

An Empirical Study of Employer and Employee Relationships of Domestic Help Workers in Punjab.

Ekta Rani
Assistant Professor
Khalsa College, Patiala

Dr. Rajni Saluja
Associate Professor
Desh Bhagat University, Amloh, Punjab

Abstract: In India household work has always been considered as below someone's dignity. It has always been the 'duty' of the woman: wife, mother, daughter or sister to do the household tasks and expect no pay. No wonder regarding that the domestic worker is so deliberately underpaid. Cooking, cleaning, caring for children, these are all skilled jobs but they fall under the unorganised sector, with no law to protect rights, no health cover and no pension. The problems like no formal contracts ensuring an employer-employee relationship, lack of organisation, poor bargaining power, no legislative protection, and inadequate welfare measures with no provision for weekly holidays, maternity leave and health benefits need to be resolved. The present study addresses the issues and tries to find the status of the domestic help workers in Punjab area.

Key words: Domestic Help Workers, Employer and Employee Relationships.

1. Introduction

Domestic help workers encompass a noteworthy part of the international workforce in informal employment and are among the most exploited groups of workers. Though all the servants do not work inside home yet all the domestic workers are considered as servants generally. Domestic work is basically the employment of people for wages in their employer's residence. A domestic worker is any person who is engaged in domestic work within a private household. Domestic work as different from other types of labour is described as tasks performed in or for a domestic household. Domestic work covers the tasks such as cleaning, cooking, washing clothes, childcare, nursing the elderly in a private household. It may involve work outside home such as gardening, driving, and maintenance work etc. There are various types of domestic workers categorized on the basis of number of hours and nature of the employment. The domestic workers can be:

- a) **Part-time worker** are the workers who work for one or more employers for particular working hours per day or performs certain number of tasks for each of the multiple employers every day.
- b) **Full-time worker** toil for a sole employer daily for a fixed number of hours normally a full day work and who get back to his home on a daily basis after work.
- c) **Live-in worker** works for the whole day long for a single employer and also reside on the premises of the employer or in a dwelling provided by the employer (which is close or next to the house of the employer) and does not arrive back to her/his home on a daily basis after work.

The basic challenge faced by surveys of domestic workers is the exact identification and count of domestic workers, and their employers. For the reasons quite apt, it is very difficult to get accurate and reliable data on the size of domestic work. Available data and the statistics are not also very accurate so as to recognize the domestic work as other social communities and personal services.

Following are the problems faced by the domestic workers discussed in detail:-

Unorganized Sector

Other forms of work are placed in organized sector, but domestic work takes place in households that is unorganized place of work. It is challenging job for the employee of a household sector to gain public acceptance. Despite this, the implementations of labor laws such as minimum wages and regularized work hours, which are significant elements of any kind of work, also remain a challenge. These types of regulations are complex because the nature of domestic work is different as compared to other forms of work. Lacking appropriate means to regulate working conditions in this sector, for example, through contoured job descriptions which could be offered through standard contracts are requirements of the sector.

Physical and Sexual Abuse

Physical and sexual abuse against domestic workers is often reported in the media. Various studies and reports also acknowledge that domestic workers encounter discrimination on grounds of religion, caste and ethnicity. Sexual harassment and exploitation by recruiting agents has also been reported. It is needed to point out that most agencies are commercial in nature and do not penetrate on the welfare of workers. With the advent of the placement agencies has not brought about any significant improvement in the condition of the domestic workers. Full-time workers are the workers who live in the place provided by employers including government and defense officials. They are provided with small living space are more prone to sexual abuse.

Gender Inequality, Racism and Exploitation

Domestic work has empowered many women to enter the labor market and benefit from economic autonomy and become self dependant. Despite, this has not changed the notion of gender discrimination. All over the world, household responsibilities and unpaid care work continue to pose forceful barriers to women's participation in labour market. They are also vulnerable to 'racial' stereotyping and isolation because of language problems. Similarly, young girls from Bengal who come to Rajasthan to work are also vulnerable and isolated because of language difficulties.

Human Trafficking

This accumulated number of domestic workers is associated to transfer from agrarian-based economy to a manufacture and service-based economy. The growth of the urban middle class, specifically with the increase in the number of women working outside their homes and the availability of cheap domestic labour are the factors also associated to this fact. Migration of girls is also accredited to the alterations in the tribal societies because educated tribal girls do not want to work in the agriculture sector any more. India has authenticated migration on large scale over the last two decades of girls from tribal. These girls come with other girls from the village to be recruited as maids with affluent, through private recruiting agents, or other

Work life balance and Working Conditions

While migrating to the cities, they mainly live in the difficult conditions of slum areas. They begin to work at one or two houses and take up more, depending on their individual capacities. Apart from learning the work, they have to learn to adapt the urban ways of living and a culture totally different from their native land. That creates imbalance in their work life.

Socio Economic conditions

Rates of wages changes according to the task and the socio-economic status of employers. These factors are not formed with keeping the workers welfare but they are made to perform extra work with no additional compensation, specifically during festivals or when employers have guests. As employers can ask workers to leave with no prior notice or financial compensation, therefore it does not provide any security to the domestic workers. These studies also note that only a few workers get a weekly off; paid leave is often the result of difficult negotiations with the employers. Getting sick leave also depends on the good will of the employer.

Lack of Awareness and Unionization

Due to lack of education & lack of awareness, lack of unionization, they are left to the employer to treat them like puppets in their hands. These poor, oppressed and neglected people of the society need to be taken care of by the Govt.

2. Review of Literature

Afadameh and Kalula (2013) stated that domestic work is correlated to informal employment and this put domestic worker outside the scope of formal employment in most cases. This makes legislative framework deficient to properly regulate the sector, it concurrently leaves domestic workers exploited. Therefore, an essential step in the attainment of social justice for abused and exploited domestic workers lies in their ability to unionize, receive information and understand their rights.

Kumar (2012) researched on Inimitable Issues of Construction Workers: Case Study. Construction workers are available all over the world. The employment intensity of construction workers is more in developing countries like India. Eighty two construction sites were referred during the study. There are certain problems such as poor health, dangerous working conditions, exploitation, embarrassment, no safety measures, and lack of educations being faced by the workers of the construction units. The study stressed on the need to create awareness of all labour rights and recommended proper intervention programme as well as proper implementation of labour law for this sector.

According to ILO Report (2011) the most recent global and regional estimates of domestic workers produced by the ILO's Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, at least fifty two million women and men above the age of 15 were domestic workers in their main job in 2011. The majority of domestic workers are females, out of eighty three per cent of the total, female constitute forty three million or some. Domestic work is major source of employment for women, accounting for seven per cent of women employees at global level. The women workers still remain the least protected groups of workers under labour legislation, despite the significant role played by them in the working of households and society and nation as a whole,.

NYS Department of Labor (2010) the report discussed the unique issues in the domestic work industry and their impact on the ability to bargain collectively. Frameworks have been identified for collective bargaining and representation for domestic workers under the New York State Employment Relations Act (SERA). Recommendations have been given for other alternatives for providing benefits to domestic workers. The report concluded that both domestic workers and their employers must collectively form the best form of organisation. It also concluded that there are certain issues specific to the application of collective bargaining that needs further exploration in domestic work industry.

Ray and Qayum (2009) focused that the employer-employee relationship is a complex one and is viewed as one of domination, dependency and inequality. This is such an area of work where the females are dominating in the total number of employers and the employees. As household is the workplace, employer and employee relations are frequently not restricted to work but enforced as larger sustaining systems. This often confuses and convolutes the notional clarity between family and work, affection and duty...because the workplace and contract in a capitalist world must coexist with those of hierarchical arrangements and emotional registers of home.

3. Research Methodology

Objectives of the study

1. To study the various employment related issues of domestic Workers such as working hours, leave, pay, other facilities
2. To suggest a framework that helps to maintain better relations and eradicate exploitation of the domestic workers.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study is confined to three regions of Punjab i.e., Majha, Malwa and Doaba. Districts have been identified on the basis of convenience. Mansa, Ludhiana, Bathinda and Fatehgarh Sahib from Malwa region Amritsar and Gurdaspur cities are identified from Majha region and Jalandhar and Kapurthala from Doaba region have been identified. It includes the various categories of domestic workers such as Maids, Drivers, Cooks, Baby-Sitters, Sweepers, Gatekeepers, Guards, and Gardeners etc.

Probability sampling technique such as Multi Stage random sampling and further snowball sampling technique is also used due to non-availability of appropriate and official data of domestic help workers. Cost and time constraints are important factors for deciding the size of sample. At the same time accuracy of results is very important. To meet the requirements of objectives, a sample of 600 domestic workers is considered (75 from each district).

Statistical Techniques

Correlation and Factor analysis have been used to analyse data.

4. Analysis of the data

Correlation and Factor Analysis

- ER1 My salary compensation is not as per work.
- ER2 Most of the times I do not get salary on time
- ER3 Most of the time I do not get full salaries
- ER4 I do not get any regular annual increment in my salary
- ER5 I am expected to do more job as compared to the ones for which I am hired
- ER6 I have problems related to leave.
- ER7 I am expected to work 7 days a week.
- ER8 I am expected to work on festivals and public holidays
- ER9 I have to lose my salary in case I take a leave in emergency
- ER10 I have no Job security and satisfaction.
- ER11 There are chances of Physical assaults at my workplace
- ER12 I can approach authorities in case of any incident of Physical assaults at my workplace
- ER13 There are chances of life threats at my workplace
- ER14 I can approach authorities in case of any incident of life threats at my workplace

	ER1	ER2	ER3	ER4	ER5	ER6	ER7	ER8	ER9	ER10	ER11	ER12	ER13	ER14
--	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	------	------	------	------	------

ER1	1	0.183	0.38	0.43	0.63	0.8	0.58	0.47	0.43	0.42	0.41	-0	0.51	-0.32
ER2	0.18	1	0.77	0.49	0.46	0.4	0.19	0.18	0.67	0.48	0.61	-0.2	0.67	-0.46
ER3	0.38	0.7	1	0.63	0.73	0.6	0.3	0.35	0.67	0.51	0.69	-0.2	0.73	-0.41
ER4	0.43	0.494	0.63	1	0.55	0.6	0.56	0.64	0.54	0.56	0.51	-0.1	0.5	-0.46
ER5	0.63	0.455	0.73	0.55	1	0.7	0.52	0.59	0.65	0.4	0.62	-0.2	0.65	-0.45
ER6	0.76	0.437	0.61	0.64	0.68	1	0.45	0.41	0.47	0.34	0.48	-0.1	0.63	-0.45
ER7	0.58	0.189	0.3	0.56	0.52	0.4	1	0.86	0.58	0.72	0.54	-0.1	0.5	-0.35
ER8	0.47	0.183	0.35	0.64	0.59	0.4	0.86	1	0.58	0.65	0.49	-0.1	0.44	-0.35
ER9	0.43	0.67	0.67	0.54	0.65	0.5	0.58	0.58	1	0.66	0.79	-0.1	0.78	-0.43
ER10	0.42	0.483	0.51	0.56	0.4	0.3	0.72	0.65	0.66	1	0.65	-0.1	0.63	-0.39
ER11	0.41	0.614	0.69	0.51	0.62	0.5	0.54	0.49	0.79	0.65	1	-0.2	0.91	-0.43
ER12	-0	-0.16	-0.2	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	1	-0.16	0.55
ER13	0.51	0.667	0.73	0.5	0.65	0.6	0.5	0.44	0.78	0.63	0.91	-0.2	1	-0.55
ER14	-0.3	-0.46	-0.4	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4	-0.4	-0.4	0.55	-0.55	1

Table showing Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
ER1	1	0.826
ER2	1	0.838
ER3	1	0.845
ER4	1	0.596
ER5	1	0.756
ER6	1	0.891
ER7	1	0.918
ER8	1	0.87
ER9	1	0.813
ER10	1	0.809
ER11	1	0.803
ER12	1	0.869
ER13	1	0.833
ER14	1	0.783

Table showing Total Variance Explained by the model.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.519	53.705	53.705	7.519	53.705	53.705
2	1.581	11.291	64.995	1.581	11.291	64.995
3	1.233	8.808	73.804	1.233	8.808	73.804
4	1.118	7.982	81.786	1.118	7.982	81.786
5	0.666	4.755	86.541			
6	0.502	3.583	90.124			
7	0.353	2.519	92.643			
8	0.305	2.182	94.825			
9	0.238	1.703	96.527			
10	0.164	1.172	97.699			
11	0.118	0.844	98.543			
12	0.095	0.675	99.218			

13	0.071	0.505	99.723			
14	0.039	0.277	100			

Component	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.06	29.002	29.002
2	3.113	22.238	51.24
3	2.682	19.154	70.393
4	1.595	11.393	81.786
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

Table showing Rotated Component Matrix

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
ER2	0.896			
ER3	0.82			
ER13	0.771			
ER11	0.76			
ER9	0.733			
ER7		0.896		
ER8		0.871		
ER10		0.752		
ER4				
ER6			0.86	
ER1			0.837	
ER5			0.669	
ER12				0.931
ER14				0.752

Source: Calculated values of Analysis

Factor 1

Financial and Physical security

- ER2** Most of the times I do not get salary on time
- ER 3** Most of the time I do not get full salaries
- ER 9** I have to lose my salary in case I take a leave in emergency
- ER 11** There are chances of Physical assaults at my workplace
- ER 13** There are chances of life threats at my workplace

The first factor contributing maximum to the variance talks about the financial and physical security. This factor is very important and is associated with delay in salary. The domestic help workers have a very limited source of earning and their daily life needs depends upon the goods which they take on debt. If the salary is delayed the creditors make their life difficult which spoils their quality of life. Most of the time these domestic help workers do not get full salaries due to uninformed holiday or breakage of some crockery or any other minor loss of asset.

Some of the respondent claimed that they have to lose their salary in case they take a leave in emergency for example medical illness in the family or due to some guest or some festival or any other work. These help workers are also having a risk of physical assaults at workplace from young boys and specially men. This may even lead to life threats at their workplace.

Factor 2 Difficult working conditions

ER7 I am expected to work 7 days a week

ER8 I am expected to work on festivals and public holidays

ER10 I have no Job security and satisfaction

The second significant factor is difficult working conditions. The respondents explained their misery by claiming that they have to work seven days a week and specifically they cannot take an off on Sunday. Not only this on weekends since most of the family members are home the work load increases to a greater extent. Similarly on public holidays everyone is home and the work load increases. Despite any necessary or festival if the domestic help workers take an off then there are very high chances of dismissal or salary deduction. So all these factors lead to poor or difficult working conditions.

Factor 3 Compensation Issues

ER1 My salary compensation is not as per work

ER5 I am expected to do more jobs as compared to the ones for which I am hired

ER6 I have problems related to leave.

The third most significant factor found was about compensation issues. Most of the respondents claimed that their family income was as low as five thousand rupees. It makes it very difficult for an individual to imagine running a family of three to four members with such a low amount of family income. However 80 per cent respondents claimed that their family income is more than ten thousand rupees.

Factor 4 Awareness about accident reporting

ER12 I can approach authorities in case of any incident of Physical assaults case.

ER14 I can approach authorities in case of any incident of life threats at my workplace.

The last factor which was drawn from the factor analysis was awareness about accident reporting in case of any incident of Physical assaults at workplace. Not only this in any case of threat to the life of these domestic help workers these people should be aware of what to report and where. Although it has been observed that the general awareness about the laws and rules to these people is low but still it's very important parameter of the study.

Findings of the study

Employer- employee relationship is the one that exists between the employer and the employee due to the employment of the services of the employee by the employer. Harmonious relationship between the both depends upon the various factors such as mutual trust, safe working conditions, payment of wages or salaries on time, satisfaction and high self esteem of the employees, welfare facilities offered by the employers etc. In case of poor relationship, there can be misunderstandings that lead towards conflicts, grievances, complaints and exploitation.

As per employer employee relationships are concerned, domestic workers in Punjab still faces problems like caste discrimination and status discrimination. According to the analysis, there is high correlation among the workers who are getting salary late often complaint of expectation of longer working hours and more work from the employers. The employees who were called seven days a week by their employers were the ones who claimed that they do not have work satisfaction. There is also high correlation between the two factors such as not getting annual increment in the salary and that the domestic help workers are expected to work even on festivals. The respondents who have problems related to leaves, says that they are expected to do more job as compared to the ones for which they are hired. This is quite evident from the analysis that the average relationships of the domestic workers with their employers are not of satisfactory level.

The reason towards the deteriorated relationship is due to the non regulation of the sector by the government. No proper law has been formulated till date to regulate the wages, working conditions, grievance redressal of the workers. This weak point of the labour legislation gives freedom to the employers to exploit the workers.

Suggestions

1. An analysis of the study shows that domestic workers suffers a lot due to non inclusion in the scope of several labour laws due to the limited scope of the definitions of the workman, employer or establishment. The present

laws do not cover them due to the nature of their work, the technicalities of the employee and employer relationship and private homes are the workplace instead of an organized institution. Even the placement agencies do not fall under the preview of labour laws. To include domestic workers under these laws, definitions will have to be amended to suit the domestic work industry.

2. Registration of the domestic workers must be compulsory. Any employer keeping unregistered domestic worker must be subject to police verification and investigation.
3. Database of the domestic workers must be maintained and collected by the government to get the accurate number of the domestic workers in the country.

Conclusion

To sum up, socio-economic conditions of the domestic help workers are not good. They face problems both at home and work place. They have a very massive work load with less compensation. There is no homogeneity in their wage structure and their wages are very low. However, they are compelled to do this job because of lower education or poor financial background. They are exploited at their working place and in some cases, even at their own homes by their own husbands or in-laws. It is necessary to make them aware about the exploitation and inspire them to organize themselves for protecting their rights and also to work for implementation of laws by the government. Then only, they can live with status and dignity equal to that of other members of the society.

References:

- [1] **Afadameh Amah and Kalula Evance** (2014). Regulating Domestic Work: International rative Perspectives in South Africa, Namibia & Indonesia. Research Paper presented at Social Justice Conference 13, South Africa.
- [2] **Anderson, Bridget** (2000). *Doing the Dirty Work? The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*. Zed Books. New York: The University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9781856497619.
- [3] **Banerjee, Arpita and Saraswati Raju** (2009). Women Migrants and Work in Urban India. *Economic and political weekly*. 54(28). ISSN: 0012-9976
- [4] **Chandrashekhar C.P, and Ghosh J.** (2007). *Women Workers in Urban India*. Macro scan, Feb 6, 2007. Retrieved: http://www.macrosan.com/fet/feb07/fet060207Women_Workers.htm
- [5] **Chan Chris and Nandvi Khalid** (2015). Changing Labour Regulations and Labour Standards in China: Retrospective and Challenges. *International Labour Review*. Vol.153, Issue 4, pp-513-534, ISSN: 0020-7780
- [6] **Darcy du Toit** (2013). *Domestic Workers and Realisation of Their Rights*. Cape Town. South Africa: Pretoria University Press. ISBN: 978-1-920538-20-0
- [7] **John K.** (2010). Domestic Women Workers in Urban Informal Sector. *National Monthly Refereed Journal of Research in Arts & Education*. Volume no.2, Issue no.2 ISSN: 2277-1182
- [8] **Mantouvalou Virginia** (2012). *Are Labour Rights Human Rights?* UCL Labour Rights Institute, On-Line working papers-LRI WP X/2012 Retrieved : www.ucl.ac.uk/.../VMantouvalou_Are_labour_rights_human_rights.pdf
- [9] **Neetha, N.** (2004). Making of Female Breadwinners Migration and Social Networking of Women Domestic in Delhi. *Economic and Political Weekly*. April 24, pp-1681-1688, ISSN 0012-9976
- [10] Padma. 2002. Women workers in India in the 21st century-Unemployment and underemployment.http://www.cpiml.org/liberation/year_2004/february/Women_Workers.htm
- [11] **Rao, P. Shanmukha and N.V. S. Suryanarayana** (2013). *Issues and Challenges of Female Labor Migration*. Retrieved: <http://www.globalrp.org/issues-and-challenges-offemale-labor-migration.html>
- [12] **Secretariat, R.S.** (2011). *Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment Bill (2010)*. Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, New Delhi.
- [13] **Samal C. K.** (2006). Remittances and Sustainable Livelihoods in Semi-Arid Areas. *Asia-Pacific Development Journal*. Vol. 13, No. 2, pp-73-92. ISSN: 01171968
- [14] **Smith Peggie** (2011). The Pitfalls of Home: Protecting the Health and Safety of Paid Domestic Workers. *Canadian Journal of Women and Law*. Vol.23, No.1, pp-309-339.
- [15] **Tokman Victor** (2010). *Domestic Workers in Latin America: Statistics for New Policies*. Working Paper, WIEGO, USA (June 2010).
- [16] **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** (2007). *Ghana Human Development Report 2007: Towards a more inclusive society (Accra)*.
- [17] **UNICEF** (2007) www.unicef.org/india/child_protection_2053.htm