
SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF FULL TIME (LIVE-IN) DOMESTIC WORKERS IN TRICITY OF CHANDIGARH

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ABSTRACT

In the Tricity of Chandigarh (Chandigarh, Panchkula and SAS Nagar), the growing urbanization pulls the migrants from nearby rural areas especially from low income, illiterate, scheduled caste households in search of better job opportunities and decent place of living with a hope to get their children good education and a bright future. In the process of migration the male of the family gets accommodate themselves in salaried occupations or in some kind of self-employment options, depending upon the level of their education. However, the female of the household are left with very few options domestic work being the most preferred where no skill and education is required to earn something instead of enjoying leisure time. The domestic workers are termed as full-time (live-in) domestic workers who work for cash payments and reside in the places of employers either in separate servant quarters or in the same house. Full-time (live-in) domestic workers need to be present round the clock in the service of their employers. The study is based on primary data of 107 domestic maids randomly selected from different locations (Sectors) of Tricity; the detailed questionnaire was structured to collect the data. These full-time (live-in) domestic workers hail from nearby hindi speaking states like UP and Bihar either in first or in second generation. Usually they don't have any skill and earns Rs. 6374 on an average excluding in kind payments accrue to them in terms of free accommodation.

Keywords: Migrant, Full-time (live-in) domestic workers, servant quarter, average monthly earnings.

Introduction

An increase in the level of inequality, large supply of migrant women in search of employment or along with their families and a hope for a decent living paved the way for rural-urban

migration. Raveendran and Vanek (2020) put forth six types of employment options available for migrant women; House Based Work (HBW), Street Vendor, Construction, Informal transport, waste picking and domestic work. Feminization of house work makes domestic work an easy and affordable occupation for migrant female workers. Nearly 48 per cent of the total workers are working in the informal sector. Domestic work is one such occupation in the informal sector which attracts the migrant females. They get paid in combination of cash and kind sometimes 'in kind' payment is barter in terms of servant quarter or space to live with free electricity, water and sanitation facilities. A female domestic worker either work on part-time or on full-time basis. Their services have become an indispensable part of today's 'dual-career' couple society where both female and male of the family go for work outside and need domestic help for almost all chores of the household ranging from cleaning to cooking and taking care of the toddlers. Full-time (live-in) domestic workers work in the closed environment of employer's household. They are treated as family members rather than workers however; they can't rest like a family member they have to be present in the service of their employer round the clock a new term is used for these workers 'Quasi Live-ins' (Abraham, 2021). Employment of full-time (live-in) domestic worker is not new rather it has its roots back in the pre-colonial era. They were called 'servants' or 'Das'/'Dasi' in the previous times but now with the passage of time they have attained the tag of 'worker'. However, their socio-economic profile and working conditions have not been discussed meticulously due to lack of data pertaining to them. In the present paper, an attempt has made to analyze the socio-economic profile and working conditions of female full-time (live-in) domestic workers in the tricity of Chandigarh.

Growth in number of domestic workers

Domestic work is largely a women led occupation, Neetha (2009) highlights the feminization of the sector by showing an increase from 63.4 to 71.6 per cent during the period 1999-2000 and 2004-05. Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (2007) showed an increase of 222 per cent during 1999-2000. Further, Raveendran and Vanek (2020) showed an increase in the numbers of female domestic workers from 2017-18 PLFS estimating women domestic workers to be 3.4 million. They further showed a dramatic decrease in women's employment in agriculture in rural areas from 75.6 million in 2011-12 to 55.1 million in 2017-18. On the other side, non-agricultural work in the urban areas showed an increase from about 24.1 to 27.2 million in the employment of women which directly points towards the rural-urban migration of women workers and enters into the informal labour market having easy entry with no education and skills required.

Review of Literature

Kumari, S. (2015) examines the increase in demand for full-time (live-in) domestic workers due to the rise in double-income families among the middle class where domestic help is necessary either for some specific task of child/elderly care, cooking etc.

Neetha, N. (2013) presented the increasing number of female domestic servants in urban India over the 10 year period from 1999 to 2010. She substantiated her point by taking the NSSO data for 2004-05 & 2009-10 & highlighted the share of female workers as high as 68 per cent in this work category. Increase in the number of part-timers is much more than the increase in number of full-time workers as part-timers are more preferred by urban middle-class household due to lower wages than full-time workers, easy hire and fire, more choice of worker available to the employer to carry out different task within the budget of the employing household.

Sen and Sengupta (2012) analyzed the role of the institution of marriage and education in the lives of domestic workers. Marriage and education are found to be two main factors contributing to the employment of women in domestic work as they enter into domestic work through three important stages of life; Pre-marriage, post marriage and post child birth. In pre-marriage stage young girls prefer to work for full time as they do not have family obligations before marriage.

Kundu, A. (2007) studied the working and living conditions of female domestic workers of Kolkata. By analyzing the result of a primary survey it was found that full-time domestic workers are deprived of decent work conditions as they have to stay in employers' houses without any proper rest break while part-time domestic workers are somewhat better in this context. The author used Engel's ratio, which is the percentage of total consumption expenditure on food items, as a tool to assess the standard of living of sample domestic workers and concluded that standard of living of full-time domestic workers is somewhat better than that of part-time domestic workers.

Sarkar, S. (2005) analyzed the problem faced by domestic worker at their workplace lowest wages in almost all the categories of informal sector occupations, extra work burden given by the employers, reduction of wages for absence in work and sexual harassment faced by the female domestic workers are the obvious conditions at work for the domestic workers .

Research Gap

Various scholars and authors have worked on the working conditions and socio-economic conditions of part-time domestic workers. Very few studies were found analysing the working conditions of live-in domestic workers especially in Tricity of Chandigarh.

Objectives and Methodology

Objective

To study the socio-economic conditions and working conditions of Full-time (live-in) female domestic workers in the tricity of Chandigarh.

Methodology

The study is based on Primary Data collected from 107 female full-time (live-in) domestic workers during the field survey through detailed questionnaire and interviews. For the present analysis, multistage sampling techniques were used. In the first stage, three cities namely Chandigarh, SahibzadaAjit Singh Nagar (SAS Nagar) and Panchkula are selected purposively due to high growth of urbanization in these cities for the past few decades. In the second stage, the stratified random sampling technique has been used to collect data from domestic workers from various selected locations of Chandigarh, Panchkula and SAS Nagar. Survey was carried out in different sectors and locations based on the size of the houses of the employers which indirectly captured the economic class of the employers of domestic workers. A total of 107 female full-time (live-in) domestic workers were surveyed during the year 2019. Collected data was analysed using appropriate econometric techniques.

Sample Distribution

City	Number Of Full-Time Domestic Workers
Chandigarh	59 (55.14)
Panchkula	17 (15.89)
SAS Nagar	31 (28.97)
Total	107 (100.00)

Analysis and Results

Profile of Sampled Female Full-time (Live-in) Domestic Workers

To analyse the social profile of female live-in domestic workers various indicators like age, religion, caste, marital status and educational level etc. needs to be studied. The profile of the domestic worker is divided into two tables. Tables 1 consist of personal characteristics of the

domestic worker and table 2 shows the family details of the full-time (live-in) female domestic workers.

Table 1: Social profile of the female full-time (live-in) domestic workers

S. No.	Characteristics	Full-time
I. Age Profile		
1.	Mean Age	29
2.	Maximum Age	55
3.	Minimum Age	15
II. Religion		
1.	Hindu	90%
2.	Sikh	5%
3.	Muslim	3%
4.	Christian	2%
III. Caste Status		
1.	Scheduled Caste	56%
2.	OBC	8%
3.	General	36%
IV. Marital Status		
1.	Married	58%
V. Literacy Level		
1.	Literates	38%

Source: Field Survey

Having a look at the table 1 it is clear that female full-time (live-in) domestic workers in majority are illiterate have come from Hindu families and belong to Scheduled Caste groups. They enter into the labour market at a very young age (15 years in present case) through social networks from both demand as well as supply side. On the demand side, employers search their relatives and close neighbors for a hard working female domestic worker, while on the supply side these workers started coming with their mothers at a very young age so that they can learn the work and gets familiar to the employer for getting work in the future.

Table 2: Family Details of Female Full-time (Live-in) Domestic Workers

I. Main occupation of Household		
1.	Salaried Occupation	54%
2.	Daily wage Labourers	16%
3.	Self-Employed	30%
II. Family details		
1.	Head of the family	

Self	10%
Any other member	90%
2. Nuclear family	93%
3. Family size	4
4. Number of school going children	2
5. Children under 5	1
6. Earners	1
7. Dependents	2

Source: Field Survey

Full-time (live-in) female domestic workers primarily come from nuclear families of four members with two school going children on an average where the heads of the households are fathers, brothers or any other male member of the family. Salaried occupations like driver, maali, worker at tuck shops etc, dominates the head of the household’s occupations while a significant percentage of 30 per cent are involved in self-employed works like selling vegetables, electricians etc.

Table 3: Migration Status of Female Full-time (live-in) Domestic Workers

I. Migration Status	
1. Migrants	88%
II. State of Origin	
1. Uttar Pradesh	46%
2. Nepal	13%
III. Reason of Migration	
1. Employment	79%
2. Marriage	14%
3. Family	7%

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 shows the migration status of female full-time (live-in) female domestic workers, 88 per cent are migrants out of which a majority of 46 per cent is from Uttar Pradesh only and rest belongs to nearby states like Haryana, Bihar, uttrakhand etc. This informal group of workers usually comes as ‘tide- migrants’ either along with their parents in case of search of employment or with husbands after marriage to get rid of poverty and to repay the debts back in the village. Urbanisation pulls the male of the household from rural to urban areas and female of the household started entering informal labour market in order to put some extra money into the budget of the family. Also, the poor couple wants to live at the personal place of employer so that they can enjoy the benefit of improved living standards and a good environment for their children.

Living Conditions

Table 4: Living Conditions of Female Full-time (Live-in) Domestic Workers

I. Residential Status	Full-time (Live-in) Domestic Workers
1. Servant Quarter	73%
2. Room	18%
3. Kitchen/Drawing area	9%
II. Place of Servant Quarter	
1. Inside the House	16%
2. Outside the House	54%
3. Upstairs	19%
III. Sanitation facilities	
1. Separate toilet	90%
2. Same Toilet as Employer	10%
IV. Electricity	
1. Free of cost	93%
2. Have to pay bill	7%

Source: Field Survey

Table 5: Asset Ownership of Female Full-time (live-in) Domestic Workers

Asset	Full-time (Live-in)
Television	41%
Refrigerator	29%
Cooking Gas	65%
Bicycle	22%
Two-Wheeler	15%
Washing Machine	18%
Mobile Phone	86%
Land Ownership	14%

Source: Field Survey

Living in the private space of employer’s hampers the independence of full-time (live-in) domestic workers. Nearly 73 per cent got separate servant quarter by the employer with separate toilet usually in the backyard of the house or upstairs. Though majority is exempted from paying any kind of rent or electricity bill, however, 7 per cent of the sampled female full-time domestic

workers are bound to pay electricity bill while no rent is paid by them to the employer. They don't own any land at the native place to sow which pushes them towards urban settlements.

Keeping in mind the social profile of full-time (live-in) female domestic workers the next section is devoted to problems faced by these workers as their workplace is behind the closed doors of employer's household. They are at the service of their masters all the time. They are termed as workers but not treated as such they have to be present to render their services round the clock.

Working conditions

Though the minimum hours of works are fixed for almost all categories of workers but the female full-time (live-in) domestic workers live outside the purview of fixed working hours. They are not entitled for paid leaves even in case of emergency they face a wage-cut in their monthly earnings (28%). They are paid in the combination of 'cash' and 'kind' which reduces their bargain power though number of countries has already fixed a percentage of minimum wage rate upto which a domestic worker could be paid in kind as a part of total payments. However, India is yet to formalize this minimum percentage. Few barter cash wages for decent accommodation. Although only 2 per cent of the total faced a deduction in monthly earnings in order to compensate loss to the employer in terms of broken crockery or spoiled clothes, however, they get scolded by the employer. They are not supposed to use the same toilet as of the employer (86%), not allowed to drink in the same glass (56%), not allowed to talk to the neighbors (28%) and they are kept locked in the house (34%) all the day doing household chores but not able to stroll outside with their own wish.

Table 6: Pay Deductions of Female Full-time (Live-in) Domestic Workers

Indicators	Percentage
Deduction in wages in lieu of holidays	28%
Deduction in 'cash' wages for paying in 'kind'	8%
Wages are deducted to compensate breaking crockery etc.	2%

Source: Field Survey

Table 7: Ill-treatment and Untouchability at workplace

Indicators	Percentage
Toilet facilities at workplace	
• Allowed to use same toilets	42%
• Have separate toilets	86%
Not allowed to use the same utensils from the employer's kitchen	56%
Physically/mentally/verbally/sexually abused by the employer	16%
Asked by the employer about their religion and caste at the time of hiring	17%
Not allowed to talk to any stranger or neighbor	28%
Keep her locked in the house	34%

Source: Field Survey

Perks and Benefits at Workplace

Working in the formal sector of the economy may give bonus and other perks like hike in pay every year or a trip or a child care allowance to the work, working in the informal sector only gives stale fruits and vegetables by the employer (95%), or may give a chance to the worker to provide a replacement worker when they go to their native places (4%) so that they can their work back when they return from their native places. Nearly 30 per cent get medical help from their employer in case of small illness and accident at workplace, 85 per cent are allowed to use home appliances to get their work easy like chopper to cut vegetables, grinder etc while rest are very particular and asked the worker to do all the work by hand.

Table 8: Perks given by the employer at the workplace

Indicators	Percentage
Get food from the employer's kitchen	46%
Get vegetables/fruits/milk from the employer's kitchen	95%
Get gifts at festivals	88%
Get fixed holidays per month without deductions	14%

Get holidays when go somewhere outside	37%
Get fixed rest hours	2%
Taken to shopping malls and movies by employers	10%
Give replacement worker when go to native place	4%
Get paid when go to native place	7%
Allowed to use home appliances to make work easier	85%
Allowed to bring their children to workplace	23%

Source: Field Survey

Table 9: Personal help and mutual trust by the employer

Indicators	Percentage
Get medical help from their employer	30%
Family members are ever got employment with the help of employer by the employer	7%
Given financial assistance for marriage/house construction or any other purpose by the employer	23%
Employers pay for tuition or books of the children	7%
Given fridge/TV etc., by the employer	40%
Keep keys with her when the employer goes outside	14%

Source: Field Survey

With the passage of time, live-in domestic workers start sharing a cordial relationship with their employers, Sen (2013) called it “*Pragmatic Intimacy*” which renders the worker some material gains from the employer and additional work with utmost sincerity to the employer. This relation of mutual affection and dependence is also captured during the field survey when a full-time live-in domestic worker aged 55 years refused to talk about her own family and said that the employer and her children are her real family. She takes care of the children of the family like her own, they call her “Dadi” instead of “aunty”, and she devotes her full day to these children without taking care of her own sleep time or off days. Nearly 14 per cent kept their keys with

domestic workers and showed a sense of mutual trust and affection by helping the worker whenever need arises.

Average Monthly Earnings

Full-time domestic workers are either very young who are employed by the employer in a very young age to either take care of their children or to help other domestic workers. They are considered to be easy to adjust in the employer’s environment and can be employed at a lower monthly earnings which can be seen from table 10, maximum earnings are given to the worker lying in the age group of 55 years and above (Rs. 15000 pm) followed by the age group of 45 to 55 years (Rs. 7772). After a long period of employment, workers and employers started sharing a mutual relationship of trust which increases their income. As per ILO estimates, “nearly 57 per cent of domestic worker have no legal limits to their normal weekly hours and 44.9 per cent are not entitled to any weekly rest as well”. Similar findings have been presented by the field survey, 48.60 percent of female domestic workers work for more than 12 hours in a day and earn just Rs. 6374 in return. Their earnings are not in accordance with the time spent at workplace.

Number of employer’s family members doesn’t affect the earnings of full-time (live-in) domestic workers. They are paid lump sum amount as per the locality rate to some extent and bargaining power of the worker which obviously depend upon the number of members of employer’s family.

Table 10: Average Monthly Earnings of Full-time (Live-in) domestic workers

S. No.	Characteristics	Average Monthly Earnings (Rs)
I.	Age (years)	
	15-25	5684
	25-35	6067
	35-45	6796
	45-55	7772
	55 and above	15000
II.	Employer’s Family Members	
	Single Employer	4962
	2-6	6517
	Above 6	7056
III.	Number of working hours	
	6-9	6386
	9-12	6636
	More than 12	6201
IV.	Size of the household	

9-12 Marla Household	5543
Govt. accommodations/flats	5857
Kanal Houses	6669
V. Work Experience (years)	
Less than 5	5418
5-10	6757
10 and above	7826
VI. Major Tasks performed	
All Household work	6391
Kitchen work	6818
Care work	5404
Supervising others and cooking task	7875
Average Monthly Earnings	6374

Source: Field Survey

The most important variable in determining the monthly earnings of a full-time (live-in) female domestic worker is size of the household, bigger the house in terms of area which is measured in terms of *Marlas* in the present study, larger will be the earnings of the domestic worker from that household. It is obvious because large houses are located in posh areas of the city with rich employers giving better remunerations than houses located in less costly sectors /areas. As can be seen from table 10, Kanal houses renders maximum (Rs. 6669) to full-time (live-in) domestic workers with a decent living place which also has a high opportunity cost in terms of rent. Work experience doesn't matter in blue collar jobs (Sharma, 2016). Jobs where physical stamina matters, experience in terms of years at workplace doesn't impact the earnings much. However, in case of live-in domestic workers experience does matter in the cases when they work for long period of time for the same employer because of trust and indispensable services given by them. Even if they shift the employer, they get higher earnings due to a reputation built up of having good work experience of live-in domestic service. As can be seen from the table, domestic worker having an experience of more than 10 years earns the maximum i.e. Rs. 7826 here the experience is counted as the total number of years in live-in domestic service not in the single household.

Another important variable in determining the monthly earnings of female full-time (live-in) domestic worker is the *Major Tasks* performed by them. Supervision task accompanied by cooking work is paid highest among the pool of other workers due to two reasons. First, supervision task is usually given to trustworthy old domestic worker only and second, cooking is considered as the task of a trained domestic worker only which renders them handsome money.

Table 11: Average Monthly Household Income, Per capita income and Share of full-time domestic worker’s income in total household income

	Income (Rs.)
Average Monthly total Household income	11589
Average monthly per capita household income	
Average monthly income of full-time (live-in) female domestic workers	6374
Contribution of Full-time domestic workers in total household income	55%

Source: Field Survey

Full-time (live-in) domestic workers run their families in the meager average household income of Rs. 11589 only out of which the accommodation is earned by the female domestic worker in those cases where domestic workers live with their families in servant quarter (Quasi Live-in) along with monthly contribution of Rs. 6374 which is almost 55 per cent of the total household income. The opportunity cost of living in a rented accommodation or in *jhuggi-jhop*diststructures are also added up in the total earnings of full-time (live-in) female domestic workers.

Table 12: Factors Affecting Average Monthly Earnings of Full-time (live-in) Domestic Workers; Multivariate Model

[Dependent Variable: Average monthly Earnings of Full-time (live-in) Female Domestic Workers(Rs.)

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable in Natural Form	Dependent Variable in Log Form
Age	(-)364.57 (2.027)**	(-)0.06 (2.525)**
Age ²	6.83 (2.482)**	0.001 (3.029)*
Type of Family (Dummy): Nuclear=1 Joint=0	(-)2823.77 (3.630)*	(-)0.21 (1.823)***
Type of Work (Dummy 1): Cooking=1 Other=0	29.66 (0.046)	(-)0.12 (1.295)

Type of Work (Dummy 2): Care work=1 Other=0	(-)1553.99 (1.549)	(-)0.32 (2.124)
Presence of other domestic workers (Dummy): Yes=1 No=0	1359.09 (1.953)	0.31 (2.964)**
Work Experience	54.28 (0.579)***	0.00 (0.344)*
Intercept	12441.021	9.559
F values	4.781	4.267
R ²	0.253	0.232
Adj. R ²	0.200	0.177

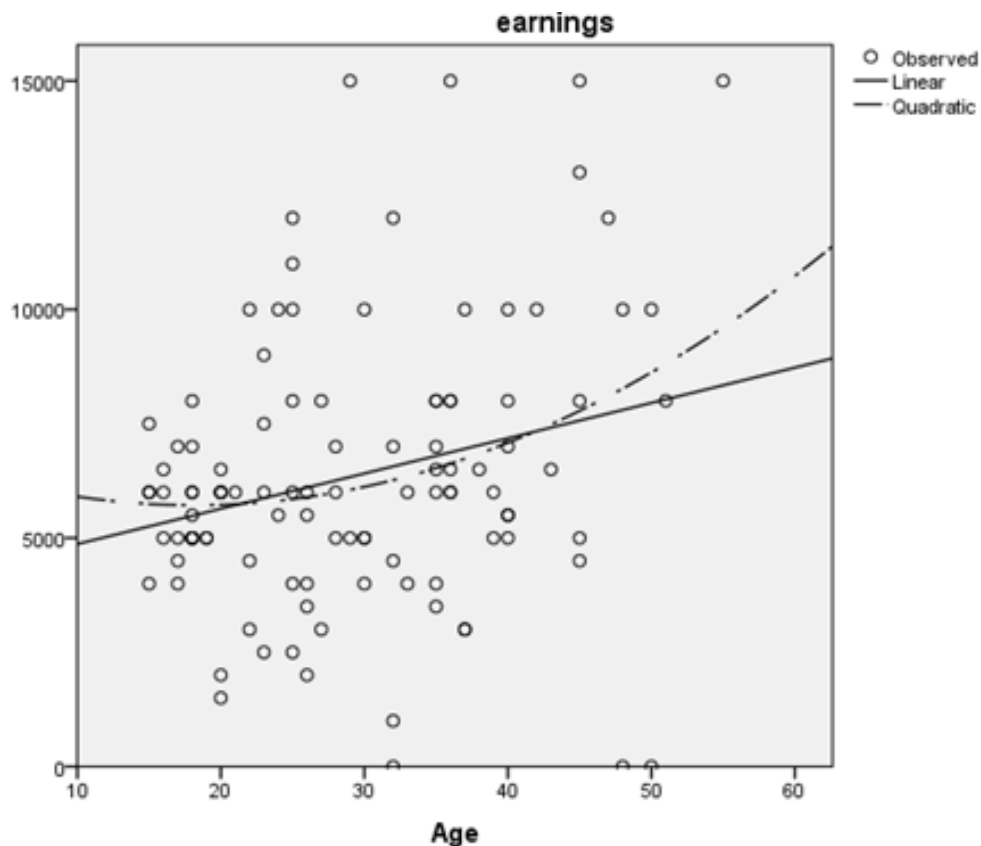
Note: Significance level at *1%, **5% and ***10 per cent

Source: Author’s Calculations

Multivariate analysis using various significant explanatory variables has been done and results are presented in the table 12. The signs of the explanatory variables are in accordance with common sense theoretical viewpoints. Also, the coefficients are statistically significant, due to which the model is considered best fit for the present data and explanatory variables to explain the variations in the average monthly earnings of full-time live-in domestic workers. Age and Age² are significant in both equations, unlike the case of part-time domestic workers. The relationship between age and earnings was found to be non-linear but not an ‘inverted U-shaped’; rather ‘, U shaped’ curve is found during the curve estimation.

Age-Earnings Relationship of Full-time (live-in) female domestic workers

The ‘U-shaped’ relationship showed that there is a negative relationship between age and earnings, i.e. in the starting years of age, the full-time live-in domestic workers earn a declining income and then after reaching a minimum level, their earnings start increasing, which might be due to establishment of cordial relationship between employer and her. However, the decline in the previous years might be due to the young age of the female domestic worker which forces her to work even at lower earnings. Also, in the early years female full-time (live-in) domestic workers feel good for having a decent place for living along with free electricity and other amenities hence demand for a higher payments is not made by the worker. However, with the passage of time the servant quarter remains constantly available for them which make them ask for increase in cash payments only.



Conclusions

To conclude, the socio-economic conditions of the female full-time (live-in) domestic workers are not in accordance with the minimum standards of workers. They live in the vulnerable conditions with lower earnings and high work pressure, long working hours and intermingling of care and household work of their own households and that of employers. Lack of residential facilities to the migrant domestic workers attracts them to live in the controlled conditions of employer. They lack paid leaves, maternity care benefits and other bonuses which are meant for formal workers. They are paid in the combination of cash and kind for which

Suggestions and Policy Implications

The findings of the study highlights the need of fixation of percentage up to which a domestic worker can be paid in kind. The need of the hour is to bring these workers into the umbrella of formal sector rules and regulations. The Government should bridge the gap between affluent (the employer) who have large houses to accommodate these workers on their own terms and conditions and poor migrants who don't have any decent living facilities which forces them to live in the private spaces of employer.

Limitation of the Study

The study lacks the employer's perspective on the needs and duties of full-time (live-in) domestic workers in isolation. Also, the live-in domestic workers were interviewed mostly in the presence of their employer's which somehow affect the results especially the cases of exploitation and ill-treatment couldn't be captured as such.

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