

**IMPACT OF COVID - 19 PANDEMIC: WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS\***

BY

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**Abstract**

Domestic work was an occupation which was gaining a lot of significance before COVID-19 pandemic, but this occupation faced a severe setback with the arrival of COVID-19 pandemic. Women have successfully dominated this occupation by stepping out of their homes and kitchens. But this has not delivered an escape to women as they have now been trapped in the kitchen of the wealthy people. It has been observed that the women in urban areas are successfully dominating the public-private dichotomy. This has highlighted great demand for domestic workers. The objective of the study is to bring in light the situation of poverty, exploitation, health hazards and social exclusion faced by domestic women workers which would enable the NGO's, GO's to frame new policies and plans for supporting these women domestic workers at state and national level. The aim of the research is to deliver a message to transform the point of view of wealthy people about the domestic workers. They should stop recognizing this unorganized sector jobs as less productive, because if these domestic workers from unorganized sectors stop reporting to work it would not be possible for the people working in organized sectors to perform their jobs efficiently and regularly. The research paper is an attempt to pivot lens on the pathetic situation and exploitation faced by domestic women workers due to COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Domestic, Lockdown, Women Workers.

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Received 21 October 2021, Accepted 31 October 2021, Published 10 November 2021

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**1. Introduction:**

In 2020, World Health Organization declared the disease Covid-19 as a pandemic posing a challenge to public health across the globe. This led to adverse global economy due to complete or partial lockdown at global level. This scenario was just the beginning of the pathetic impact on the social and economic dysfunction of the world population. The GDP of the country was declining due to traces of unemployment. This pandemic adversely afflicted the livelihood of people across the globe. Employment security in India, especially those were employed in the informal sector were majorly

affected. The employees in unorganized sector bawled to quench their basic necessities. They were constantly facing the ultimatum of infection. Dissimilar groups of workers were facing symmetric curtailment in terms of livelihood and safety. From among these groups the group of women domestic workers, due to social distancing and lockdown restrictions faced unemployment and financial diffidence. The relief mechanisms of the country were inappropriately designed, which excluded the women domestic workers and so they remained outside the picture in the country. They were subjected to the highest level of vulnerability and exploitation during pandemic. The devaluation of domestic workers was evident during the pandemic. The employment conditions still prevail to be uncertain and unsafe.

### **1.1. Women Domestic Workers In Ulhasnagar Region, Thane.**

Ulhasnagar region situated in Thane district has majority Sindhi population. The women domestic workers from here came across many dissonances and issues during the pandemic. Many of them were permanently terminated from their work. Few of them were given refreshments from their employers earlier which were denied due to pandemic. This also affected their health adversely. The employers reduced their wages without consent as they were aware of their socio-economic adversities due to pandemic. The women domestic workers were also exploited financially by their employers. Many of the families of women domestic workers were unable to meet one square meal.

Many women domestic workers are migrants so they don't have ration cards. This took away all their rights to access government support extended to unorganized sector during COVID 19 pandemic. But still Ulhasnagar region is known for its religious beliefs, charity, and humanity. During this tough crisis when domestic workers were starving and unable to meet their basic necessities, seva undertaken by the financially strong people supported this ignorant and exploited stock. Many Gurudwaras, temples, ashrams started with langars. Distribution of refreshments was carried out 24\*7 at "Thairasingh Darbar" among women domestic workers who found difficult to meet a single square during the day. They also distributed groceries among them. Some also offered medicines to needy, as well as assisted financially to BPL women domestic workers.

Due to termination from jobs the women domestic workers who were single parents could not pay monthly rents and were left homeless. They were given shelter at religious places with their kids. Clothes were distributed among those needed. The children of homegrown workers were given online coaching under the roof of "Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission" in Ulhasnagar.

## **2. Review Of Literature:**

### **1. Dithhi Bhattacharya, Meghna Sukumar and Mohan Mani, 2016, Living on the Margins: A Study of Domestic Workers in Chennai, Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC), Centre for Workers' Management.**

This study is under taken to review the progressions in homegrown workers because of the change in class relations and family rebuilding in India. It additionally dives into the rank elements and the revamping of private settlements in metropolitan regions that today characterize how homegrown specialists are seen in the public eye. It consequently opens up the conversation on the best way to

coordinate homegrown laborers in the changed financial and social environment. The review is situated in Chennai and draws on the experience of getting sorted out homegrown specialists of the Penn Thozhilalar Sangam.

2. B. S. Sumalatha , Lekha D. Bhat and K. P. Chitra, 2021, Impact of Covid-19 on Informal Sector: A Study of Women Domestic Workers in India, The Indian Economic Journal (IEJ), Volume 69, Issue 3, page: 441-461

The study reveals that least coordination and lack of institutional help was offered to women domestic workers during the pandemic. The research method used was primary through telephonic meetings with 260 homegrown laborers from three urban areas, in particular Delhi, Mumbai and Kochi. In the outcomes, far and wide employment cutback decreased pay and expanded responsibilities of women domestic workers. Around 57% of women domestic workers faced shame and separation at working environment, and 40% worked with practically no security measures. Frequency of abusive behavior at home, expanded work trouble at home, issues in admittance to medical services, and so on, were accounted for. The review brings up the critical need to have a public level strategy and state support explicitly focusing on ladies homegrown laborers.

**3. Dr. Jyotsnamayee Nanda, 2020, Impact of Lockdown for COVID-19 on Women domestic workers: Impact of Lockdown for COVID-19 on Women domestic workers: A Case Study from Cuttack City, Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies (NCCDS).**

The research paper explored that women domestic workers were regarded casual and untalented with next to no sacred certifications. They give monetary security to the socio-monetarily rich families. However, because of lockdown they were confronting fear. The researcher attempts to discover the effect of lockdown forced because of COVID-19 pandemic covering 100 women domestic workers as respondents from Cuttack city of Odisha. He attempts to highlight an ideal opportunity to enlist a reasonable arrangement so that in future if such a circumstance like lockdown emerges they won't battle with appetite and uneasiness.

**4. Antara Rai Chowdhury, Gautam Bhan, Kinjal Sampat, 2020, Impact of COVID-19 and lockdowns on domestic workers: First report, Rajasthan Mahila Kaamgaar Union (RMKU) and the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS).**

The survey was an attempt to examine the severe impact of Covid-19 pandemic on domestic workers based on parameters like earnings, income, changes in employment status, savings, dues and debts. A comparative study was used for data analysis. The research showed decline in the income of domestic workers, preceded by job loss and health advisories on isolation which made access to the place of work unviable. They met their basic necessities by ending up their savings further leading to borrowings. The paper also pivots lens on State sponsored schemes under PMGKY that benefited every women worker.

**5. Rufina Augustine, Dr. Rupesh Kumar Singh, 2016, Condition & Problems of Women domestic workers, Journal of Sociology and Social Work (JSSW), Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 110-117.**

This review featured the "Condition and issues of female homegrown laborers" in India through descriptive framework of research. The study reveals that the association of wedded females in homegrown works was more than other classes like widow, separated and unmarried. The present review highlights a positive reform of a females role as majority of the respondents were the bread workers and were in any event, heading the family. Study additionally shows that females of underneath neediness line (BPL) families are more occupied with homegrown works.

**2.1 Objective Of Study:**

1. To analyze the problems faced by women domestic workers of Ulhasnagar region during Covid-19 pandemic.
2. To Study the Socio- Economic background of the women domestic workers from Ulhasnagar region.
3. To examine the degree of support from government organizations for the welfare of women domestic workers from Ulhasnagar region during Covid-19 pandemic.
4. To find out the assistance provided from economically rich people from Ulhasnagar region to women domestic workers for meeting their basic necessities during Covid-19 pandemic.

**3. Research Methodology:**

To attain the research objective data was substantiated through both primary and secondary sources. Since the women domestic workers belong to illiterate section of the society in depth structured interviews were conducted. The respondent size was 100 in count from Ulhasnagar region, Thane due to time constraint. They were also assured that the data collected through interviews shall remain confidential. Secondary sources of data like government records, already published journals, newspapers etc are used for extracting data. The data was collected in III parts using purposive sampling method. Besides the structured interviews, data was also extracted from women domestic workers through group discussions and case study.

**4. Result And Discussion:**

This study is an attempt to explore the degree of exploitation and hardships faced by the domestic women workers from Ulhasnagar region, Thane. The research design handed down is Descriptive in nature and Purposive sampling method is executed to interview 100 respondents with the aid of structured interviews.

**4.1 Findings:**

**1. Termination Of Employment:**

One female domestic worker named Zenab Abdulgani Shaikh reported:

When I heard about the disease, I was shocked. The next day I reported at work as usual my employer enquired about my family as to know about their well being. After I was done with my daily chores

there while I was leaving he handed over me Rs/- 1000 and told me there was no need for me to report to work until everything turned out to be normal. Not only this, the employer also informed the other houses where I worked about this. Others also followed the same pattern. I was left jobless.

## **2. Uncompensated Labour:**

Kamalbai Balerao a female domestic worker said:

When complete lockdown started my employer told me there would be horizontal expansion of my duties now, since the males of the family were home 24\*7. When I asked for extra pay I was threatened to discontinue. My husband used to work in logistical company near Bhiwandi, he had already lost his job due to COVID 19 pandemic. I was the only person who was responsible for generating square meals for family. So if I leave this work how will I feed my children? I also borrowed Rs 10,000/- for meeting our basic needs during that time.

## **3. No Work No Pay:**

Malanbai Ahale reported:

My husband has undergone heart surgery, he doesn't keep well. I am forced to shoulder financial responsibilities of my family. I have a joint family with 9 people. I had 8 houses to report for performing their chores. My monthly income was Rs 7000/-. As soon I heard about the virus I was scared, complete lockdown was a curse for me. I had no money to buy medicines for my husband in the initial months of lockdown. I had to borrow Rs. 5000/- for my husband medication at high rate of interest.

## **4. Salary Cuts:**

Sunita Suresh Gade shared:

My husband is a dabbawala with part time and delivered flowers in Bail bazaar situated in Kalyan. I was working in three families since 7 years. As soon I heard about this virus I was in anxiety and fear. Since my husband had already lost his job I was the only bread earner in the family. Generally my two leaves in the month are paid ones. But during pandemic I was clearly instructed by my employer no paid leaves will be granted and hence forth even if I wish to continue my salary would be sub sized.

## **5: Health Risks:**

Abeda Khan shared her experience:

I was scared to report to work. Out of five houses, 3 employers denied work and the remaining two employers daily instructed me to get groceries, fruits, vegetables for them. This was not a part of my chores, but still I was forced to practice on their behalf. Being a domestic female worker my socio-economic justice was thrashed during this pandemic. My employers were under threat of being infected by virus if they step out of their comfort zone, but my life and health was at stake each day.

#### 4.2 Conclusion:

The research highlights women domestic workers belong to uneducated family backgrounds. Majority of them were married and continued to contribute their services during COVID 19 pandemic despite of being paid ancillary wages even though they worked for excessive hours because of the jobless males in the family. Many of them stood up as front line workers in COVID centers for earning their daily bread as their employers terminated them from work. Some were forced to report to work with no sufficient safety measures especially in those houses where their employers were senior citizens. The study is an attempt to examine the degree of women empowerment as majority of the women domestic workers were single bread earners during COVID 19 pandemic. Women domestic workers from Ulhasnagar region were exposed to fear of contracting the virus. Few women domestic workers lost their loved ones due to lack of financial and medical assistance. For improving the socio-economic conditions of women domestic workers it is important for the society as a whole to realize and appreciate their efforts. The government should take initiatives to provide social security to this bunch of stake to avoid them for facing exploitation and vulnerability in future.

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