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UGC sponsored two day National Seminar On

Gender and Work: Challenging Conventional Wisdom

Organized by



Department of Sociology and Industrial Relations St. Joseph's College (Autonomous) Bangalore – 560027

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A Study on the Socio - Economic Conditions of Women Domestic Workers in North Chennai

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Abstract

Domestic workers are an important part of the global workforce in informal employment. They are mostly from the marginalized sections of the society. They work for private households, often without formal contracts, unregistered and excluded from the scope of labour legislation. According to ILO, there are at least 53 million domestic workers worldwide, not including child domestic workers and this number is increasing steadily in developed and developing countries. Even though a substantial number of men work in this sector, it remains as a highly feminized sector having 83 per cent of domestic workers as women. At present, women domestic workers earn very low wages, work for long hours, have no guaranteed weekly day of rest and at times are vulnerable to physical, mental and sexual abuse or restrictions on freedom of movement. It is observed that most of the women in North Chennai work as domestic workers and live under poor Socio-Economic conditions. Therefore, the researcher aims to study the Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Domestic Workers in North Chennai. Descriptive Research Design and Convenient sampling was used in this study. It was found that Demonetization, Wage discrimination and Health Problems have major impact on the Socio-Economic conditions of the Women Domestic Workers.

Keywords: Domestic Workers, Women, Socio, Economic, Living conditions.

Introduction

According to The Domestic Workers Convention, 2011, the term 'domestic work' means work performed in or for a household or households; 'domestic worker' means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship and a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker. National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) classifies the following occupations as domestic labour: Housemaid / Servant, Cook, Gardener, Gatekeeper / Chowkidar / Watchman, Governess / Baby-sitter, Tutor, Driver and "Others".

Domestic workers comprise a significant part of the global workforce in informal employment and are among the most vulnerable groups of workers. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) 67 million men and women are employed as domestic workers across the world. There is as of yet no data on the exact number of domestic workers in India. Theestimates vary from 4,75 million (NSS 2005) to over 90 million according to differentsources. While the former is a gross under-estimation, the latter may be exaggerated. However, it can be safely estimated that they number over 50 million in the country.

Women dominate this sector, with their culturally conditioned roles as domestic caregivers fitting well with these occupations. In most countries, women comprise the vast majority of employees in the domestic service sector, usually more than 80% of people working as domestic workers. In China and in Spain, more than 90% of domestic workers are female (ILO Office for China and Mongolia, 2009, p. 1, LABORSTAT, 2008). An ILO analysis of 2004-05 NSSO data shows that in India, female housemaids / servants form the largest sub-category amid domestic workers.