



A STUDY ON WORK-LIFE QUALITY OF FEMALE DOMESTIC WORKERS

Dr.Seema Kouser

Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Government First Grade College , Halagur, Mandya District

Abstract:

Domestic workers are regarded as an important source of income for millions of women worldwide. This sector has existed for centuries, as evidenced by the histories of slavery, colonialism, and other forms of servitude. In today's society, the contribution of domestic work is vital for the economy. They have become increasingly in demand around the world in recent decades. Domestic workers are not normally considered workers, and their working conditions remain unregulated. Their employment situation is considered outside the general framework of existing employment laws. This is mainly because most of the work done is generally invisible. Women domestic workers account for a large part of India's unorganized labor force. Though men do this type of work, there is a trend toward the feminization of domestic work. People from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are primarily involved in this work. The increase in the number of domestic workers in India is attributed to an increase in affluent sections' per capita income, increased female labor participation, the disintegration of joint families, and an increase in life expectancy with an increase in ill health levels. Therefore, their daily struggle for survival has yet to capture the attention of the government. Thus, this study is entitled "A Study on Work-Life Quality of Female Domestic Workers." This helps to understand the major factors responsible for the low economic status of women domestic workers. The study will also highlight the issues and problems of these women domestic workers and various measures that can be taken for the welfare of this sector.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life, Women, and Domestic Workers.

Introduction

The quality of work life refers to the overall well-being of employees in the workplace, including their physical, mental, and emotional health, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and personal growth opportunities. It encompasses all aspects of an individual's work experience, including their relationships with colleagues, job security, compensation, working conditions, and career development. A positive quality of work life is essential for employee motivation, engagement, and retention. It has been shown to increase productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being, leading to better mental and physical health outcomes. Women workers in the informal sector belong to India's most vulnerable working segments of society. They are from a socially and economically disadvantaged group. Legal and political status is almost amorphous, limiting their ability to advocate for rights. Domestic work is one of the most common occupations for women in India, and domestic services are quickly becoming the largest segment of female employment in the country's service sector. However, estimating the exact number of domestic workers is difficult because many of these workers are frequently not captured exclusively by existing macro-data sources. The majority of the women are economically disadvantaged members of society who have migrated from rural to urban areas. Domestic workers are not typically regarded as employees, and their working conditions are unregulated. Their employment situation is deemed incompatible with the general framework of existing labor laws. This is because the majority of their work is generally invisible. This study focuses on working women in the domestic sector, taking domestic women workers in Kerala as a case study. The study is based on primary data collected through interview methods in different parts of Kerala.



Statement of the Problem

Domestic workers include individuals who provide services such as cleaning, cooking, child-rearing, and elder care to households. Women are disproportionately represented in this type of work, and they often face multiple challenges, including low wages, long working hours, a lack of job security, social isolation, and little opportunity for career advancement. So this study is entitled "Quality of Work Life Among Female Domestic Workers.". This helps to understand the major factors responsible for the low economic status of women domestic workers. The study will also highlight the issues and problems of these women domestic workers and various measures that can be taken for the welfare of this sector.

Objectives of Study

1. To examine the demographic characteristics that affects the quality of work life among domestic female workers.
2. To examine the problems faced by domestic women workers at home and place of work.
3. To highlight the challenges faced by domestic women workers in managing family matters.
4. To understand the socio-economic condition of domestic female workers.
5. To examine whether female domestic workers are uniformly distributed over different salary groups.

Hypothesis

To pursue the proposed study, the following hypotheses are framed, and their validity is tested through research techniques:

Ho: Female domestic workers are uniformly distributed over different salary groups.

Data Sources and Methodology

The research methodology used for the research is a descriptive study. Since the majority are not well educated, the study is based mainly on primary data, which has been collected through an interview schedule. An in-depth discussion was held with women domestic workers in Karnataka. Information was gathered through oral responses in the field of the study. By using convenient sampling, the data was collected from a sample of 100 women domestic workers working in different parts of Kerala, and a percentage analysis was done. The collected data are classified into different categories and analyzed using statistical tools.

Data Analysis and Interpretations

In this paper, the data was collected using the schedule method, and the respondent's interpretation is given below:

Demographic Factors:

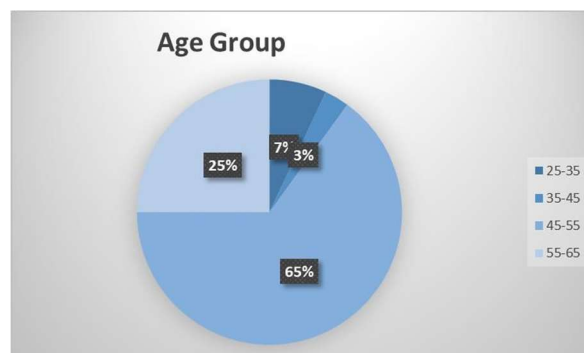


Figure1: Age group of women Domestic workers



Interpretation: The majority of the female workforce employed as domestic workers belonged to the age group of 45–60. This points out that increased family responsibilities have made women take up jobs as domestic help. Females in their younger generations have a higher preference for jobs such as sales girls, in small offices, typing jobs, and tailoring, and soon they prefer higher status and glamor over manual labor.

Educational Qualification	Frequency
Primary	78
Upper Primary	15
Others	7
Total	100

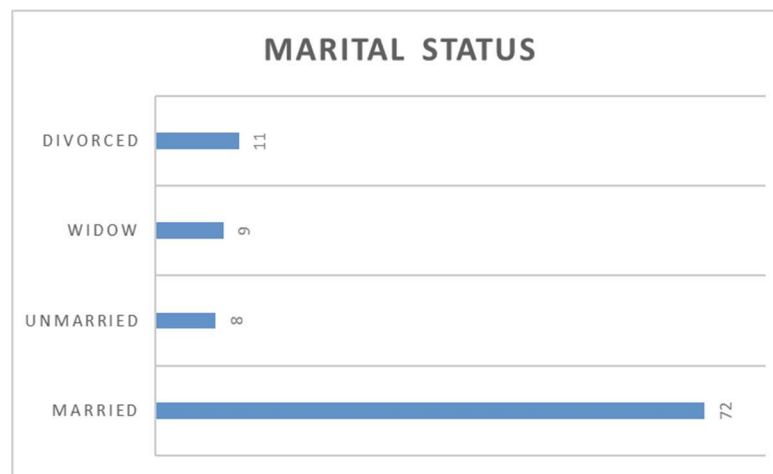


Figure 2: Marital status of women Domestic workers

Interpretation: Seventy-two percent of respondents are married, nine percent are widows, and eleven percent are divorced. The educational qualifications indicate that many of these female workers have low levels of education. This has prevented them from going for other productive occupations.

Nature of Work:

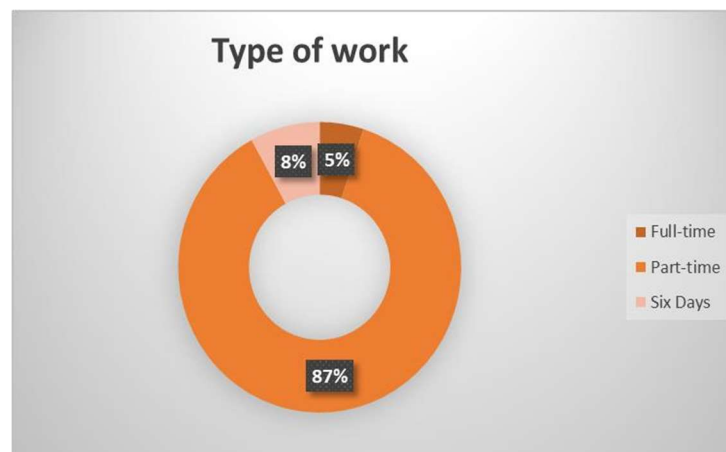


Figure 3: Type of work of women Domestic workers



Interpretation: Five percent work full-time in one household. Eighty-seven percent work part time, on average for 5–8 hours per week. Though there is a good demand for these workers, they prefer to work only six days a week due to personal and health problems. Only eight percent of people work seven days a week. In times of emergencies, at festivals, or during other occasions in the employer's family, the workers work overtime with additional pay.

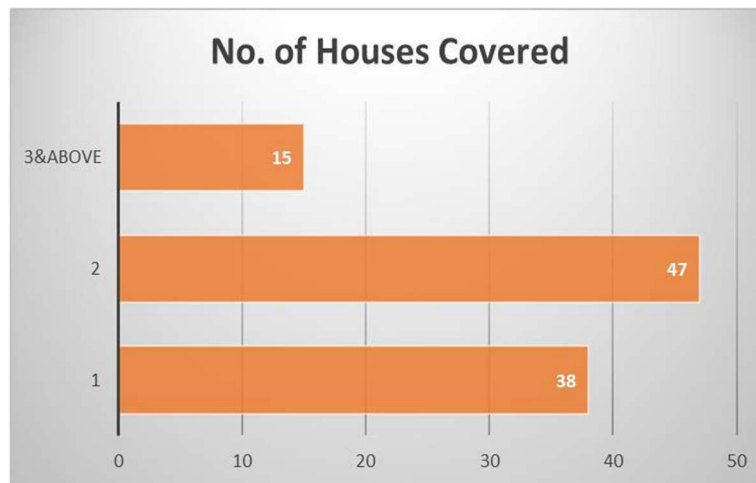


Figure 4: Number of houses covered weekly by Domestic workers

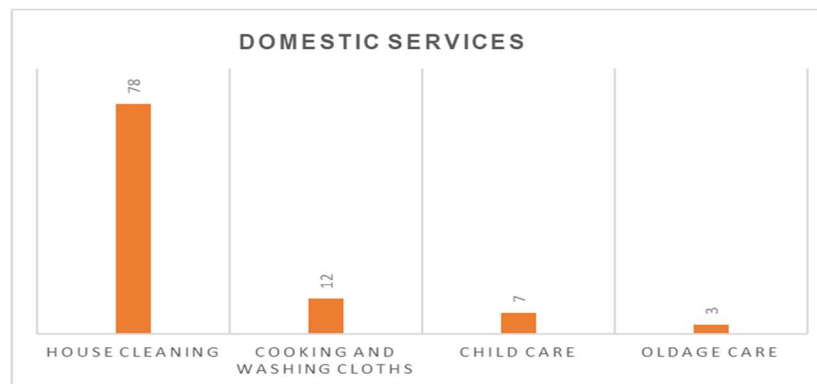


Figure 5: Domestic Services of Female Domestic Workers

Interpretation: The domestic workforce is mainly engaged in cleaning jobs, such as sweeping and mopping the floor, cleaning the toilets, and washing utensils. Seventy-eight percent are engaged in the job. Twelve percent are involved in cooking and cleaning. Seven percent take care of children. Three percent take care of the elderly along with the maintenance of the house.

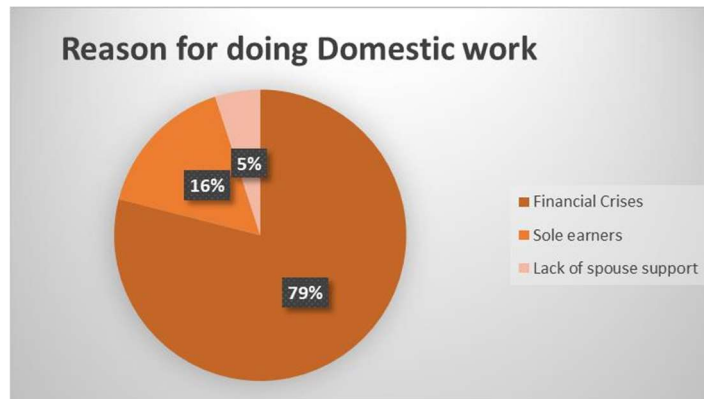


Figure 6: Reason for doing domestic work

Interpretation: Seventy-nine percent of the respondents have pointed to finance as the main reason for working. Sixteen percent of them are sole earners because their husband is sick, they are widows, or they are separated. Five percent indicate that their husbands do not contribute anything, though they work. The respondents have opted for this job for its high wages compared to other occupations with limited skills. Eighty percent have not registered with any agency for employment. They are employed mainly through acquaintance with the households or through information from friends, neighbors, or relatives. They feel that, through agencies, they cannot stick to one household and have to pay commission to the agency.



Figure 7: Traveling Distance from Home to Workplace

Interpretation: Forty-eight percent of the respondents travel between 1 and 5 km for work. Twenty percent travel between 5 and 10 kilometers for work, and fifteen percent travel between 10 and 20 kilometers. Ten percent of respondents work close to their homes, and the majority travel by bus and rely on individual or shared automobiles to get to work.

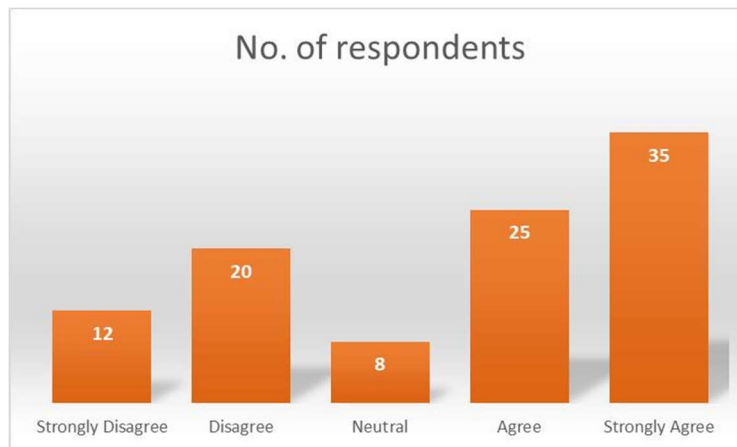


Figure 8: Health issues affect work and family life.

Interpretation: The long working hours and physical demands of domestic work can also hurt women's health and well-being. Many of them work for several households, which can result in physical and mental exhaustion and a lack of time for leisure and personal development. Most workers do not have access to adequate healthcare or time off for rest and recovery.

Socio-Economic Development:

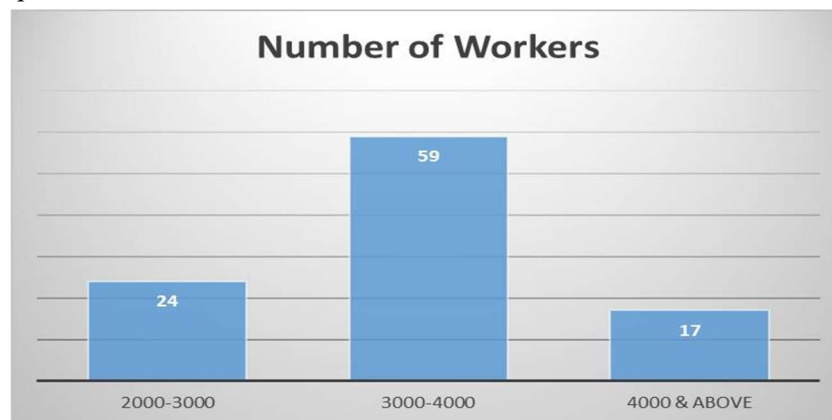


Figure 9: Health issues affect work and family life.

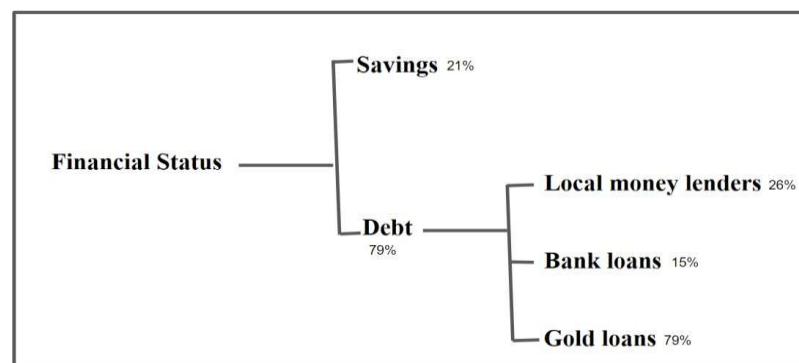


Figure 10: Financial Status of Women Domestic Workers



Interpretation: Domestic workers in Kerala are a privileged lot, with daily wages ranging from Rs 300 to Rs 1500. A person who works in four households per week earns Rs 800 on average. The rates vary depending on the area, type of work, duration, need, time, and so on. Female workers earn enough to support their families. Ninety-eight percent say they receive special benefits in cash and in-kind during family festivals or other occasions.

Though twenty-one percent save, seventy-nine percent point out they have debts. Twenty-six percent of debts are incurred by local money lenders or other unorganized sources. Only fifteen percent of people have bank loans, while twenty-eight have gold loans. Debts were primarily incurred for child marriage, child education, house repair, and treatment of family members. They frequently end up paying a significant amount of interest to the money lenders. Loans are frequently obtained after mortgaging the home in which they reside. Most of them indicate that they have the freedom to borrow from their employers and repay in installments or pay by working freely.

Income in Rs per Month	Financial Debt
2000-3000	24
3000-4000	52
4000 & Above	3

Table 1: Monthly wages and the number of workers having financial debt Interpretation: Since $r = -0.42$, there exists a moderately negative correlation between income and financial debt taken on by workers. That is, low-salaried workers tend to take on more financial debt to meet their financial burden.

Testing of Hypothesis:

Chi-square test of goodness of fit for the income distribution of women domestic workers: H_0 : Female domestic workers are uniformly distributed over different salary groups.

Income in Rs per Month	No. of Workers
2000-3000	24
3000-4000	59
4000 & Above	17

Table 2: Income Distribution of women Domestic workers

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i = 30.38$$

Critical Value of $\chi^2 = 6.6$ at the 1% level of significance and d.f. 1.

Here, χ^2 is greater than the Critical Value of χ^2 . So we conclude that the income distribution of women domestic workers is not uniformly distributed over different salary groups.

Overall Findings

Domestic workers' social relationships are strong. They actively participate in family ceremonies and socio-cultural activities in their neighborhood. They interact with other fellow workers in the locality and try for better job prospects at other locations. Seventy percent are proud of their jobs, and they point out that they have the support of their husbands and relatives in their activities. Eighty-three percent are members of Kudumbasree, a social and economic initiative of Kerala, and the remaining are members of other local self-help groups. None of them are members of any trade unions.



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Every respondent had a reason for continuing to work in this industry, with eighty-two percent stating that they are willing to work as long as their health allows. Twelve percent would rather work until their debts are paid off and they are settled in life. Only four percent have indicated a preference for different jobs. Two percent have not yet decided on their future course of action. The respondents dislike the idea of leaving their families and moving to remote areas; it would provide them with more income and better living conditions. Even though they are engaged in domestic work, the workers hope for a better future for their children, expecting them to have a safe future and to work in other jobs, even in the unorganized sector, with more dignity, better working conditions, and less manual labor. But still, the domestic sector is often undervalued and stigmatized, which can affect the self-esteem and dignity of women working in this sector. Moreover, the gendered division of labor in households and society reinforces the idea that domestic work is women's responsibility, leading to the devaluation of this work.

Suggestions and Conclusions

Studies have shown that several factors affect the QWL of household servants, including their pay, working hours, job security, working conditions, social support, and training opportunities. Employers can improve the QWL of their household servants by implementing policies and practices that address these factors, such as providing fair compensation, flexible working hours, safe working conditions, and opportunities for skill development and advancement. Employers can also create a supportive work environment that fosters good communication, mutual respect, and recognition of the workers' contributions.

In addition, government regulations and labor laws can play a crucial role in improving the QWL of household servants. Governments can enforce minimum wage standards, regulate working hours, and establish occupational safety and health regulations to protect the rights and well-being of household servants.

Finally, incorporating QWL among domestic workers is critical to improving their working conditions and overall well-being. Employers and policymakers should take concrete steps to address the factors that affect the QWL of household servants to ensure that they have a dignified and fulfilling work experience. Raising awareness about the rights and entitlements of domestic workers and promoting gender equality in households and society are essential steps towards improving the quality of the work lives of women domestic workers in Kerala.

Future Scope of Study

There is scope for researching on a wider basis. It must focus on a wider sample to get more generalized results. Moreover, it must be directed at understanding individual differences so that employee-specific initiatives to improve work-life balance can be initiated by governments. The size of the sample used to determine the dimensions of the scale is small due to a lack of time.

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