

# **Preference and Impact of Female Domestic Workers in Urban Homes: A Study of Delhi-NCR**

**Dr. Priti Singh**

Dept. of Psychology, Government Girls College, Chomu, Rajasthan, India

**ABSTRACT:** Tens of millions of women and girls around the world are employed as domestic workers in private households. They clean, cook, care for children, look after elderly family members, and perform other essential tasks for their employers. Despite their important role, they are among the most exploited and abused workers in the world. They often work 14 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week, for wages far below the minimum wage. They may be locked within their workplace and subject to physical and sexual violence. Children and migrant domestic workers are often the most vulnerable. An international treaty – the Domestic Workers Convention – was adopted in June 2011, providing the first global standards to protect domestic workers.

**KEYWORDS:** domestic, female, workers, household, family, children, violence, physical, sexual

## **I.INTRODUCTION**

Domestic work has been one of the oldest jobs in the world. Due to various reasons like drought, lack of agriculture, lack of employment option, land acquisition in the name of development, displacement, harassment of Dalit class, lack of basic amenities like medical facilities, water, etc., people migrate from the villages to the cities. These migrants are mostly poor and disadvantaged and they get work in the unorganized sector in the city. Women also have to work because of the high cost of living and poor economic conditions. Due to the lack of education and skill in women, the easiest livelihood for them is domestic work and they are forced to do it. 35 types of work classify as jobs for domestic workers. The work that fits into this category includes gardening, babysitting, cooking, sweeping, swabbing, dusting, washing utensils, washing clothes, attendants (for sick and elderly), [1,2] drivers, security guards, car cleaning, etc. While some of these jobs are done by male domestic workers almost all the other jobs are done by women domestic workers. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), there are about six million domestic workers in India. According to the National Sample Survey 2011-12, there were 2,38,92,791 domestic workers in the country out of which 4,05,831 were women and 21,79,403 were working in the New Delhi. In the five years between 1999-2000 and 2004-05, the number of female domestic workers increased by 22.5 lacs. For this reason, the share of women in working population has increased from 11.8 percent to 27.5 percent. Domestic workers have to face many types of problems in both home and workspaces. On the one hand, they do not always get a happy atmosphere and support at home; on the other hand, the situation at their workplace is mostly that of discrimination and insecurity. [3,4]

The society's view of domestic workers is not good in general. Their work is not considered dignified and their work is not given importance and they are considered to be servants instead of workers. Employers of household workers from time to time give them stale leftover food, torn clothes, worn out shoes & slippers, etc. It hurts their self-esteem but they bear it silently believing it to be their fate. If there are incidents of sexual harassment with them in the workplace, the society also blames them. Female domestic workers invest their entire earning in their families, yet they rarely have a say in the major family decisions. These women have to face domestic violence. Their husbands normally consume alcohol from their own wages, so the responsibility of running the whole house comes on these women's shoulders. These women do not have any social or economic security. There are no domestic women workers associations or NGOs that come forward to help them. Therefore when there is injustice done to them, nobody comes forward to fight for them. In the absence of such organizations, their demands do not become known to the public. [5,6] Female domestic workers work for approx. 14 hours daily, thereby causing fatigue, joint pain, back pain, etc. Most of the time, during the work, their hands are in water containing detergents or phenyl, which causes wounds in the fingers. Usage of cold water in winters to wash clothes, utensils or swab the floor accentuates the development of arthritis in the fingers and hands of these women. They are not allowed to use toilets in the workplace, due to which they drink less water, often due to this, they develop urine infections. Due to drinking less water, there is a possibility of kidney

# **International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering, Technology & Management (IJMRSETM)**

*(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed Online Journal)*

Visit: [www.ijmrsetm.com](http://www.ijmrsetm.com)

**Volume 3, Issue 7, July 2016**

damage also. There are many occasions when these women become victims of physical violence, sexual abuse, and inhuman behavior at the workplace. According to a research by Human Rights Watch, domestic servants in India have to face extreme harassment. The women and child development department informed the Rajya Sabha in February 2014 that cases of violence are increasing with domestic workers in the country and between 2010 and 2012, 10,503 cases of domestic crime against domestic workers were registered, in which 3564 cases were registered in 2012, 3517 in 2011 and 3422 cases were registered in 2010 [7,8]. If anything gets stolen in the house, then the first person to suspect is the domestic worker. These women do not get any facilities like weekly off, annual vacation, maternity leave, sick leave, insurance, social security benefits etc., like other workers. If there is an accident at the workplace, the employer does not pay for the medical treatment of the worker. The contribution of domestic workers in the country's economy is never assessed; they are not given a status of workers. Because of this, they do not have any specific pay scale and do not enjoy pay hikes or allowances like workers in other sectors. The wages given to domestic workers are less than the minimum wages in the New Delhi-NCR. Placement agencies make a lot of false promises of them getting big salaries and allowances and bonuses and then they sometimes exploit them financially and also physically. [9,10]

## **II. EFFORTS BY THE CENTRAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS**

In order to safeguard the rights of the domestic women workers, in 1959 a Bill called Domestic Workers (Conditions of Employment) was introduced, which could not be passed. Again, the Unorganized Workers Safety Act 2008 (domestic workers also included) did not implement its provisions properly. The International Labor Organization announced the rights and policies, principles of domestic workers in the domestic workers' convention on June 16, 2011. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also drawn specific attention to domestic workers, who have a right to "enjoy effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment, and violence". In the year 2015, Labor Welfare has drafted a national policy for domestic workers in which the minimum wage, [11,12] hours of work, annual leave with salary, medical leave, maternity leave, social security, accident and health insurance and protection from sexual abuse, were to be included in the contracts between domestic workers and their employers. The National Health Insurance Scheme was announced in this year's budget which will cover 10 crores 'vulnerable' families. The health coverage of the scheme will be up to Rs 5 lacs per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization. Domestic workers have been included in the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013. Minimum wages have been fixed for domestic workers in India, especially Delhi. Chief Minister's Urban Domestic Working Women Welfare Scheme the female domestic workers are registered and provided social security, education, health treatment, maternity leave, and insurance. Domestic workers have not been given the status of labourers. This is the reason that the women who work as domestic workers have been neglected for minimum wages, hours of work, protection from occupational hazards etc. Domestic workers are poor, deprived and belong to lower classes and do not have the strength and neither have the freedom to speak. In such situations, the employer exploits the cheap and easily available labour. Domestic workers are not getting good wages or better work environments, there are no regular working hours, they have to face violence, abuse, sexual harassment at workplace, exploitation by brokers and placement agencies; forced migration; there is a lack of welfare schemes; they are faced with major problems like lack of opportunities to move forward. The biggest problem is that they do not have any organization, because they have little or no bargaining power and they cannot even raise their issues properly. [13,14]

In the Sustainable Development Goals - Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls is to be achieved by future. The Government of India has committed to this. Therefore, the government will have to make serious efforts to recognize domestic workers as women and to give importance to their work. For this, the government will have to bring out a national policy at the earliest for domestic workers, by providing skill development training; there should be a legal contract between employers and domestic workers. Every female domestic worker should be mandatorily given information regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. The government has to create more and more welfare schemes such as a discount for a smart card to travel in public transport or lower rate of interest on bank loans. At the same time, domestic workers must be organized to fight for their rights and they will have to link themselves to the wider struggle of the workers, only then they and their work will be given honor and respect.

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. Ensure women's full and effective

# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering, Technology & Management (IJMRSETM)

*(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed Online Journal)*

Visit: [www.ijmrsetm.com](http://www.ijmrsetm.com)

Volume 3, Issue 7, July 2016

participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels[15,16]

## III.RESULTS

More than 4,300 domestic workers have organized under SEWA Delhi to gain awareness of their rights and enable them to mobilize with collective strength. Through government and employer liaising, SEWA Delhi facilitates domestic workers towards addressing their concerns, such as ensuring decent wages, safe work conditions, and paid leave. SEWA Delhi links domestic workers and their families with government social security schemes and SEWA Delhi development programs. Since January 2014, SEWA is the lead partner on the ILO supported project "Preventing trafficking of women and girls in India through empowerment and organization of domestic workers." [17,18] Through this project, SEWA Delhi aims to ensure that:

- **Women domestic workers are empowered** through information and support networks particularly in relation to migration
- **Collective voice and advocacy capacity of women domestic workers is strengthened** through organization
- **Women domestic workers are better able to negotiate for better wages** as a result of skill development and empowerment
- **Union leaders and women domestic workers are able to exercise their rights** as workers through an improved understanding of their rights at work.
- **Access to effective complaints mechanisms and support services** for women domestic workers who experience exploitation and abuse at work.[19]

Dhoop Siri, a domestic worker, sustained injuries on her left hand around four months ago after she fell while mopping the floor at her employer's house. "My employer neither helped me in my medical treatment nor gave me any leave. It's been nearly four months and I haven't fully recovered. As I'm allowed just two leaves in a month, my salary was deducted when I took an extra day off due to my injury," said Siri, who had a crepe bandage tied on her left hand while participating in a domestic workers' convention in New Delhi, National Capital Territory (NCR). The malaise of violence against workers employed in urban housing societies and other business establishments continues unabated in urban satellite cities like Noida, Gurugram, Delhi. In the past few months, several incidents of violence being perpetrated toward residential staff in urban high-rise gated societies have gone viral. And yet, attacks on this particular class of workers has always been a common problem in the Delhi NCR region. In July 2014, a gated society named Mahagun Moderne Society in Greater Noida, was attacked by a mob of migrant workers and slum dwellers from nearby colonies. The mob consisted of domestic workers, their families and the blue-collar staff that served in the residents of the building. The purpose of the angry mob was to ransack the home of Anshu and Mithul Sethi to look for Zohra Bibi,[20,21] a domestic worker employed at the home of the Sethis. Zohra, who lived in a nearby slum, was accused of theft and sacked from her job. However, the family did not report the incident to the police. Instead, they called her to their house the next day to collect her pending payment. According to reports, Bibi did not return home for over 24 hours and was only found later in the basement of one of the buildings in the complex. Apparently, she had taken shelter inside the basement after being assaulted by her former employers who had beaten her and allegedly kept her locked inside her room.

The incident caused a huge uproar. Many editorials and columns on the ugliness of the urban class divide in satellite cities like Noida and Gurugram were published by Delhi-centric media houses. The problem of violence that domestic workers face in cities like Delhi is not unheard of. In 2015, two Nepalese employed as domestic workers for a Saudi diplomat were rescued from his Gurgaon flat. Investigations into the matter revealed that the two women had been repeatedly abused sexually by the diplomat and at least 20 others for months. Nearly a decade since then, the malaise of violence against workers employed in urban housing societies and other business establishments continues unabated. Blue-collar workers, mostly migrants from smaller towns and villages across India, continue to face attacks from

# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering, Technology & Management (IJMRSETM)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed Online Journal)

Visit: [www.ijmrsetm.com](http://www.ijmrsetm.com)

Volume 3, Issue 7, July 2016

upper-class, upper-caste city dwellers with barely any legal recourse available to them. This year itself has seen several such attacks on staff like security guards, domestic workers, lift operators, and even auto and taxi drivers. On August 29 this year, a security guard working at the Close North Apartment society in Gurugram filed an FIR after a resident of the complex violently attacked him for no reason. In viral videos of the incident, the resident, a businessman named Varun Nath, was seen violently slapping the guard, named Ashok Kumar, after getting stuck in the building's elevator. In his fit of rage, Nath allegedly even threatened to kill the guard, who was on duty when the lift malfunctioned. Kumar claimed that Nath attacked him despite the former helping him out of the elevator. Nath, who was arrested by Gurugram Police sections 323 (causing hurt) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was later released on bail. Speaking to The Quint after the incident, the 48-year-old security guard had said, "Kyunki unke paas paisa hai, unko ghamand ho raha tha. Unhone socha hoga, 'Yeh chhote log mera kya bigaad lenge?' (He has money and pride, and must have thought, 'What could these poor people do to me?')."[22,23]

In the same month, a 28-year-old woman was arrested and her family was booked for allegedly stripping and assaulting their 43-year-old domestic worker whom they suspected of theft. Following the assault, the victim tried to die by suicide by consuming rat poison. As per reports quoting the police investigating the case, the family had sought the services of a 'tantrik baba' (occultist) to find out who among their employees had allegedly committed theft in the house. The tantrik ruled that it was the victim who had committed the theft following which they beat her. In a similar incident in May, a 48-year-old domestic worker employed with a family in a Rajouri Garden gated society alleged abuse from her employer who repeatedly beat her and cut her hair as "punishment" for so-called bad behaviour. On 10th September, a woman in Noida was arrested for repeatedly slapping a security guard because he had delayed opening the gate. The incident occurred in the Cleo County residential complex in Noida Sector 21. In this case too, security footage capturing the violence went viral. The woman, who was arrested for alleged assault, was later released on bail. A few days ago, Bhavya Roy, an advocate in Delhi was also arrested after she was found misbehaving with security guards at Jaypee Wishtown society in Sector-128 in Noida. In videos, she could be seen manhandling the guards and pulling one by their collar and dragging them outside the gate while hurling abuses and derogatorily calling the guard "Bihari". Delhi Commission for Women Chairperson Swati Maliwal took cognisance of the incident and asked the Noida Police to take strict action against the woman.[24]

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

For many of those living in the region, domestic workers are an intrinsic and indispensable part of society. Maids and nannies nurse our children, maintain our homes and institutions and keep the wheels of everyday life functioning with ease. For the role they play in the smooth running of society, they deserve respect and proper treatment. As a workforce, they form an admirable powerhouse of industry and finance. Most housekeepers don't bother that their house helpers are also human beings who need to be treated with equal dignity, nobility, and pride. When the **self-respect of a maid is constantly eroded, she is unable to perform well**, she loses her motivation and starts resenting her superiors; the same case is with males. Thereby, we should acknowledge that our housemaids are human beings with the same requirements as housekeepers; they need to be praised and appreciated to perform well. Undoubtedly, the pain of dejection and demotivation is horrendous![25]

### 1) Treat Your Maid With Respect

It is against nature to disrespect the workers, talk impolitely, still desiring them to work at the maximum level. One compliment and a gentle pat on your maid's back will cast magical wonders on her; her motivational level will go high up the skies.

Certainly, no need to compromise on the work quality; still, you are supposed to call her respectfully by her name, address her like a family member, **take care of her basic needs**, give her the food that you eat, and let her live at a cozy place; be gentle to her as she has left her family to serve you. Instead of shouting, reprimanding, or condescending, set some obvious rules, and give her sufficient time for adjustment.

# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering, Technology & Management (IJMRSETM)

*(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed Online Journal)*

Visit: [www.ijmrsetm.com](http://www.ijmrsetm.com)

Volume 3, Issue 7, July 2016

## 2) Be Kind And Compassionate

Kindness creates goodwill in people, and it never goes unrewarded. Try to owe your maids with compassion and kindness as it is essential to forging a strong relationship.

Talk calmly yet firmly, as it is a brilliant way to address the subordinate, make your maid realize that her substandard work will not be acceptable at all. But keep in mind, **maids have problems too**, and they fall ill, get accidents, face misfortune tho; hence, be aware of her situation, be compassionate and keep helping her.[22,23]

## 3) Ensure The Maid Is Not Overworked

It is a fact that you hire your maid to reduce your domestic burden, but don't pile too much work as she needs to look after her family too. Paying someone doesn't mean you are buying them; if you can't handle all your domestic chores, don't expect that poor soul to do so.

**Overwork and burden can make your maid sick**, or there are possibilities she will leave the job, and eventually, you and your domestic work will be affected. There is a straightforward solution, hire more maids or divide the duties by assigning certain domestic tasks.

## 4) Communicate Appropriately

Communicate your house helpers very clearly as it is a key to professionalism. Be clear yet precise in your instructions, communicate with her appropriately, and assign her the tasks priorly. Communicate with your workers and ask them about their family members and ask some essential details, so you could help them when the need arises.

## 5) Develop Trust

Whether you have a part-time helper or a full time, develop a degree of trust between you and your maid. It never means to trust her blindly, but treat her well and let her know that you trust her like other members of the house; in this way, she will be happy and satisfied.

## 6) Appreciate On Her Hard Work

Appreciation is a token, and your few words are enough to buck the workers up and to make their day. The encouragement can also be demonstrated through gestures, monetary bonuses, or presets. Your every little action may be giving her a day off from her daily routine as it will elevate your domestic helper's morale.[25]

## REFERENCES

1. "In service". Oxford English Dictionary (Online ed.). Oxford University Press. (Subscription or participating institution membership required.)
2. ^ Anti-Slavery International. "Domestic Work and Slavery". Anti-Slavery.Org. Anti-Slavery International. Archived from the original on 30 September 2014. Retrieved 24 September 2014.
3. ^ "ILO Global estimates of migrant workers and migrant domestic workers: results and methodology" (PDF). International Labour Organization. Retrieved 2015-12-23.
4. ^ "100th ILO annual Conference decides to bring an estimated 53 to 100 million domestic workers worldwide under the realm of labour standards". International Labour Organization. 16 June 2011. Archived from the original on 2015-12-27. Retrieved 2015-12-23.
5. ^ Verfürth, Eva-Maria (n.d.). "Hard work new opportunities". D+C Development and Cooperation No. 09 2009. Archived from the original on 2009-10-12. Retrieved 2009-01-10.
6. ^ See the UN Human Rights Committee's report, "Domestic Workers' Rights in the United States."



# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering, Technology & Management (IJMRSETM)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed Online Journal)

Visit: [www.ijmrsetm.com](http://www.ijmrsetm.com)

Volume 3, Issue 7, July 2016

7. ^ Hilgers, Lauren (2013-02-21). "The New Labor Movement Fighting for Domestic Workers' Rights". The New York Times. ISSN 0362-4331. Retrieved 2013-03-10.
8. ^ Graff, Daniel A. (n.d.). "Domestic Work and Workers". The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago. Archived from the original on 2009-05-13. Retrieved 2009-08-31.
9. ^ Bello, Grace (January 17, 2013). "The Home Economics of Domestic Workers". Archived from the original on January 31, 2013.
10. ^ "Without Labor Protections, Domestic Workers Earn Low Wages And Receive No Benefits". ThinkProgress. Archived from the original on 2013-10-04.
11. ^ See the UN Human Rights Committee's report, "Domestic Workers' Rights in the United States."
12. ^ "About Us". National Domestic Workers Alliance.
13. ^ "Feminists and Domestic Workers; Muchachas No More: Domestic Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean" by Elsa M. Chaney; Mary Garcia Castro
14. ^ Susan B. Murray, "'We all love Charles': men in child care and the social construction of gender", Gender & Society; (1996) 10: 368
15. ^ Silvey, R. (2004), "Transnational Migration and the Gender Politics of Scale: Indonesian Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia". Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography
16. ^ Arat-Koc, S. (1992) 'In the Privacy of Our Own Home: Foreign Domestic Workers as a Solution to the Crisis of the domestic sphere in Canada', P. Connelly and P. Armstrong (eds.) Feminism in Action: Studies in Political Economy, Toronto: Canadian Studies Press.
17. ^ Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920–1989; by Phyllis Palmer
18. ^ Levenstein, Harvey (1988). Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-504365-5; pp. 60–71
19. ^ "Resource guide on domestic workers". International Labour Organization. Archived from the original on October 4, 2013. Retrieved October 4, 2013.
20. ^ "Uruguay First Country to Ratify C189". Idwn.info. 2012-05-03. Archived from the original on 2012-10-25. Retrieved 2012-05-11.
21. ^ "Domestic Workers Chart". ThinkProgress. Archived from the original on October 4, 2013. Retrieved October 4, 2013.
22. ^ Guerra, Isabel (30 March 2009). "Peru: Domestic servants can no longer be forced to wear uniforms in public". Living in Peru. Archived from the original on 16 January 2014. Retrieved 19 March 2011.
23. ^ "Housemaid-turned-rapper gives voice to suffering of domestic helpers in Latin America". South China Morning Post. 4 August 2015. Archived from the original on 19 January 2014. Retrieved 15 January 2014.
24. ^ "Brazil rapper voices Latin housemaids' suffering". New Straits Times. 4 August 2015. Archived from the original on 19 January 2014. Retrieved 15 January 2014.
25. ^ "Child domestic workers: Finding a voice" (PDF). Antislavery.com. Archived (PDF) from the original on April 3, 2013. Retrieved October 4, 2013.