

## **Domestic Help Workers- A Comparative Study of Punjab**

**Ekta Rani**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Management, General Shivdev Singh Diwan Gurbachan  
Singh Khalsa College, Patiala Punjab*

### **Abstract**

*According to International Labor Organization, —Domestic help workers encompass a noteworthy part of the international workforce in informal employment and are among the most exploited groups of workers. The objective of the study is to do the comparative analysis of the position of domestic help workers in three different areas of Punjab that is 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. To meet the requirements of objectives, a sample of 600 domestic workers is considered (75 from each district). One way ANOVA is adopted to get statistical results. The study found that there are fair amount of men in the sector but domestic work industry is currently dominated throughout the Punjab region by women. Though the domestic work industry has provided ample opportunities to woman to become self- dependent, on the other hand it also leads towards exploitation, harassment and sexual embarrassment at the workplace. In sum, socio-economic condition of the domestic help workers is not good. They face problems both at home and work place. They have a very massive work load with less compensation. There is no homogeneity in their wage structure and their wages are very low. It is suggested that there is need for comprehensive legislation controlled both by centre and state governments.*

**Keywords:** *Domestic Help Workers, Exploitation, Punjab*

### **Introduction**

According to International Labor Organization, —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. Child domestic workers remains excluded, at present there are almost 53 million domestic workers all over the world and this number is increasing gradually in developed and developing countries. 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. Exploitation of domestic workers can partially be linked with the gaps in national labour and employment legislation, and it often depicts imitate the discrimination based on sex, race and caste.

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. It includes the various categories of domestic workers such as Maids, Drivers, Cooks, Baby-Sitters,

Sweepers, Gatekeepers, Guards, and Gardeners etc. To meet the requirements of objectives, a sample of 600 domestic workers is considered (75 from each district).

### **Objective of the Study**

To do the comparative analysis of the position of domestic help workers in three different areas of Punjab that is Majha, Malwa and Doaba.

### **Research Methodology**

The study is confined to three regions of Punjab i.e., 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. 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. Cost and time constraints are important factors for deciding the size of sample. At the same accuracy of results is very important. To meet the requirements of objectives, a sample of 600 domestic workers is considered (75 from each district).

Structured questionnaires were designed to collect primary data from domestic help workers. Questionnaires consisted of mostly closed ended questions. Interviewer administered questionnaires are planned for this study. The method of interview was direct personal investigation and it was focused at interview based methods to focus attention on the given experience of the respondent and its effects. Sources of secondary data on domestic help workers will be collected from official publications of International Labour Organization, Ministry of labour and Employment (India), Department of Labour (Government of Punjab), International and National Journals and Magazines for human resource and labour market, local and international newspapers, World Wide Web, Local Labour and Women Commissions, Non-Government Organizations related to welfare of labour and domestic help workers, Local police stations of respective districts. The study is confined to three major regions of Punjab- Majha, Malwa and Doaba. Non-Probability sampling technique such as stratified sampling technique and snowball sampling technique was used due to non-availability of appropriate and official data of domestic help workers. Cost and time constraints were important. One way ANOVA is adopted to get statistical results.

### **Results & Discussions**

#### **Results of One way ANOVA**

The table 1 shows the results of one way ANOVA where the means of awareness levels of three sections of Punjab regions are compared i.e. Doaba, Majha and Malwa. The results of the test are positive at 597 degree of freedom and 0.05 percent significance level.

**Table 1: Table showing results of One-way ANOVA**

Regions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum	Between Component Variance
<b>Doaba</b>	153	3.0915	1.03466	.08365	2.9262	3.2568	1.00	5.00	
<b>Majha</b>	206	2.3883	1.10637	.07708	2.2364	2.5403	1.00	5.00	
<b>Malwa</b>	241	2.4274	1.15286	.07426	2.2811	2.5737	1.00	5.00	
<b>Total</b>	600	2.5833	1.14539	.04676	2.4915	2.6752	1.00	5.00	
<b>Model</b>			1.10778	.04523	2.4945	2.6722			
				.21551	1.6561	3.5106			.12898

Source: Author's Calculation

### ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	53.203	2	26.602	21.677	.000
Within Groups	732.630	597	1.227		
Total	785.833	599			

The table 1 shows the results of one way ANOVA where the means of awareness levels of three sections of Punjab regions are compared i.e. Doaba, Majha and Malwa. The results of the test are positive at 597 degree of freedom and 0.05 percent significance level.

The objective of research to do the comparative analysis of the position of domestic help workers in three different areas of Punjab that is Majha, Malwa and Doaba. The comparison is made on the basis of financial position, quality of life awareness about rights and overall satisfaction. From the results of ANOVA analysis in table 1 it can be evidently seen that among the three regions the best respondents with somehow positive feedback was seen from the Doaba region i.e. from the area of Kapurthala and Jalandhar. The prime reason is that the overall population staying in these areas are business class and have relatives staying abroad. The financial conditions of the people in these areas are better than the remaining areas. The quality of life as well as overall life satisfaction of these areas is higher than the other parts of Punjab. As far as the understanding of rules and laws are concern the respondents of these areas are far ahead especially as compared to their other counterparts.

The domestic help workers of the Majha region are the poorest among all. The situation here is not so good. The work load is high and the compensation and holidays given to them is less

as compared to other areas. Due to this the overall quality of life is low and they have a poor work life balance.

Now if we discuss the Malwa region which consists of Mansa, Ludhiana, Bathinda and Fatehgarh Sahib region. They are least paid and are most exploited workers. Barring a few places like Patiala, Nabha etc. the other workers have a poor situation and severe physical and financial position. It has been observed that the education level and the financial position of the employee also impact the quality of life. Areas such as Mansa, Bathinda where the education level is low as compared to Patiala, Ludhiana and Jalandhar the quality of life and financial position both are good as compared to the counterpart.

### **Observation about the Domestic Help Worker Industry**

The study found that there are fair amount of men in the sector but domestic work industry is currently dominated throughout the Punjab region by women. Though the domestic work industry has provided ample opportunities to woman to become self- dependent, on the other hand it also leads towards exploitation, harassment and sexual embarrassment at the workplace. It has also shown that due to the various types of jobs in the domestic work, the jobs occupied by men are different from that of women. It was believed that the domestic work industry was an industry of past type of society and did not belong to the modern world, but the recent trends are showing some changes in the domestic work industry, it is not fading away, but is transforming. There are several specific causes that are credited to continuing the cycle of the demand for domestic work. One of these reasons is that with more women accepting full-time jobs, a dually employed household with children places a heavy burden on parents. It is however a matter of debate that this burden of shared responsibility wouldn't result in the demand for outside domestic help if men and women were providing equal levels of effort in domestic work and child rearing within their own home. Migratory workers from different states often indulge in domestic work that comes to the state due to their economic survival. But it has also led to several problems. On one hand it has also fulfilled the demand of the domestic workers in the state, on the other hand it has increased the level of exploitation of the workers. Because the migratory population becomes the easy prey in the hands of the employers due to their lack of awareness regarding their rights.

### **Recent trends in Domestic Help Workers**

1. As one of the emerging activities due to growing number of working women in various developed and developing countries, represents the demographics that show increasing requirements for care economy. It has also shown changing patterns related to the GDP growth and other macroeconomic activities linked with increasing inequalities. It is a clear indication that with the increase in income inequality, there will be a shift in the number of domestic workers.
2. The nature of the expansion of this type of women's work is determined by the notion of gender of societies all over the world and women is mainly responsible for the care economy and social reproduction even when they are engaged in outside work, and so transfer some of

This burden of previously unpaid work on to paid workers (usually other women). This has been associated with a globalization of the care economy, with growing use of migrant workers across and within countries, as well as the growth of part-time domestic work.

3. Though the demand of the domestic work is increasing these days yet domestic work is mainly unrecognized in various countries, generally undervalued. Since this work is basically performed in the household sector, this nature of the work has debarred it from the scope of the various labour legislations. It becomes difficult in this case to monitor the various work life conditions of the domestic workers. Since most domestic workers are women (and often migrant women) they are even less likely to be in a position to organized and demand their rights collectively. It is usually perceived as something less than regular work by both employers and the workers themselves, and contracts are usually determined bilaterally in conditions of unequal bargaining power without strong awareness of either labor market conditions or the legal rights of the workers. The relatively high proportion of child labor in this activity is also a reflection of the sheer difficulties of monitoring and regulation.

4. For the reasons quite clearly mentioned that it is very difficult to get accurate and reliable data on the purview of domestic work. Available review of literature clearly points towards lack of sufficient official statistics regarding domestic workers. Thus it makes it all the more difficult to define the categories of the domestic workers so as to recognize it.

5. The limited data that are available indicate that domestic work is overwhelmingly feminized. These numbers can vary sharply depending upon source, and it is widely recognized that the official estimates are likely to be underestimates. For varied reasons domestic workers are often excluded from labour force surveys. This is more likely when they are not adults, as is often found in developing countries. Sometimes the domestic workers also remain unrecorded. The increasing importance of domestic work as paid employment specially in India makes it all the more obligatory to certify that such work is given distinction and materialize under decent conditions with adequate pay. Presently, because of the personalized nature of such work, the work contracts are informal and in that case they do not come under the purview of the law. Most of the domestic work is done under suppressive conditions such as low pay, overtime without pay, long working hours, low self-esteem, and no social security.

6. It is unfortunately the case that as long as overall productive employment generation remains so sluggish, there will be pressures on domestic workers that can force them to accept working conditions that are poor and even sometimes degrading. However, both public policy and labor mobilization can play roles in improving such conditions even when the overall employment scenario is bleak.

7. What is required is professionalizing the relations between employer and employee, which can only be done through a combination of organization, legislation and institution-building. This makes it compulsive for the Government of India to ratify the Convention of International Labor Organisational Domestic Work, passed by the International Labour

Congress in 2010. This Convention evidently formulates the basic rights of domestic workers, and provides guidelines on terms and conditions of employment, wages, working hours, occupational safety and health, social security and the avoidance of child labour. It is just the beginning; the government has to take stern steps to ensure the welfare of the workers

### **Conclusion of the study**

In sum, socio-economic condition of the domestic help workers is not good. They face problems both at home and work place. They have a very massive work load with less compensation. There is no homogeneity in their wage structure and their wages are very low. However, they are compelled to do this job because of lower education or poor financial background. They are exploited at their working place and in some cases, even at their own homes by their own husbands or in-laws. It is necessary to make them aware about the exploitation and inspire them to organize themselves for protecting their rights and also to work for implementation of laws by the government. Then only, they can live with status and dignity equal to that of other members of the society.

### **Suggestions**

- There is need for comprehensive legislation controlled both by center and state governments.
- There should be a help line no. and also a complaints committee to handle the sexual harassment complaints of domestic workers.
- 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.

### **References**

- Bothra, N. (2010). The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- D'Souza A. (2010). Moving towards Decent Work for Domestic Workers: An Overview of the ILO's Work. Geneva: ILO Publications.
- De La C., Hector G. B., Geraldo V. P., and Lee Swepston (1996). The International Labor Organization: The International Standards System and Basic Human Rights. Boulder. Colorado: West View Publications, A division of Harper Collins Publishers.
- Equal Remuneration Act (1976). Ministry of Labour. Government of India. 5. Maternity Benefit Act (1961). Gazette of India. 2012-2013.
- Malik, Prakash Lal (2015). The Industrial Law. Ed. 24, Vol. II. Lucknow: Eastern Book Company.
- Naidu, M. C., and K. Dasaratha Ramaiah. (2006). Child Labour in India-An Overview. Journal of Social Science, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 199-204.
- Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (2008). Government of India.