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A Study on the Plight of Female Domestic Helps in the present society: An Overview

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Abstract

Female domestic helps are a vast number of unorganized workforces in India. The trend in the present society shows that we cannot even think of the smooth functioning of our lives without them. Low wages, insecurity of job tenure, sexual harassment etc. are some common problems, these workers have to face in their everyday life. This study highlights the conditions and problems of female domestic workers including their physical and mental health. The study also focuses on the steps of awareness among this section by the working of Governmental and non-governmental organizations for the development and welfare of these sections. Few suggestions have also been given in the concluding part of the study, to improve the conditions of female domestic workers in India.

Key words: Education, Health, Wages, Work security, sexual Harassment, NGO's.

1. Introduction

Female domestic workers are one of the significant groups of unorganized labours. Since ages there is the concept of maids, servants or domestic help in the forms of 'dasis', as gift with the bride, bonded labour etc. They are always oppressed and exploited in all forms by their employers. Domestic workers, most of them being women, are particularly vulnerable to human rights violation, with respect to their working conditions, wages, living conditions etc. Out of 100% unorganized labours, around 38-40% workers are engaged as domestic help all over India. The present-day working women cannot even imagine about their lives without a domestic help but these helps are exploited in all respects by their employers. In recent years, many NGOs have come up to taking up causes of women domestic workers. In this study we are to highlight policies and programs regarding working hours, fixed salary, leaves, measures for safety of their health and hygiene etc.

As mentioned above, the domestic helps are unorganized labours and are away from any specific laws or regulations. Moreover, lacking immunization, they are left to the mercy of the employer. They are also denied rights to health care, education, justice, human dignity and respect of all unorganized labour, the domestic helps are like closet to us in our homes. We are least bothered while exploiting them, we cannot think about a smooth day to day life without them but not aware or interested in uplifting their lives.

1.1. Statement of problem: -

Women domestic workers face several problems in their personal and occupational lives. They used to work for long hours but are paid very less. They are lack of job security and paid leaves. Even during emergency or pandemic situation like Covid-19, many of the domestic helps did not get their regular salaries and even lost their job. To earn more money, they keep running from one house to another and thus ruin their health and grows diseases like respiratory problems, skin diseases, body ache etc.

Their family lives also suffer from poverty and conflicts as they have more mouth to feed than they earn. Above all these problems most of the husbands of these domestic helps have the bad habit of consuming liquor, which does not allow them to save a single penny for their future, nor they are able to send their children to school. As a result, the future of the children also becomes dark and obvious. They are after, growing up, can only pursue the same job as done by their presents.

1.1 Types of services provided by the domestic helps.

Domestic workers provide a range of services in private homes like – sweeping and cleaning, washing clothes and dishes, shopping and cooking, to look after children and elderly people and sometimes disabled also, gardening, driving and security services etc. Some of the domestic helps stay with their employer, and some work as part time workers in multiple houses. A survey by the Domestic Workers Sector Skill Council (DWSSC) says that nearly 85% of domestic workers have not been paid adequately but still the number of domestic

workers is growing every day. If we analyse the causes of growth of numbers of domestic workers we get the following causes like –

- 1) Easy entry and exit policies.
- 2) No need of fair amount of education needed.
- 3) The more the number of households, the more the amount of income.
- 4) Migrate workers.
- 5) Extra income.
- 6) No need of extra quality or qualification.
- 7) Poverty and debt issues.

1.2. Problems of female domestic workers: - Most of the domestic workers face the following problems in their day to day activities –

a) Isolated in Private Homes.

Because domestic workers are employed in private homes, they can be invisible as workers and are isolated from the society. They are depended on the good or bad mood of their employer.

b) Abuse, harassment and violence.

According to the International Domestic workers Federation, some face multiple forms of violence in their day to day work like physical abuse, sexual exploitation, inhabitation, being provided with poor-quality food, lack of privacy, lack of mobility etc.

c) Low payment.

Domestic helps are often paid lower than the amount of a daily wage. Due to scarcity of jobs, the workers used to be paid with less amount of wage. Sometimes, the domestic workers are been assigned with extra duties for which they are never been paid off.

d) Disadvantages of migrating workers.

If a domestic help is migrated from one place to another, they have to face many other problems like not knowing the language which may lead to losing their jobs.

e) No measures of social security.

As of now there is no means of social security measures for the domestic helps. Though the Government has enacted the unorganized labour, Social Security Act of 2008, but the provisions are far more away from being executed in its practical sense, leaving this section of unorganized workers unsecured and exploited.

1.3. Addressing the challenges –

Very slowly but of course, the domestic workers has started to get attention to uplift their live and also the light of social security also. Many countries as well as different states in India, has come forwarded with measures to provide social security to this section of the society. In North Guwahati a non-governmental organization namely SEWI has come up with the idea of formation of unions for the domestic helps. Many other NGO's as well as Government Organisation has put forwarded their efforts to uplift the live of this important section of unorganized workers.

