AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF WORKING CONDITIONS AND WORK LIFE BALANCE OF DOMESTIC HELP WORKERS IN PUNJAB, INDIA

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Abstract

Domestic help workers encompass a noteworthy part of the international workforce in informal employment and are among the most exploited groups of workers. Often excluded from the scope of labour legislation, domestic workers work for private homes, usually without evident terms of employment, and remain unaccounted. The major problems being faced by the domestic workers are deplorable working conditions, labor exploitation, and abuses of human rights. Domestic workers intermittently confronts very low wages, unreasonably long hours, have no guaranteed weekly day of rest and at times are accessible to physical, mental and sexual abuse or restrictions on freedom of movement. The proposed study aims to find out the various abuses related to working conditions and work life balance of the domestic workers in Punjab.
Index Terms — Domestic Help Workers, Working Conditions, Work Life Balance.

I.   INTRODUCTION

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. Working as chef, washing clothes and utensils, childcare are all skilled jobs but they fall under the unorganized sector, with no law to protect rights, no insurance and no pension or gratuity. It means that in case of a dispute with the employer, the worker cannot go to a labor court, as she is not technically recognized as a 'worker'. Since Independence all laws are formulated for the organized sector. Workers range from full-time to part-time workers, skilled and unskilled workers. There is a dire need to address the issues such as no formal contracts ensuring an employer-employee relationship, lack of organization, poor bargaining power, no legal protection, and lack of welfare measures with inappropriate provision for weekly holidays,

maternity leave and health benefits. This lack of regulation has led to innumerable violations of domestic workers' rights, including working hours and the absence of any job security.

Domestic workers constantly speak of the more of the marginalized communities in society. Domestic workers have to face prejudice and bias related to social status is reflected very strongly at the workplace. Domestic work has been rooted deep in the history of India with both men and women working in others' homes often regarded as 'servants'. The rich finds a luxry to employ servants, on the basis of the important aspects such as loyalty, obligation and patronage. Domestic work is the result of the hierarchies of the caste system in India. Lower caste people do the 'Dirty' work of cleaning while other chores such as cooking, washing etc. are done by higher caste workers. Domestic work can simply be regarded as an extension of historical culture where the upper class people use to employ servants. The nature of work as well as workers has been rapidly altering in urban and rural sectors. The area now mainly incorporates women domestic workers who are not recognized as workers and their work remains undervalued. This is predominantly due to the notion of gender inequality associated with housework--value is not given to women's work in their homes, and by large, even paid work in others' homes is not given any value or regarded as work. This is the reason that domestic work is mostly undervalues because it is performed by lower caste. All these confer to the deteriorated status attached to their work, both in their own minds and in society.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of literature review is to allow a reader to ingress the research on a particular topic by picking articles or studies data relevant, worthwhile, significant, valid and summarising them into one complete report. The literature reviewed in this synopsis by no means is the opinion of the student or supervisor conducting the study.

Afadameh Amah, Kalula Evance (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.

Toit du Darcy(2013) emphasised that Domestic workers are devastatingly female and exposed to what has been termed 'triple exploitation' – that is, discrimination based on gender as well as class, exasperated by their generally weak position in the labor market, and, in many cases, nationality or race. At the same time domestic work – including child-care and care for the elderly – has come to play an increasingly significant role in the global division of labor. It is, quite simply, too important a sector to be left entirely to the interests of individual employers. Thus domestic work was an area in need of in-depth research from the perspective of the implementation of workers' rights.

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 organization. It also concluded that there are certain issues specific to the application of collective bargaining that needs further exploration in domestic work industry.

III.   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To Study the various employment related issues of the domestic help workers such as working hours, payment of wages on time, leave, pay, other facilities unionism, grievance handling, labour contract, etc.
- To study the work life balance among the domestic help workers.
- To study the employer and employee relationships.

IV.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study has been confined to three zones of Punjab 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. Non-Probability sampling technique such as Step wise random sampling and further snowball sampling technique is used due to non-availability of appropriate and official data of domestic help workers. To meet the requirements of objectives, a sample of 600 domestic workers is considered (75 from each district). Statistical techniques such as Correlation, Regression and Factor Analysis have been used to analyse data.

V.   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Correlation Matrix of Employment related variables

	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 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: Primary survey conducted for this research (2016).

Factor Analysis has been applied to employment related variables and four factors has been extracted out of it.
Factor 1   Financial and Physical security
Factor 2   Difficult working conditions
Factor 3   Compensation Issues
Factor 4   Awareness about accident reporting
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 there quality of life. The second significant 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. The third most significant factor found was about compensation issues. Most of the respondents claimed that there 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 there family income is more than ten thousand rupees. Punjab has reasonably high cost of living index as compared to other parts of the country which makes the life of these domestic help workers very difficult.   It has been generally observed that with the increase in the family income the satisfaction level of the domestic help workers increases. 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.

Correlation Matrix of Work Life Balance issues of the Domestic Help Workers

	WC1	WC2	WC3	WC4	WC5	WC6	WC7	WC8	WC9	WC10	WC11	WC12	WC13
WC1	1	0.21	0.42	-0.3	0.34	0.26	0.301	0.22	0.338	0.259	-0.29	-0.29	-0.301
WC2	0.21	1	0.79	-0.3	0.32	0.36	0.391	0.51	0.495	0.601	-0.57	0.569	-0.62
WC3	0.42	0.787	1	-0.3	0.56	0.63	0.658	0.66	0.752	0.596	-0.63	0.627	-0.712
WC4	-0.3	-0.312	-0.4	1	-0.3	-0.11	-0.1	-0.2	-0.22	-0.26	0.366	0.366	0.305
WC5	0.34	0.316	0.56	-0.3	1	0.73	0.748	0.69	0.52	0.545	-0.36	0.364	-0.445
WC6	0.26	0.361	0.63	-0.1	0.73	1	0.929	0.75	0.674	0.625	-0.46	0.457	-0.532
WC7	0.3	0.391	0.66	-0.1	0.75	0.93	1	0.81	0.643	0.583	-0.48	0.481	-0.547
WC8	0.22	0.505	0.66	-0.2	0.69	0.75	0.805	1	0.759	0.637	-0.48	0.484	-0.538
WC9	0.34	0.495	0.75	-0.2	0.52	0.67	0.643	0.76	1	0.593	-0.44	0.437	-0.631
WC10	0.26	0.601	0.6	-0.3	0.55	0.63	0.583	0.64	0.593	1	-0.31	0.307	-0.67
WC11	-0.3	-0.569	-0.6	0.37	-0.4	-0.46	-0.48	-0.48	-0.44	-0.31	1	1	0.519
WC12	-0.3	-0.569	-0.6	0.37	-0.4	-0.46	-0.48	-0.48	-0.44	-0.31	1	1	0.519
WC13	-0.3	-0.62	-0.7	0.31	-0.5	-0.53	-0.55	-0.54	-0.63	-0.67	0.519	0.519	1

Source: Primary data collected for the Survey, 2016.

Table showing Rotated Component Matrix		
	Component	
	1	2
WC6	0.904	
WC7	0.903	
WC8	0.843	
WC5	0.795	
WC9	0.746	
WC10	0.716	
WC11		-0.856
WC12		-0.856
WC2		0.701
WC3	0.624	0.648
WC4		-0.627
WC13		

Factor 1   Challenging working condition
Factor 2   Personal growth and satisfaction

The first significant factor explaining the variance is Challenging work environment. The significant contributing factors to this are rigid work timings, long distance travelled by the domestic help workers to travel from one house to other. Not only this they have to take care of their kids and family which constantly creates a pressure on the domestic help workers which reduces their competency. The second significant factor of the study is personal growth and satisfaction. The significant parameters leading to this factor are getting fair treatment and respect at my work place, able to get nice sleep of minimum 6-8 hours at night and breakfast in the morning without hurry. Most of the respondents complained that they did not get time for basic hygiene like bathing or using toilet. Not only this since they are expected to come early in the morning i.e. before the employers go to office so they hardly find any time to eat stomach full of morning meal.

Regression Analysis

Table showing Model Summary of Regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.801a	0.641	0.636	0.48965

As seen from the table of the model summery of the regression analysis is explained. The R square value of the model is0.641 whereas the adjusted R squared value of the model   is 0.636. This means that the model is able to explain 63.6 percent of the variance. The dependent variables of the study is job security and satisfaction which is depended on independent parameters such as Financial and Physical security, Difficult working conditions, Compensation Issues and awareness about accident reporting which have been the factors achieved from the factor analysis of the job related parameters.

Table Table showing ANOVA analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	126.272	4	31.568	131.668	.000a
	Residual	70.728	295	0.24		
	Total	197	299			

a. Predictors: (Constant), VAR00005, VAR00003, VAR00004, VAR00002

b. Dependent Variable: VAR00001

Source: Primary survey conducted for this research (2016).

Table showing coefficients of Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)Job Security and Satisfaction	0.39	0.1		4.03	0
	Physical and Financial Security	0.51	0.05	0.602	9.92	0
	Difficult Working Conditions	0.47	0.04	0.549	12	0
	Compensation Issues	-0.3	0.05	-0.369	-6.42	0

Awareness About Accident Reporting	0.03	0.04	0.022	0.59	0.6

a. Dependent Variable: job security and satisfaction

Source: Primary survey conducted for this research (2016).

The most important variable which can be confirmed from the factor analysis is financial security. It leads to 51.4 percent of the variance. The result is very obvious because if these help workers are not able to fulfill the basic requirement as per Maslow's Need Hierarchy theory it will not give them any motivation to work. The second significant variable which explains the dependent variable is difficult working conditions which mean ill treatment at work, difficult working conditions. This factor explains 46 percent of variance in the dependent variable. The next significant factor is compensation issues. This factor is negatively associated with the satisfaction of employee. This factor is contributing about 30 percent in explaining the dependent Variable. The fourth Factor of the regression is Awareness about accident reporting. This contributes to 25 percent in explaining the dependent variable. 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.

VI.   FINDINGS

As per the working conditions are concerned, the domestic help workers in Punjab, faces very average and poor environment at the workplace. They have to perform more tasks than they are entitled to, without any extra wage or compensation. They also face problems like leaves and day offs. If they need leave due to illness, festival or any other reason, their wages are decreased. They also aspire fair treatment from their employers as their work is considered below dignity. 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. 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 there quality of life. They also reported during the survey that they do not get enough time to take care of their families. Most of the workers work in more than two houses. Besides their job, they have their own household duties. This clearly shows the imbalance due to their hectic schedule. 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 employees 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.

VII.   RECOMMENDATIONS

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 does 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 perview of labour laws. To include domestic workers under these laws, definitions will have to be amended to suit the domestic work industry. Registration of the domestic workers must be compulsory. Any employer keeping unregistered domestic worker must be subject to police verification and investigation. 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.

VIII.   CONCLUSION

There is need to give importance to the domestic workers and the need to treat them with respect. It is important to recognize that women workers who are forced to work in the unorganized sector are often from the poorest sections. The actual challenge is to ensure that the labour laws and social security schemes that exist for the diminishing number of workers in the organized sector should be extended to the ninety percent workers in the unorganized sector. We urgently need social policy to protect the rights of domestic workers.

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