

## DWELLING ON THE SIDELINES: A STUDY OF MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS IN THIRUVALLUR DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

*In Spite Of being one of the oldest and most significant services of the Informal sector for millions of individuals in India, domestic work is frequently devalued as well as poorly controlled. Therefore, as a supplement to being poorly paid and overburdened, numerous domestic workers continue to be socially as well as legally vulnerable. Domestic work, primarily performed by women, has been taking place behind the closed doors, nearly invisible to the external world. Mainly, domestic workers are coming from rural areas. There has been a substantial increase in the number of migrant domestic workers in recent times in the informal sector of urban areas. The domestic service is currently acknowledged as a vital type of livelihood. The reason for the migration of the rural population to urban areas is poverty, drought, and rural unemployment. These migrant domestic workers don't have any law to protect their rights, no health coverage, and don't have a pension. Migrant domestic workers vary from full-time to part-time workers, experienced and inexperienced workers. The problems like no official contracts guaranteeing the employer and employee connection, the absence of organisation, inadequate negotiating power, lack of judicial protection, and insufficient welfare procedures without the requirement for the weekly holidays, maternity holiday and health insurances should be addressed, while at the same time they are susceptible to abuse, frequently receiving insufficient protection from labour law. The present study addresses the manner in which the conditions faced by migrant domestic workers and their nature of work, challenges, constraints, living and working conditions in Thiruvallur district.*

**Keywords:***Migrant domestic workers, Minimum wages, Women domestic workers, Health Insurance, Informal sector.*

## INTRODUCTION

Migrant domestic workers provide essential services to the states they visit, contribute to the wealth of aging communities and the sustainability of the welfare and employment systems of these states. The migrant domestic workers are the lowest group of people in our society. The total number of domestic workers in India has been growing in recent years at the range of 4.2 million from the official estimates, as well as unofficial estimates of greater than 50 million. According to the figures, Indian households have witnessed a 120-percentage rise in the domestic worker's sector. While at the same time the figure stood 7,40,000 in 1991, it has grown to 16.6 lakh in 2001. These Days, it has turned into a standard for a family to rely on a domestic maid. According to the information provided by the Delhi Labour Organisations, there are well over five crore domestic workers in India the vast majority of those who are women.

The main reason for the increase in the domestic workers is migration from the countryside to urban areas usually occurs because of debt bondage, poverty, unexpected death in the family, rural unemployment. The fascination of urban life serves as an additional “pull” factor causing young girls and women along with their families to migrate. Working in urban areas is perceived as a possible solution to poverty and village dwellers are ignorant of the abusive working environment and poor wages that the overwhelming majority of migrant domestic workers have to suffer.

Furthermore, a significant number of migrant domestic workers are coming from areas, that have been exposed to natural disasters as well as man-made disasters and as such are from marginalised communities. In recent years, many MNC started their offices in urban areas, because of employment all educated crowd moved to the urban areas. In most of their families both parents are employed, and no one is available to take care of the children and their parents, for their support domestic workers are employed.

These migrant domestic women workers perform a variety of home services, ranging from providing care for children and aging parents for a person or a family, housekeeping involving cleaning, and domestic care. Additional responsibilities could include food preparation, laundry service, and ironing, grocery shopping, and other household chores. The migrant Men domestic

workers perform a range of essential services in households, they sweep and scrub, shop, care for the elderly, and the disabled, they also provide driving, gardening, and security services.

Most migrant domestic workers are uneducated and unskilled. They are one of the most impoverished and highly abused groups of workers in the nation. Migrant Domestic workers are compelled to be reliant on their employers (Agencies) as they have no judicial protection as workers in accordance with India's labor laws, and they have no negotiating power due to their circumstances of illiteracy, poverty, and low skills. This paper is mainly focused on the migrant domestic worker's nature of work, challenges, constraints, living, and working conditions in Thiruvallur district.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

*The following areas have been marked in accordance with the overall objective of the study.*

- ✚ The present study is mainly focused on the migrant domestic workers in the study area.
- ✚ To analyze why migrants, choose domestic work as an occupation in the study area.
- ✚ To point out the working conditions of domestic workers, especially for women in the study area.
- ✚ The personnel inquiry into the living conditions of selected sample migrant domestic workers in the study area.
- ✚ To envisage the policies and plans to elevate the lives of migrant domestic workers at the national level.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

- ✚ This present study is carried out only on migrant domestic workers in Thiruvallur district
- ✚ This work mainly highlights the women groups of migrant domestic workers in the study area.
- ✚ This work analyses the nature of the work of migrant domestic workers in the study area.
- ✚ This study also finds out the duration of the work, whether they work full time, part-time (or) permanently staying in their employer's house.

## **WHY MIGRANTS CHOOSE DOMESTIC WORK AS AN OCCUPATION**

Domestic work offers an essential employment source for uneducated people or individuals with extremely little education. Official figures position the statistics employed in India being as 4.75 million people, of which 3 million people are women but this is regarded as a serious understatement and the real number will be more among 20 million to 80 million labourers.

Most migrants remain domestic workers within the state, which implies that it is an important access point to the target places in the labour markets, particularly for women, who comprise 60% of all migrant domestic workers.

The causes for choosing the domestic worker employment by migrants are primarily poverty and the unemployment rate in their village as a result they relocate to different places to enhance their livelihood. Sadly, they do not get jobs in other fields due to the fact that they are unskilled and new to the place. Because of job unavailability, few women migrants take up domestic work so that their family could survive. And most of them choose this work because they feel that they can get immediate shelter with food in the new migrated location.

Local domestic workers mostly choose the job because it has been handed over to them through their parents, or few of them are uneducated because of their families' poor background and no one is available to support their family thus they are forced to take up domestic work for their livelihood purpose. Domestic employees are every so often sufferers of forced labour in many circumstances, which is linked to their family condition.

## **MIGRANT DOMESTIC WOMEN WORKER'S WORKING CONDITIONS IN THIRUVALLUR DISTRICT**

Now, females represent approximately half of the overall population of Indian migrants. They are moving, more often due to being independent workers, typically to more sophisticated urban areas in pursuit of a healthier life for them and their dependents. Replicating patterns of gender disparity, at their destination they have a tendency to find work in customarily female-dominated jobs for example in domestic work. The ever-increasing demand for domestic work by families

is thought to be one of the main causes of the increasing feminization of labour migration that was observed in the last few decades.

There are two types of domestic workers, they are local domestic workers and migrant domestic workers. Migrant domestic workers mostly work with Agencies as a contract employee of that employer in urban areas. A domestic worker may work on full-time,( Reside worker), or part-time, they might be hired by a single-family or by several, they may be residing in the household of the employer as a residing worker or they may be residing in his/ her own home (reside-out worker).

Most migrant domestic workers who stay and work in home will face the societal and cultural isolation at the destination because of linguistic and cultural discrepancies, the absence of advance wages and proper information on the conditions and terms of employment, lack of employment law coverage and implementation in the local areas, and limits on freedom of movement and association, amongst many other issues.

The majority of residing migrant domestic workers work a bare minimum of 16 hours per day, seven days per week. Part-time domestic workers frequently work in 2 to 4 different homes for almost 8 to 12 hours each day. Workhours of local domestic workers will be able to work 8 to around 16 hours per day. Salaries, medical benefits, leave facilities, and the rest period are at their employer's sympathy.

In this research we have identified many issues confronted by migrant domestic workers in Thiruvallur district, however, there are many problems that are not covered in this study. Almost more than 85 percent of domestic workers in Thiruvallur district consist of women, varying from ages 18 to 65 and it has been estimated that more than 20 percentage amongst them are under the age of 25, in Thiruvallur district. In general, residing women migrant domestic workers are facing the serious problems like – low salaries, additional work, lengthy working hours, the absence of holidays, mistreatment, absence of welfare facilities, lack of social protection measures, fatigue due to workload, no proper rest, and there is no freedom.

## **IN GENERAL, DOMESTIC WORKER'S CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS**

An informal occupation of migrant domestic labourers is widespread in our nation. The domestic worker is frequently “unseen”, secret for consequences of social protection registration or any other compulsory statement in accordance with the provisions. Most domestic workers remain uneducated. They are involved in household tasks such as washing, cleaning, and cooking, which are traditionally viewed as women’s work and deemed servile in nature.

As previously mentioned, migrant domestic workers comprise one of the most susceptible types of workers. Physical violence and forced work are amongst the human rights violations that frequently disturb such workers, especially women. Nevertheless, the violations also involve long hours of difficult work with no rest and unreasonable wage procedures, for example, the unnecessary deductions for housing and food. These Types of rude circumstances are prevalent and have serious implications for domestic employees and their families. Truly, without fundamental necessities and the material provisions not being met, nearly all domestic workers will not be able to understand their fundamental rights and live in liberty and dignity.

The most common issues that domestic workers meet in their job’s relationship, specifically their informal nature as well as non-recognition of employment rights or social security, working hours, wages, and all the potential violations linked to forced labour. Furthermore, they are usually sufferers of suspicion. If something is missing at home, they're the first to be charged with threats, physical abuse, police questioning, conviction, and perhaps even dismissal.

They will have to adjust to an unfamiliar environment, society, as well as the language. Migrant domestic Workers encounter a great feeling of isolation due to the lonely nature of work. This solitude is exacerbated by the fact that the majority do not have any or extremely little time off as well as they are not able to communicate with far-away relatives and friends. Frequently, they are not permitted to use the phone and are forbidden from mingling with relatives and friends who live and work in the same town.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study tries to contract with the nature of work, challenges, living conditions, constraints, and opportunities of migrant domestic workers in Thiruvallur District. The conclusions of the study will provide better knowledge and insight to lawmakers, to design an efficient strategy for enhancing the terms of the livelihood of the migrant domestic workers in addition to the development of the work. The study will also serve as a measure and establish a reasonable effect for individuals who have the benefit to conduct research on migrant domestic work. Furthermore, the finding of the study will provide information to make policymakers and accountable authorities aware of the problems and constraints as well as possibilities of domestic work in the Thiruvallur district and alleviate or reduce the challenges. Moreover, it will help legislators and government organizations as a succinct source of data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

In modern society, most of the people in urban cities live in the form of nuclear families. Since both the parents are employed, domestic workers are hired for the purpose of cooking, washing, cleaning, caring for children and elderly parents. In the study area of Thiruvallur district, most migrant labourers are employed in domestic work through the help of agencies. The observation of the researchers in this study area is that most migrants consist of destitute women, widows, and few men serving as security guards, and drivers.

The working conditions of migrant domestic workers, in our research, found that the maximum number of migrants are employed through agencies. Thus, their wages are paid through the agencies and as a result, their payments are very regular. Moreover, their accommodations and food are up to the standard. However, certain agencies siphon the payments received by migrant domestic workers. Most of the respondents held a favorable opinion on the households.

In our survey, around 40% of the selected sample migrant workers said that they were provided free accommodation in their employer's house. Whereas, 60% of the selected sample migrant workers said that they had to live outside in slum areas. Many of these workers are employed as part-time workers, they work in 3 to 4 houses a day, for 2 to 4 hours in each house. In most households, these part-time workers do not receive any of the benefits received by full-time

workers such as food or shelter. It was observed that if the household mistreats them, they are not likely to continue working in that household.

In our study, it was observed that migrant domestic workers were not aware of their own rights. Agencies and the NGOs have the responsibility of educating migrant domestic workers on their legal rights and elevate their lives. The government should provide welfare policies and programs to improve the livelihood of migrant domestic workers. Furthermore, the authorities should prescribe minimum wages per day and make migrant domestic workers eligible for welfare measures such as medical policies for them and their dependents, children's education, and Death compensation. Thus, these are the welfare measure that would definitely improve the lives of migrant domestic workers in the study area.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The General Public's opinion of domestic work is frequently that it is low prestige work carried out by impoverished men and women. Migrant domestic workers comprise a good amount of population of the labour force in our country, but it has been missing from the legal background of the labour rules of the country. In today's society, because of the lack of important legal protection, wellbeing measures as well as other arrangements for the empowerment of migrant domestic workers. They themselves are socially disadvantaged, economically susceptible, and politically underprivileged parts of our society. They ought to have appropriate care, safeguards, and procedures for equality in modern society in accordance with the principle of humanitarian factors. The migrant domestic workers do not possess backing groups as well as civil society assistance provided under the current circumstances. The nation's legal measures are mostly ineffectual in the current situation. The government and NGOs want to make a Comprehensive Strategy in order to assist its residents in accomplishing the proper work for migrant domestic workers. As an integral part of this approach, migrant domestic workers pursue the efforts to develop knowledge, increase awareness, encourage exchange and discussion and create policy tools necessary to guarantee efficient security of migrant domestic workers' rights, encourage their job market incorporation. We desperately need a social strategy to safeguard the rights of migrant domestic workers in the more recent and older types of work in the informal sector.



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