or more households in a day. Domestic servants usually live with the employing family, performing a multitude of household tasks (such as laundry, ironing, cooking, cleaning, and serving) in exchange for a modest wage plus room and board. Domestic workers are usually young, single women from working-class families whose terms of service last until marriage. Women of modern days certainly play a vital role in development of society. There are many women who are found working in private companies and in government offices. In the mechanical way of living both women and men have to work. They need domestic workers for doing household works. This article focuses on Socio- economic status of domestic workers in Madurai City. In Madurai, various classes of people like socialites (Upper class), middle class and poor class live in large number. Socio- economic status of women varies with various classes to which they belong. In Madurai city, domestic workers play vital role in various segment of the society. There are 10,000 domestic workers in Madurai city. The main objective of the study is to collect socio-economic data of women domestic workers in Madurai city with a view to studying the problems faced by them in their working, living and social conditions.

Keywords: Domestic Workers, Household Work, Exploitation, Violence, Working Conditions, Problems faced by Domestic Workers.

Introduction

Women workers in India constitute one third of the total workforce. Majority of these women are engaged in the un-organized sectors such as agriculture, construction, domestic services etc. The overwhelming majority of domestic workers are women and girls. This study is empirical in nature and provides information about the profile, nature, working and living

conditions of women domestic workers. The female domestic workers surveyed are the part time and full time domestic workers who serve one or more households in a day. Domestic servants usually live with the employing family, performing a multitude of household tasks (such as laundry ironing, cooking, cleaning, and serving) in exchange for a modest wage plus room and board. Domestic workers are usually young, single women from working-class families whose terms of service lasted until marriage. While comparing the pay to other jobs open to poor and uneducated females, domestic work attract few native-born women in spite of its long hours, low status, lack of freedom, and close supervision. Consequently, domestic servants often come from the ranks of the most desperate members of the community, either those who are too poor to pay for housing or those excluded from other vocations.

Women of modern days certainly play a vital role in the development of society. There are many women found working in private companies and in government offices. In the mechanical way of life both women and men have to work. They need domestic workers for doing household works. This study focuses on Socio- economic status of domestic workers in Madurai City. Madurai city is the head quarter of Madurai district. In Madurai, various classes of people live - like socialites (Upper class), middle class and poor class. Socio- economic statuses of women vary with various classes to which they belong. In Madurai city, domestic workers play vital role in various segment of the society. There are 10,000 domestic workers in Madurai city. Of these, around 1000 persons have registered themselves in the association for domestic workers. The main objective of the study is to collect socio-economic data of women domestic workers in Madurai city with a view to studying the problems faced by them in their working, living and social conditions.

Domestic workers have no fixed wages, fixed working hours or weekly off. They are the prime suspects when valuables go missing from the houses of their employers. Domestic workers are subjected to sexual harassment at work place and are discriminated against by caste. Their hard work is seldom recognized. However, being a domestic worker they are left with little time for taking care of their family. Most of women are forced to work as domestic workers because of their family circumstances do not lend much support to run their family. In most cases, the women are forced to take up the profession of domestic helps because of poverty. The male employers (house owners) in the house sometimes behave inappropriately even when their wives were in the same house. Hence the domestic workers are subjected to sexual harassment in work place. On the issue of caste discrimination a few households do not permit domestic workers to enter their houses because of their caste. They are allowed to work in the backyard. Sometimes domestic workers are dismissed without any notice and not paid for the days they work. The working time is 7.30a.m to 6.30pm. Of late, the employer offers mobile phone to domestic worker and then deduct the cost of the phone from his salary every month. Whenever the employers call them, immediately they go to their work place. When the employer has guests at home, the domestic worker has to do extra work, without any extra pay. Pay scale for domestic workers varies from Rs 500 to Rs 2500 per household.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the socio economic status of women domestic workers.
- To identify various problems faced by the domestic workers.
- To suggest appropriate measure to resolve the problems faced by the domestic workers.

Need and Significance of the study

The present study is considered to be very relevant to the present day society and country as a whole as it reflects the various hidden issues pertaining to the domestic workers. The study is of current relevance as the domestic workers face several problems such as low salary, over time work without pay, sexual harassment etc.

The study is intended to cover a specific area, i.e. Madurai city because of constraints of time and money. In this area more number of female involved in domestic work. They have faced some many problems in our society. Moreover the domestic workers problems are not taken proper care. Therefore the present study is considered to be a valuable contribution to the studies already available relating to the domestic workers. No previous study has covered socio-economic status of women domestic workers in Madurai city. In respect of the problems of women domestic workers which promoted the researcher to conduct the present study.

Scope of the Study

The study has been undertaken mainly to identify the problems faced by the female domestic workers. The study gives an insight into important problems like monthly salary, overtime pay, and rest day, annual leave and violence. This study gives importance to the more specified aspects of life such as literacy, age, income, and size of the family of the domestic workers.

Location of the Study Area

The study has been conducted in five areas of Madurai city namely Tallakulam, Thiruppalai, K.K.Nagar, Kannanenthal and B.B.Kulam.

Research Methodology

The present study is empirical in nature as the researcher herself desires to go and cover the Madurai city personally to ascertain the problems of domestic workers through personal interviews and the interview schedule specifically prepared for the study to elicit the information and data from the women domestic workers on various problems faced by them and impact of each problem on their families.

Data Collection

Primary data

The researcher has used both primary and secondary data for the study. The primary data were collected through a well structured interview schedule administered to a sample of 50 domestic workers in Madurai city.

Secondary data

The secondary data were collected from the books, journals and websites. Some published data were collected from previous studies.

Sampling Design

In order to select sample workers in Madurai city, the convenient sampling technique was used. Madurai city comprises 100 wards. It was decided to cover a sample of 50 domestic workers scattered over the Madurai city. The researcher has selected 5 wards in Madurai city and collected information from 10 domestic workers from each ward to represent the whole city.

Tools for Analysis

The data were analysed with the help of various statistical tools such as percentage analysis, and Likert's scaling techniques. Percentage analysis was used to simplify the problem of comparison.

Problems Faced by Domestic Workers-Rating

Sl. No.	Statement	S.A. Score 5	A. Score-4	No. Score-3	D. A Score-2	S.D.A. Score-1	ΣXW Total Scores	$\bar{X} W$ Average	Rank
1.	Feel tired	13	19	8	5	5	114	228	IX
2.	Deduct money from salary	13	25	5	5	2	183	366	III
3.	Misbehaviour of male employers	7	23	10	7	3	174	348	IV
4.	Little time to care for children	15	21	7	5	2	192	384	I
5.	Little time to care for husband	4	11	12	17	6	140	280	X
6.	Caste discrimination	15	20	8	6	2	191	382	II
7.	Not able to attend relative's function	9	10	7	12	12	142	284	VIII
8.	No fixed working hour	3	15	10	13	9	140	280	X
9.	No leave	6	17	10	11	6	156	312	VI
10.	Low salary	4	18	12	13	4	157	314	V
11.	Over work	5	16	12	13	4	155	310	VII

Source: Compiled from Primary Data

It is observed that among eleven problems faced by domestic workers, little time to care for children is the most important problem of the domestic workers. The second important

problem is caste discrimination and followed by deducting money from salary, misbehavior of male employers, low salary, no leave, over work, not able attend the relative's function, feel tired, little time to care for husband, no fixed working hour.

Findings of the Study

- Out of 50 respondents, 45 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 46-55 years followed by 32 percent who were in the age group of 36-45 years and remaining (18%) belong to the age group of below 35 years .
- Among the sample respondents Hindu religion was found to be dominant followed by Christian.
- In regard to the marital status 76 percent got married ,10 percent respondents were unmarried and 14 percent were widows and divorced.
- It was found that 54 percent of the respondents were studied up to primary education, 25 percent were completed middle level education and remaining 21 percent have completed higher secondary level. No workers in any house surveyed have education of graduation and above.
- Regarding the family size of the respondents more than one third of them had four members .
- More than two-third of the respondents had only one earning members in their families.
- It is inferred from the analysis that two-third of the respondent had family income ranging between Rs.2000- Rs.3000 per month.
- The main reason for preferring the domestic work is to educate their children.
- It is found that the main works of the domestic workers were sweep the floor, mopping, wash the dishes and wash their clothes.
- It is observed from the analysis, 62 percent of the respondents had 15 years experience in this field 23 percent had 10 years experience and 10 percent had 5 years experience and remaining 5 percent had below 5 years experience .
- A majority 95 percent of the respondents not satisfied with the salary. Only 5 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the salary paid by the employers.
- Only 10 percent of the respondents are member of domestic helper union.
- No employer allowed weekly off with salary to their workers.
- It is found that 53 percent of domestic workers belong to schedule class, 45 percent belong to the backward class and remaining 2 percent were schedule tribes.
- 65 percent of the women work more than two houses, 25 percent working only one house and remains 10 percent were working one house and stayed at night also.

Suggestions

State like Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Kerala and Bihar have brought the domestic workers under the ambit of the Minimum Wages Act of 1948. But in Tamil Nadu ,domestic workers have not come under this Act. Due to various reasons, Domestic workers are exploited.

Hence ,the government should take steps to bring the domestic workers under the Minimum Wage Act of 1948.

All the domestic workers maybecome a member of Domestic Workers Association. Most of the domestic workers hesitate to tell about misbehavior of male employers in the house. Hence ,proper counseling should be given to them. It is observed that the domestic workers feel that they do not have enough time to take care of their children. Hence, the employer may consider them as human being and allow weekly off to them.

Conclusion

In this article, it is analysed and inferred that the socio economic condition of domestic workers is not good. Their life histories also reveal that they experienced the same condition at their young age. They face problems both at home and at work place. At home they do not enjoy the pleasant atmosphere what they want. At work place they have a very heavy work load with less remuneration. However, concentrating on their interest, they are working very hard for a better future.

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