

## **Working conditions of women domestic workers in Tiruchirappalli city**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The women struggle in India has been largely focusing on important issues like prostitution, violence, sexism, dowry, issues pertaining to women's rights and the problems of women factory workers. One major issue has not yet received the attention that it deserves, is that of women domestic workers, which is a problem that concerns both adult women and young girls. Domestic service prevails in a multitude of forms throughout India. In varied rural and urban societies, religions and caste settings, women domestic workers are employed on a live in or day work basis, for general or specific tasks. Domestic work is seen as menial and impure occupation traditionally performed by people mostly women, whose lives are still dominated by a caste system that assigned people her place in the society. This study was aimed to investigate the working conditions, wage structure and problems faced by the women domestic workers.

**Key Words :** Domestic work, Working condition, Living condition, Occupation, Wage structure

### **INTRODUCTION**

Women constitute near about half of the global as well as national population. Women workers account for about one third of all workers in India. They play a vital role in domestic sphere, in the rural field as well as in urban economy. There are 460 million workers in India, 93% of which are estimated to belong to the unorganized sector. Unorganized sector comprises a major part of the Indian economy. 96% of the women workers are engaged in unorganized sector and majority of them are concentrated in the lower income segments. Thus, unorganized labour stands for scattered and fragmented workforces working individually sometimes loosely associated, in various occupations. Unorganized labour is not formally cohesive in any recognized association and union with defined ideology, goals and areas of specialization. The unorganized sector in Indian economy is the largest sector in terms of employment of workforce

Today, domestic work is gaining importance as a source of occupation among the unskilled and under-skilled poor women. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines domestic worker as "someone who carries out household work in private households in return for wages". Domestic work is considered as a non-institutionalized unorganized sector where approximately 20 million people have engaged themselves for their livelihood. Among them, 92% are women and 20% are children below 14 years of age. Domestic workers are engaged in household tasks, which

include washing utensils, floor cleaning, washing clothes, cooking as well as some outdoor tasks such as purchase of vegetables etc. Women workers contribute significantly to the national development by performing both paid and unpaid work. Unfortunately, women in domestic work face multiple problems *viz.*, lack of decent wages, poor working condition, violence, abuse and sexual harassment etc. Their workplace is people's private homes, and it is outside the arena of labour inspectors. There have been very little initiatives undertaken concretely for the welfare of the domestic workers. Moreover, there are very few laws for the safeguard of the rights and interests of domestic workers in India. Thus, irrespective of the existence of these legislations, majority of the domestic workers are working beneath the view of legal system. As a result, they are always victims of various hazards and threats which need to be addressed from multiple perspectives.

#### **Domestic work and nature of the service :**

Most familiar type of domestic work done by part time workers and they perform variety of household services from providing care for children and elderly dependents, sweeping, washing dishes, and washing clothes dusting, folding clothes cooking and other form of work. Only in a small percentage of households included washing bath rooms, making dough and rotis, preparing tea, chopping vegetables, laundry and ironing clothes and etc.

The term domestic service is difficult to define, as the duties of domestic servants are not so well defined. In common parlance, the term is defined as a person who is engaged in part time or full time domestic work in return of remuneration payable in cash or kind for a fixed period. The term of employment may be expressed or implied. Domestic service is becoming a major and growing informal sector activity in the urban areas, especially in big cities. It is one of the informal sector activities where the conditions of work are disgusting with long working hours, low pay and absence of job security. The modern system of domestic work is an outgrowth of the system of slavery, though its nature, function and relation have undergone considerable changes over time, though the character of the industry did not change much, certain temporal and spatial distinctions could be traced.

#### **Types of domestic worker :**

Types of domestic workers, based on the hours of work and nature of employment relationship: The domestic worker can be:

##### **Part time workers:**

The worker who works for one or more employers for a specified numbers of hours per day or performs specific tasks for each of the multiple employers every day.

##### **Full time workers:**

The worker who works for one or more employers for a specified number of hours (normal full day work) and who returns back to her/his home every day after work.

##### **Live-in workers:**

The worker who works full time for a single employer also stays on the premises of the employer or in a dwelling provided by the employers (which is closed or next to the house of the employs) and does not return back to her/his home every day after work. They are engaged in all

domestic work ranging from housekeeping, washing clothes, cooking, caring baby, children and elderly and etc.

### 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. Their family life is marked by family conflicts poverty and debts. This study highlights these issues.

### Objectives of the study :

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To analysis the socio economic profile of the domestic women workers
- To understand their occupation structure and wage structure
- To examine the problems faced by the Domestic workers in the working place.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was based on primary data collected from the Domestic Workers by direct interview. A Questionnaire had been prepared for the purpose for ascertaining various aspects of the Socio – Economic profile of the Domestic Workers The questionnaire collected from 100 households in the selected area.

The Secondary data was collected from the related books, journals, International report and Internet and from the studies which have already been conducted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Table 1 specifies that out of 100 respondents, 16% of respondents belong to above 56 years age group, majority (63 %) of respondents are belongs to 26-45 years. That may be because above 30 years age group women are more comfortable to make domestic work. The majority of the respondents' (62%) of the respondents are Hindu and it is cleared from the above analysis, the majority of women domestic worker are from Hindu religion. Majority of the respondents have completed middle level of school education. Only 25 per cent are illiterate. Out of 100 respondents, 71% of the respondents are married and it shows that most of the married workers only considered

Table 1 : Socio - economic profile of the respondents			
Sr. No.	Socio-Economic profile	Responses	Percentage
1.	Age	26 – 35	31
		36 – 45	32
		46 – 55	21
		56 above	16
		Total	100
2.	Education	Illiterate	25
		Primary	27
		Middle	48
		Total	100

Table 1 contd...

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3.	Religion	Hindu	62
		Muslim	18
		Christian	48
		Total	100
4.	Marital status	Married	71
		Unmarried	14
		Widow	11
		Divorcee	4
		Total	100
5.	Monthly income	Below 2000	3
		2500-4500	5
		4600-6500	28
		6600-7500	63
		7600 and above	1
		Total	100

Source: Primary data

for domestic work. The above table indicates that the majority ( 63%) of respondent’s monthly income ranges between Rs. 6600-7500 and it shows that the domestic workers salary is very low.

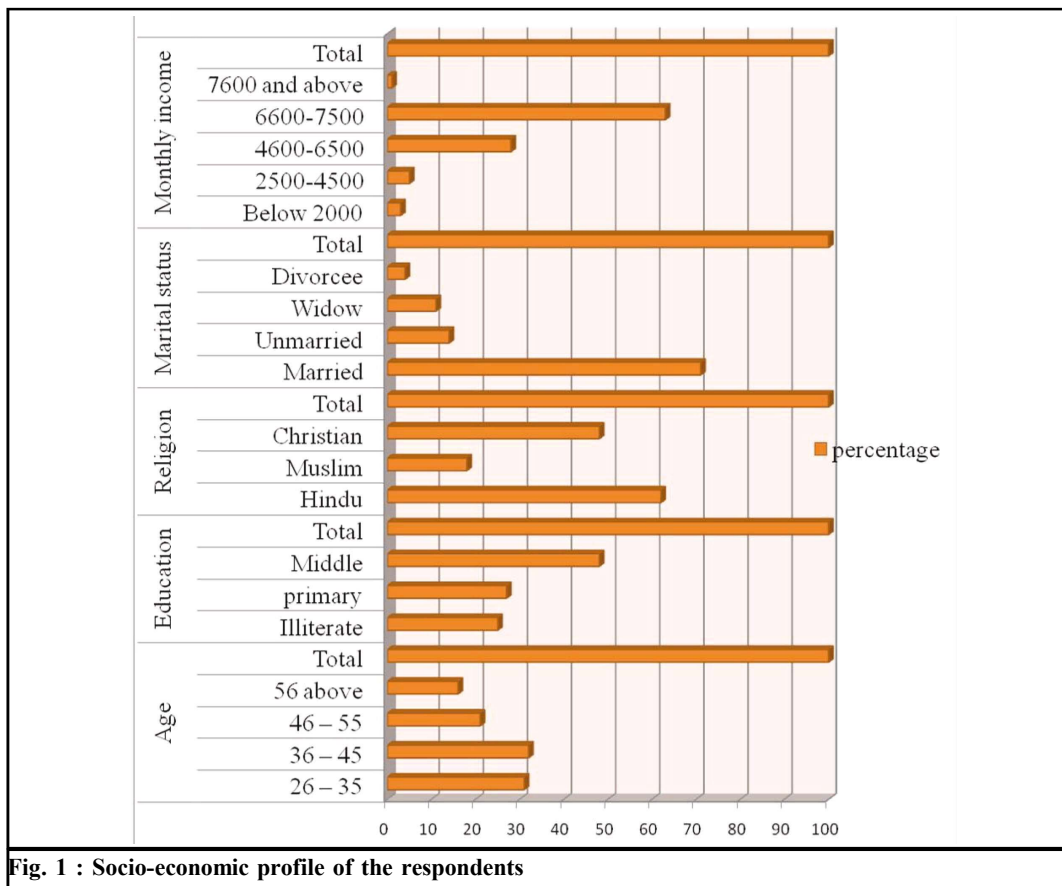


Fig. 1 : Socio-economic profile of the respondents

**Hypothesis 1 :**

There is significant association between Education and wage rate of the respondents

**Table 2 : Distribution of Domestic workers according to their education and wage rate**

Wage Rate		100-120	121-220	221-320	321-420	421 and above	Total
Education	Illiterate	10	12	2	1	0	25
	Primary	3	9	15	0	0	27
	Middle	2	28	17	0	1	48
	Total	15	49	34	1	1	100

Table value = 15.50 Degrees of Freedom = 8 calculated value =28.81

The calculated value of  $\chi^2$  (28.81) is higher than the table value (15.50) and hence the result of the experiment does not support the hypothesis. Therefore, there is no significant association between education and wage rate of the respondents.

**Main findings :**

- Majority of the respondents (63 %) were in the age group of 26-45 years old.
- Majority of the respondents' (62%) are Hindu
- 71 per cent of the respondents were married.
- Majority of the respondents have completed middle level of school education Only 25 per cent of the respondents were Illiterate.
- Majority (63%) of respondent's monthly income ranges between Rs. 6600-7500.
- Majority (91 %) of the respondents are provided meals by the home owners.
- 61 per cent of the domestic workers were getting daily wages ranges from 100-120.
- Nearly half of the respondents (52 %) were start their work at 7 a.m in the morning.
- 42 per cent of respondents were finishing their work at earlier than 7 p.m.
- Majority (83%) of the respondents get leisure hours to take rest in between their working hours.
- 21 percent of the respondents having the problem of late payment of wages.
- Majority (87 %) of the respondents are willing to continue as Domestic workers.

**Suggestions :**

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

1. Proper arrangement of Formal/Informal classes for improving the educational status of Female Domestic Workers should be organized by the Govt. and NGO'S.
2. Due to poor economic conditions Women Domestic Worker's are involved in this work so proper skill development programs for them should be organized by Govt. and NGO'S.
3. Domestic work should be recognized as other professions.
4. 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 and schemes should be formulated by the Govt.
5. Minimum Wages Act should be executed effectively in the field of domestic work by GO'S and NGO's so their labor of Women Domestic Worker's are not exploited.

6. Condition of work and working condition of Women Domestic Worker can be improved by the initiatives of Professional Social workers, civil society organizations, Govt. Organizations, Social activists, bureaucrats, policy makers, legislatures and political leaders.

### **Conclusion :**

Domestic work is a wish of employment for lots of poor women. This is one of the few sectors which have a female best part and one of the largest employment providers for women and girls in India. Women workers have twofold responsibility of home and work. There are various reasons for disgraceful conditions of women in unorganized sector *i.e.* gender discrimination, poverty, lack of basic knowledge, ignorance of government, insufficient laws which are failing to prevent them. Since the problems of women domestic workers are versatile, it should be studied holistically covering economic, legal, social, physical and psychological aspects. To achieve this objective, it is vastly needed to have an integrated approach to understand the issue and it is also important to develop a collective programme to improve their social status and working condition of women in general and women domestic workers in particular.

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