

Lived experiences of Domestic Workers of Kolkata

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Abstract:

Globalisation has resulted in the working population to have lesser means, education and skills and fewer productive opportunities resulting in their range of employment options to be brutally limited. Majority of the approximately 260.3 million people living below poverty work in the unorganised sectors now being excluded from the traditional covers. Among them, the domestic workers, specifically, in the present day forms an important part of the unorganised sector in urban and suburban India.

In recent times, considerable research is beginning to go into depth of the work-life and statistics related to domestic helps but the need for academic attention concerning working conditions and privileges for domestic workers in India still exists. Therefore, in this present paper, an attempt has been made to delve into depth of the work-life of domestic helps in sub-urban areas. Ethnographic research was conducted for a period of two months on

domestic workers (irrespective of gender bias) who travel to their workplaces via local trains. 10 domestic workers (8 females and 2 males) consisting of domestic helps (*Kaajer Mashi*), domestic care-takers (*Ayaah*), domestic cook (*Rannar Mashi*) and sweeper whose primary source of income is working in domestic households were physically interviewed (conducted through in-depth interview process) and the transcription and the field notes along with their narratives were analysed to explore their lived experiences and their well-being. Generally we assume women as domestic workers but nowadays the scenario is that the male domestic workers have to go through a migraine process to find work. The results manifested domestic workers to be an indispensable part of the society whose overall satisfaction with this profession was found to be less and there existed demands for better jobs.

Key Words: Work life experience, Commuting through local trains, Domestic helper, Poverty, In depth interview.

Introduction:

Across the world, domestic workers account for 1.7 per cent of total employment worldwide and about 3.6 percent of all wage employment. According to ILO estimates from 2015, there are 67 million domestic workers working worldwide. In India, estimates of the number of domestic workers range from 4.2 million to more than 50 million. A domestic worker is widely defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as "someone who performs household work in private residences in exchange for remuneration.". Domestic workers' absence for a day creates an imbalance in personal and professional life for a working woman (Kherde & Peshave, 2020). So, the need is increasing day by day. Another main reason is