

# **Empowerment of Female Household Maids in Bhubaneswar City, Odisha**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Women constitute nearly half of the total population in India. The country cannot achieve the development without the proper participation of women as they play a vital role in all sectors of development. The household maids or domestic worker is one who carries out the household chores (like cleaning utensils, washing clothes, sweeping and cleaning the floor, cooking or assisting the employer in the kitchen, look after the small children or accompany them to school, etc.) on part time or full time basis for one or the more employer for nominal wages. The present study "Empowerment of female household maids in Bhubaneswar city, Odisha" reveals on the socio-economic and their empowerment at personal level as well as economic and community level. A purposeful household survey was made to collect data regarding the empowerment of female household maids with the help of a questionnaire schedule. The schedule was asked and filled up by the interviewer as most of them are uneducated. The collected data were compiled, coded and analysed in accordance to the objectives of the study. Slum women's were less educated and less empowered thus, they articulate their needs; requirement and aspiration for better livelihoods. To improve overall conditions they must be registered under the trade union act, so that their wage rate will be fixed at a higher rate. They would also gate a provision for time to time increase in their wages will support them indirectly towards personal, economic and community empowerment. Government should provide other self-employment schemes to these slum women to fulfil their dreams.

**Key Words :** Empowerment, Household maids, Domestic worker, Women

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a global debate for women empowerment and gender main streaming for which the government as well as private and the NGO's have taken various schemes and programs. The women themselves are quite aware of their economic empowerment soon after education has come forward to join in different sector for employment. In India women constitute nearly half of the total population and they play a vital role in all sectors of economy. Yet, their economic status is still low, particularly of those who are engaged in the informal sector of urban economy.

The government of India and state government during the past independence period, are allocating

resources and implementing the programs for the development of the status of women in the households and outside households. Social economic dependence of women upon men is one of the primary reasons which have pushed women into a secondary status both within and outside of the family. In spite of fact the fair sex has proved their mettle in every walk of life; women's contribution is not given due to credit in most cases. It was found that among all categories in the informal sector, Domestic servants income is the lowest and they were engaged in household task, which include washing utensil, floor cleaning, washing of cloths, cooking as well as some outdoor tasks such as purchase of vegetable etc. Most of them live in slum, lead a monotonous life without any colour, struggle every day for their survival and face a

numerous problems in their day to day life like long hours of work, insecurity regarding jobs, low status with in the house as well as outside the world.

Domestic workers, the majority of whom are women, reflect the perception that the domestic glove is traditionally their responsibility, irrespective of who really plays for the work. In the non–appearance of effectively enforced labour legislation, Domestic workers stay dependent on their employer’s sense of fairness rather than an accepted legal norm that recognizes their dignity as human being. Major source of domestic workers include the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Srilanka and Ethiopia. Taiwan also imports domestic workers form Vietnam and Mongolia. Organization migrant domestic workers constitute a large portion of international labour. Much of this work remains invisible in national labour legislation and it was not certain whether the increasing participation of women in international migration provides them with a decent wage, good working conditions, social security coverage and labour protection. It is therefore important to provide more attention to labour situation of the growing number of women migrant.

### **Objective :**

There is dearth of information regarding the empowerment of domestic workers who contribute a larger share of money for their own households. So, this study on the empowerment of female household maids was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To study about the socio-economic profile of the household maids.
- To examine the working condition of household maids.
- To focus on their dreams and achievements.
- To gain knowledge about their personal and economic empowerment.
- To focus on their empowerment at community level.

### **Hypothesis :**

Slum women’s are less educated and less empowered thus, they are articulate their needs; requirement and aspiration for better livelihoods.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Methodology is the systematic and sequential operation for conducting scientific social survey and

research. A proper methodology leads to a researcher towards drawing valid and logical inferences.

Methodology is indicates the following steps -:

- Selection of the area.
- Selection of sample.
- Selection of method.
- Methods of data collection.
- Data analysis.

Bhubaneswar city of Odisha was selected to conduct this study. The maid servants had migrated from different district of Odisha like Cuttack, Nayagarh, Kalahandi, Khurdha, Baleshwar, Ganjam, Kendrapada, Phulbani, and other place to Bhubaneswar for empowermnt. They are stayed in the slum area of Bhubaneswar like Bisweswar slum, Samantpur slum. A total of 75 respondents were selected by purposive sampling method. According to Sidhu (1985) in purposive sampling method, the investigator selected a particular group or category from the population to constitute the sample because this category considered to mirror the whole with reference to the characteristics in question.

Interview method was selected to collect information regarding empowerment of female maid servants with the help of a questionnaire schedule. Sidhu (1984) considered interview method appropriated when dealing with young children, illiterates, those with language difficulties and those who need stimulation of personal conduct to be drawn out.

The data was collected with the help of a schedule was applied to a set of question with the respondents. Schedule was therefore, prepared which called for demographic profile, economic, personal and community level empowerment of the female maids servants. The local language “Odia” was used it was easy to gathered the required information. The data obtained were consolidated analyzed and presented as follows:

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The demographic profile of the respondent analysis the nature of the family, family size, monthly income and educational qualification of women household maids (Table 1).

Considerably a large number of respondents live in nuclear families and their percentage is found to be 86.66 percent, therefore it reveals that they are not totally uprooted from their original residents. The percentage of such families is found as 13.33 percent. The family size of the respondents which consist of four to five

**Table 1 : Demographic profile of the respondents**

Personal factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nature of the family	Joint	10	13.33
	Nuclear	65	86.66
	Total	75	100
Family size	1-3 members	19	25.33
	4-5 members	48	64
	6 above members	08	10.66
	Total	75	100
Monthly income	Rs. 1000-2000	23	30.66
	Rs. 3000-4000	33	44
	Rs. 5000-6000	14	18.66
	Rs. 7000-8000	03	4
	Rs. 9000-10000	02	2.66
	Total	75	100
Educational qualification	Illiterate	44	58.66
	Up (1-5 class)	09	12
	Me (6-7 class)	08	10.66
	H.Sc. (8-10 class)	11	14.66
	Chse (+2 class)	03	4
	Total	75	100

members are found to be high as 64 percent. Other 25.33 percent respondents families consist of one to three members; followed by eight families consist of above six members and the percentage being 10.66 percent. About 30.66 percent of the respondents monthly household income is below rupees 2,000. The other respondents income is found in between rupees 5000 to above rupees 6000 and the percentage is 18.66 percent. A large number of respondent's monthly incomes of the families are in between rupees 3000 to rupees 4000 the percentage is found as 44.00. There are a few families who earn more than rupees 9000, the number of family is two and the

percentage being 2.66 percent (Table 1).

Regarding the educational background of the respondent. Table 2 indicates that out of total respondents 58.66% women were illiterate, 12% were schooling up to primary school level, 10.66% were schooling up to minor level, 14.66% were schooling up to high school level and only very low percentage 4% of the respondents had completed higher education (+2). Majority of the respondents belongs to the low-prestige and income status.

Table 3 shows that majority 34.66% of women have engages themselves working sweeping and 24% women

**Table 2 : Type and hours of doing different jobs**

Types of jobs	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Type of job	Cooking	18	24
	Sweeping	26	34.66
	Moping	18	24
	Washing utensil	17	22.6
	Other	08	10.66
	Total	75	100
Hours of working	1-2 hours	15	20
	3-4 hours	12	16
	5-6 hours	34	45.33
	7-8 hours	10	13.33
	9-10 hours	04	5.33
	Total	75	100
	Total	75	100

**Table 3 : Causes of working as a household maids**

Sr. No.	Causes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Low economic status/poverty	23	30.66
2.	Aspiration about children	17	22.6
3.	Drug addiction of husband	30	40
4.	Death of head of the family	05	6.6
	Total	75	100

moping and cooking of her working. 45.33% respondents work five to six hours daily, 20% respondents who work for one or two hours daily, followed by 16% three to four hours. It is found that only few respondents work nine to ten hours their percentage being 5.33% spend in their work place.

Women household maids were generally belong to the low economic status/poverty of the society. The reasons for their vulnerable condition are caste difference, unequal gender relations, poor economic background, Irregular work, lack of credit facilities, and drug addiction of their male partners, death of husband and lack of assent. 30.66% of women are working as household maids because of low economic status/poverty. Mothers who are working as domestic maids do not want their girls. 22.6% of them think about higher education. However, they are very much concerned about the increasing cost of education, so they were working as household maids. Drug addiction is a serious problem in India and essentially in Odisha. 40% women said they

working as a female household maids causes of the victims of drug addiction habit of their husband. Only 6.6% women said they working as a household maids because death of head of the family.

The Table 4 depicts that 60% of women household maids are not satisfied with their job. Because for 13.33% maids doing extra work when guest come, get reduce their salary 30.66% women are not satisfied when one day absence if they fall sick and 16% women are unsatisfied with her job because of verbal abuse. 40% women are satisfied with their present job. 33% praised their employers being friendly helping children in study, providing breakfast, tea, clothes, medicine and 6.6% have valuable suggestion.

Kabeer (1998) said women may be seeking to increase their influence with in joint decision making process. 92% of women decision regarding reproductive function and other function of home (Table 5).

Some contexts now a days women are independent, 88% women are spending her own income and 12% were

**Table 4 : Job related satisfaction**

Sr. No.	Question	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Unsatisfied with their job	Extra work	10	13.33
		Reduce salary when one day absence	23	30.66
		Verbal abuse	12	16
		Total	45	60
2.	Satisfied with their job	Providing help (Food, clothes, medicine)	25	33.33
		Valuable suggestion	05	6.66
		Total	30	40
		Total	75	100

**Table 5 : Personal empowerment of maid servants**

Sr. No.	Question	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Decision regarding reproductive function	Yes	69	92
		No	06	8
2.	Preventing violence in the family	Yes	68	90.66
		No	07	9.33
3.	Knowledge about legal rights of women	Yes	30	40
		No	45	60

**Table 6 : Economic empowerment of maid servants**

Sr. No.	Question	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Decision regarding reproductive function	Yes	66	88
		No	09	12
2.	Preventing violence in the family	Yes	57	76
		No	18	24

**Table 7 : Community development empowerment of maid servants;**

Sr. No.	Question	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Participation in training program	Community development	43	56.75
		Enterprises	24	32.43
		Politics	24	32.43
		None of the above	22	29.72
2.	Participation in women's organization	Yes	20	26.66
		No	55	73.33
3.	Knowledge about the national development task	Yes	42	56
		No	33	44
4.	Exercise the legal rights at need	Yes	28	37.33
		No	47	62.66

not spending her own earned money rather takes money to her husband or mother in law. It was encouraging to see that 76% women's husband/son and other family members help in the house work. This shows low level of empowerment at community level. 40% of women knew the legal rights of the women like (33% reservation for women in all the government service, politics, education and etc.) and 60% of women's did not know this legal rights (Table 6).

At the community level participation 26.66% of women were participated in the women's organization or self-help and 73.33% of women were group not participated in any women organization. The major obstacle to women's participation in politics is clearly universal social attitude that the valued women principally as mothers and wives. 56% of women's were knew this development plans. Mainly women's are knew the development plans through T.V., radio, news-paper, meetings etc. out of the total respondents 37.83% in T.V. and 47.29% of women's are knew through meeting (Table 7).

### Conclusion:

In the nonappearance of effectively enforced labour legislation, domestic workers stay dependent on their employer's sense of fairness rather an accepted legal norm that recognizes their dignity as human being. To improve overall conditions of these female domestic

workers must be registered under the trade union act, so their wage rate should be fixed and there must be a provision for time to time increment their wages. To improve the economic conditions of the families of the workers, the self-employment scheme must cover the poor families of these workers. Further the government should also introduced some additional employment scheme in the area, so that the husbands and children can gate profitable work. Thus the government must take the immediate steps, including these mentioned recommendation, so that the condition of this section of the society can be improved.

More micro-level studies need to be undertaken in cross cultural context in order to build dependable knowledge on the phenomenon. We hope that scholar's civil society bodies and policy makers make further probe in to the matter and strive for the welfare of this marginalized section of the society as envisaged in the 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan of India.

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