

Present Status of Paid Domestic Workers in Assam: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

The role of paid domestic workers cannot be denied as they have been served in the society by different roles. Most of the paid domestic workers are not secured in terms of jobs and wages as they have no formal contract with their employers. The employers often make harassment to the domestic workers. It can be observed that the socio-economic condition of paid domestic workers is very miserable in the study area.

The present study tries to highlight the economic and social status of paid domestic workers based on the observation. The study uses various secondary sources like books, journals, periodicals, website etc. for the collection of data.

Keywords: Domestic Workers, Wages, Harassment, Miserable, formal.

Introduction

Paid domestic workers play very important role in the society. The role of women domestic workers is greater than men domestic workers as they must play diverse roles like mother, sister, and wife etc. Domestic workers are the important earning members in the family. They earn by providing services to the employers in a household or households. The demand for domestic workers has also been increased due to modernization of society and increasing the middle level classes families in the society. They are helping to reduce unemployment problem in the society to a great extent.

Domestic workers are scattered in different urban and rural areas of India. As per **National Sample Survey (NSSO Statistics-2011-2012, 68th round)**, there are estimated 39 lakhs people are employed as domestic workers by private households, of which 26 lakhs are female domestic workers in India. In Assam, many domestic workers are found working for the employers.

Domestic workers can be divided based on nature of work. Some workers work in kitchen and they are known as kitchen workers. Another form of domestic workers is sweeper who work sweeping in the institutions or under municipal authority or municipal board. Some workers care employers' children and they are known as Ayah. Another form of domestic workers is the part time domestic workers who work in one or more houses. On the other hand, full time domestic workers present for the whole day at employers' house.

It is very difficult to define domestic workers as they are found in different form. **The ILO convention on domestic workers, 2011, (No 189) defines domestic workers in the Article-1**, as follows:

- The term domestic work means work performed in or for a household or households;

- The term domestic worker means any person engaged in domestic work within a employment relationship;
- A person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not an occupational basis is not domestic work.

Thus, domestic workers should have employment relationship and work in a household or households. The definition clarifies that the workers who work on the casual basis are not domestic workers. For the purpose of the present study, the researcher defines domestic workers who are casual or permanent nature and who work in a household or households.

Overview of Literatures

A few studies are found with respect to domestic workers. Some of the literatures related to this informal worker are as follows:

Sumalatha, Bhat and Chitra (2021) in their research paper entitled "*Impact of Covid-19 on Informal Sector: A Study of Women Domestic Workers in India*" observed that domestic workers badly influenced by the Covid-19 in India. They call for legal measures to protect and promote the life of the domestic workers in India.

International Labor Organization (ILO) conducted a study on "*Living and working conditions of domestic workers in Cambodia*" and found that most of the domestic workers live with family that employs them. The study also found that young children have been working as domestic workers. The study also observed that domestic workers have not been getting such rights as availed by the other workers.

Fonte (2017) in his research entitled "*Domestic workers in the United Kingdom: Migrant workers or modern-day slaves?*" observed that most of the MDWs are coming from developing countries like Philippines, Myanmar, East Timor. He also assessed on the current changes and development migration policies in the United Kingdom.

Sarkar (2015) in his research paper entitled "*Decent work deficit in domestic work: A focus on part-time women workers in Delhi*", observed that domestic workers suffer from different work uncertainties and unhealthy work life which hamper their overall well-being. He also observed that the domestic workers are important earning members in their own households.

Saini (2007) in his paper entitled "*Securing working class rights for informal sector workers in India: A case study of self-employed women association*", analyzed the structure and working of SEWA which combines the twin features of a trade union as well as workers cooperative and envisaged a community support model of social protection to workers in the informal sector. This paper is concerned with the study of role of SEWA in protecting of informal sector workers.

Misra (2008) in his research paper entitled "*Skill and education in income determination: A case study of unorganized workers of along*", examined that many workers have low education qualification. The study showed that in income determination, the important variables are the skill of the workers and number of years of their experience on the job. He conducted the survey on ship breaking industry of along.

The different study on the domestic workers observed that most of the domestic workers are not secured in their job relationship with the employers and they have been living in unhygienic environment.

Relevance of the Study

The study is confined in some of the selected districts of Assam. It can be found that the present condition of the paid domestic workers is not sound. They are regarded as neglected part of the society and no relevant act found to protect and promote the condition of paid domestic workers in Assam. The present study highlights the condition of domestic workers so that ways and means can be suggested to overcome their problems.

Conceptual Framework

The paid domestic workers are the most vulnerable section in the society. The study is based on primary data collected by using schedule and direct personal interview method. The collected data are analyzed with the help of simple statistical tools and techniques.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the present study is to highlight status of paid women domestic workers based on some selected Districts of Assam. The following objectives have been adopted to achieve the main objective-

- To study the present status of domestic workers
- To recommend some suggestions based on findings of the study.

Methodology of the Study

The study is primarily based on observation method and secondary sources of data. Secondary data has been gathered from NGOs, books, journals, research articles, magazines, government/non-government records, newspapers, internet etc.

Discussion: The discussion is being made objective wise in order to have a clear representation of the objectives

Objective -1: To study the present status of domestic workers

Present Status of Domestic workers:

The condition of works of the paid women domestic workers is very miserable. The women domestic workers are not protected by minimum wages Act, 1948. Not almost all the domestic workers are covered by social security's measures for the protection of their various contingencies like illness, old age, accident, inability etc. The women domestic workers have to work under many employers. Under this circumstance the women domestic workers have to work for whole day without rest. Many women domestic workers are not availed any holidays in their employment.

Most of the women domestic workers are poor and coming from weaker section of the society. Some of domestic workers is the sole earning member of their family and they need to work under high risk due to sole earning member in their family, A large section of the women domestic workers is illiterate. It is also found that some of them are school drop-out and read class up to class five to six. This causes lack of awareness different Govt. measures to protect and promote their living conditions. The employers of paid women domestic workers often give ill treatment to the women domestic workers because of absence of any protection measures to the domestic workers in Assam.

Findings:

It can be observed that domestic workers are mostly illiterate or school dropout. It can be found that most of the paid domestic workers are very poor and unable to bear the family expenses. The study also examined that most of the paid domestic workers are coming from weaker section of the society. Most of the paid domestic workers have to work in the severe pressure of the employers, as the work of paid domestic workers is not protected under any acts or measures. Moreover, the working hours of the paid domestic workers are varied from employers to employers. The paid women domestic workers are not protected by social security measures as these measures are very important to protect and promote their various types of contingencies like old age, accidents, illness, inability etc.

Objective -2: To recommend some suggestions based on findings of the study**Suggestions and Conclusion:**

The study reveals that the paid women domestic workers must work as per wishes of the employers as they are not covered by any labour acts. The work of paid domestic workers should bring under the Labour Acts like Minimum Wages Act, Social Security Measures etc.

There should be formal contract between the employers and the women domestic workers so that their rights and duties and responsibilities can be protected.

It can be observed that the paid domestic workers are not covered by any social security measures in Assam. This calls for awareness among the domestic workers about their rights and obligations. The public in general should take initiative to create awareness among the domestic workers about their rights and obligations. The role of women domestic workers cannot be denied. They have been supporting their family by generating income and employment to themselves. However, the paid domestic workers have not been getting adequate treatment from the Government or any other authority. This call for more awareness on the part of the women domestic workers so that they shall be able to raise their problems in organized way. The lacking of adequate awareness about the applicability of legal measures which are available to informal sector like paid women domestic workers cause to live in an unprotected environment.

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