

Workplace Exploitation and Social Issues among Domestic Working Women in Wardha

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Abstract Domestic work is one of the most significant sources of livelihood for economically disadvantaged women in India, particularly within the informal labour sector. Domestic working women provide essential services such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, and elderly care, yet their contribution remains socially undervalued and economically insecure. The present study explores the socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by domestic working women in Wardha district of Maharashtra. The study is based on qualitative data collected from 315 domestic working women through in-depth interviews and field observations. The findings reveal that domestic workers face low wages, lack of job security, health problems, social discrimination, and work–family conflict. The study highlights structural inequalities related to gender, poverty, and informal employment. It emphasizes the need for policy recognition, labour protection measures, and social work interventions aimed at improving the quality of life and dignity of domestic working women.

Keywords: Domestic Workers, Informal Labour, Women Employment, Wardha District, Gender Issues.

1. Introduction

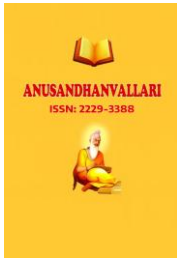
Women constitute a major workforce within India's informal economy, where employment conditions are largely unregulated. Domestic work has emerged as an important livelihood strategy for women belonging to economically weaker sections. Domestic working women perform essential household services that support urban families and contribute indirectly to economic productivity.

In Wardha district, increasing urbanization, nuclear family structures, and women's participation in formal employment have increased demand for domestic workers. However, domestic work remains characterized by low wages, absence of written contracts, limited social protection, and lack of occupational dignity. Domestic workers frequently experience exploitation, health risks, and social marginalization.

Most domestic working women enter this occupation due to poverty, limited education, family responsibilities, widowhood, or migration. The private nature of domestic workplaces makes regulation difficult, resulting in unequal power relations between employers and workers. Therefore, understanding the lived experiences of domestic working women is essential for designing effective welfare and empowerment policies.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of domestic working women in Wardha district.
2. To identify economic and workplace challenges faced by domestic workers.
3. To study health and social problems experienced by domestic working women.
4. To suggest social work interventions for improving their living and working conditions.



3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to understand the lived experiences of domestic working women.

Study Area

Wardha District, Maharashtra.

Sample Size

315 domestic working women selected through purposive sampling.

Methods of Data Collection

- In-depth Interviews
- Observation
- Informal discussions
- Secondary data review

Data Analysis

Thematic qualitative analysis was used to interpret findings.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents (N=315)

Age Group	Number	Percentage
20–30 Years	63	20%
31–40 Years	110	35%
41–50 Years	94	30%
Above 50 Years	48	15%
Total	315	100%

Interpretation

The age distribution indicates that the majority of domestic working women belong to the age group of 31–40 years, representing the economically productive stage of life. Women in this category usually bear significant family responsibilities, including childcare, education expenses, and household management, which motivates them to engage in income-generating activities. The presence of women aged 41–50 years further reflects long-term dependence on domestic work as a livelihood source.

The participation of younger women shows limited access to formal employment opportunities despite being in employable age groups. Meanwhile, the inclusion of older women above 50 years highlights the absence of retirement benefits or social security schemes, forcing them to continue labour-intensive work. Overall, the age structure demonstrates economic necessity rather than occupational choice as the primary reason for entering domestic work.

Table 2: Educational Status of Respondents

Education Level	Number	Percentage
Illiterate	95	30%
Primary Education	126	40%

Secondary Education	71	23%
Higher Secondary & Above	23	7%
Total	315	100%

Interpretation

Educational attainment among domestic working women remains low. A majority possess only primary education or are illiterate, indicating limited access to schooling and skill development opportunities. Low education significantly restricts women's ability to obtain formal employment, pushing them toward informal occupations such as domestic work.

Limited literacy also reduces awareness about labour rights, financial planning, and government welfare schemes. Women with lower education often accept poor working conditions due to lack of alternatives. The small proportion of women with higher education demonstrates that domestic work is largely associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Education emerges as a critical factor influencing occupational mobility and empowerment among domestic workers.

Table 3: Monthly Income Level

Income Range	Number	Percentage
Below ₹5000	72	23%
₹5000–₹8000	142	45%
₹8000–₹12000	69	22%
Above ₹12000	32	10%
Total	315	100%

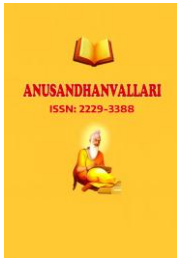
Interpretation

Income analysis reveals that domestic work provides only subsistence-level earnings. Nearly half of the respondents earn between ₹5000 and ₹8000 monthly, which remains insufficient for maintaining family welfare in the context of rising living costs. Many workers compensate for low wages by working in multiple households daily.

The significant proportion earning below ₹5000 indicates severe economic vulnerability. Lack of standardized wages and absence of employment contracts contribute to income instability. Women reported difficulties in saving money or managing emergencies, resulting in dependency on informal borrowing. The findings highlight the precarious economic condition of domestic workers and the urgent need for minimum wage regulations and financial security mechanisms.

Table 4: Major Challenges Faced by Domestic Working Women

Type of Challenge	Respondents Reporting
Low Wages	284
Lack of Job Security	248



Health Problems	241
Work–Family Conflict	205
Social Discrimination	189

Interpretation

The table indicates that economic insecurity remains the most dominant challenge faced by domestic working women. Low wages and absence of job security expose workers to constant financial stress. Since domestic employment operates informally, workers can lose jobs without notice, increasing vulnerability.

Health problems are widely reported due to continuous physical labour, long working hours, and lack of healthcare access. Work–family conflict emerges as another significant issue, as women manage both paid employment and unpaid household responsibilities. Social discrimination further affects psychological well-being and occupational dignity. Overall, domestic working women experience interconnected economic, social, and health challenges, reflecting structural inequality within informal labour systems.

5. Discussion

The study reveals that domestic working women in Wardha district experience multidimensional challenges shaped by poverty, gender inequality, and informal employment conditions. Domestic work functions primarily as a survival strategy rather than a career option. Lack of education, economic pressure, and social expectations limit occupational mobility.

Women contribute significantly to family income yet remain excluded from labour protections and social security benefits. Their work remains invisible despite its importance to household functioning. The findings highlight the need for institutional support systems and community-level empowerment programs.

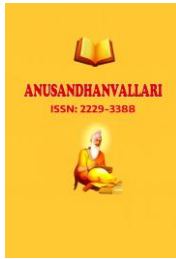
6. Role of Social Work Intervention (In Short)

Social workers play an important role in improving the living and working conditions of domestic working women. They can organize awareness programs to educate workers about labour rights, minimum wages, and available welfare schemes. Formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) helps domestic workers develop collective strength, promote savings habits, and improve bargaining power.

Social workers also provide financial literacy training to enhance income management, savings, and economic security. Conducting health camps, counseling services, and stress management programs supports the physical and mental well-being of workers. Additionally, social workers act as facilitators by linking domestic workers with government welfare schemes, social security programs, and community resources. Through advocacy, empowerment, and community organization, social work intervention helps domestic working women achieve dignity, protection, and social inclusion.

7. Conclusion

Domestic working women form an essential but marginalized workforce in Wardha district. The study involving 315 respondents demonstrates that domestic workers face economic insecurity, poor working conditions, health risks, and social discrimination. Improving their condition requires policy recognition, minimum wage enforcement, social security coverage, and empowerment initiatives. Ensuring dignity, protection, and equality for domestic workers is necessary for achieving inclusive social development and gender justice.



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