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Educational profile, problems and prospects of migrant household workers in urban area of Assam, India

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Abstract

Present study aims at finding out the responsible factors that contribute to migration to urban centers to work as domestic workers, to study the educational profile of the migrant household workers and to find out the various problems and prospects of migrant domestic workers. The study was delimited to female household workers only. Descriptive survey method has been applied in the present study. Total 50 migrant girl household workers were selected through purposive sampling procedure. Among them 12 were identified as girl child labour whose age was of below 14 years. An Interview Schedule pertaining to information seeking behaviour related to age, educational status and problems of the sample household workers was prepared by the investigator. Simple percentage and tables have been used to analyse the data in descriptive way.

Keywords: Educational profile, migrant household workers, girl child labour

Introduction

Education is considered as the main weapon for bringing all kinds of changes in a modern society. Without proper education nobody can think of shaping his/her life in desired way. It is impossible for everyone to be, what actually someone wants to be in the absence of education. Making people realization about the importance of education in a developing country is very significant approach as in these countries thousands of people live in below poverty line. Poverty is the main curse in a democracy which is known to all educated man. Among the Indian poor families, household work is the most popular profession and this profession is mostly dominated by girls coming from different rural corners of the country to the urban areas where number of women service holders is found to be more. Researches reveal that there are approximately 20 million people who are engaging themselves as household workers in this country. Among them 92% are of female category and 20% are children under 14 years of age. From general observations, it can be said that there is the need of awareness raising activities for women belonging to economically backward category. In most of the times women belonging to this labour category do not like to send their children to school and bring their kids along with them to the working field. In these families girl Children are trained up for household activities from the 5 years of age. Therefore, in the present study, an attempt has been undertaken to know the educational profile of the migrant girl household workers, various problems faced by them and future prospects of education in the society as household workers.

Statement of the Problem

Under the purview of the above observations, present problem has been stated as – “Educational Profile, Problems and Prospects of Migrant Household Workers in Urban Area of Assam, India”

Objectives of the Study

Present study is based on the following objectives-

- To find out the responsible factors that contribute to migration to urban centers to work as domestic workers
- To study the educational profile of the migrant household workers

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- To find out the various problems and prospects of migrant domestic workers

Significance of the Study

Normally, household workers are employed for different types of household activities like cooking, cleaning, dusting, sweeping and mopping the house, washing clothes and/or utensils, ironing, marketing, running errands, childcare, care of the aged or disabled, etc. Such type of household workers is very commonly seen in the urban families where maximum wives are service holder. Working women normally cannot do all kinds of household affairs for which they need the help of others. Here lies the significant need of household workers to run the family peacefully. These household workers do the most manual arduous tasks, have impossibly long hours with no benefits of social security, security of employment, wage raises, paid leave or medical facilities etc. So, it draws the attention of the investigator which needs serious efforts to give justice to these needy people of the society.

The 51st round survey conducted by National Sample Survey Organization reveals that the number of women regular employees in urban area is 10 times more than those in rural areas. It was also mentioned that the regular working women in urban area has been increased by 15 per cent over the period from 1977 to 1995. As a result the need of domestic workers has also been increasing day by day. It led to an increase in the number of household workers in urban areas. Highlighting the living condition of women domestic workers, the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS, 2007, p. 86) mentioned, "Working in the unregulated domain of a private home, mostly without the protection of national labour legislation, allows for female domestic workers to be maltreated by their employers with impunity. They may be strictly confined to their places of work. The domestic workforce is excluded from labour laws that look after important employment-related issues such as conditions of work, wages, social security, provident funds, old age pensions, and maternity leave."

So in such a situation, normally there arise certain questions like what are the socio economic factors responsible for choosing this occupation, what is the educational background of the household workers and what kind of problems they are facing in this labour field. Under the purview of such observations, the investigator has considered the present problem to be very significant which needs serious attention of everybody concerned.

Delimitation of the Study

Present study has been delimited to female household workers only.

Review of Related Literature

Various studies have been conducted in the last few decades about the household work and role of women. A few of them are- Atanu Thaker has made an enquiry into women's workforce participation and she concluded that the proposal for participating in the workforce made by feminist literature and the gender empowerment measure (Proposed by UNDP) may not empower the women; rather it will burden the women more and more.

Nirmala Banerjee has made an enquiry about women workers in the unorganized sector of Calcutta's economy.

She found that the employment was regular for working women and their wage rate was significantly lower as compared to those for men with equal qualifications. The working women in the informal sector included a significant number of children and old people and over 60 percent of them were illiterate.

Leela Gulati has made an attempt to study the women in the unorganized sector in Kerala on the basis of micro-level observations. It appeared that women go to work because of the irregular nature of employment that their men are involved in and the low incomes they make. Regarding the kind of work opportunity open to women in the unorganized sector, very often they choose the type of work that their parents or relatives are involved in. Also they prefer to stick on the same kind of work they are similar with and pick closer by locations.

Jeemol Unni and Uma Rani have made an attempt to study the informal sector in the light of structural adjustment programme. With steady decline in the growth of the formal sector in India following the introduction of the SAP, a large section of the growing labour force is being absorbed in agriculture and the unorganized informal structure resulting in a progressive increase in employment in the informal sector.

According to Padmini, of all services in India, there is not a more unregulated or disorganized form of work than the domestic service. There are no regulated hours of work for women in domestic service, nor have laws been passed to protect them.

Murugaiah has analysed occupational risk of domestic servants in Tirupathi selection grade Municipality in Andhra Pradesh. The risk areas include high level of insecurity, deplorable wages, long working hours etc.

Research Methodology Adopted

Method of the study: Descriptive survey method has been applied in the present study.

Sample: Total 50 migrant girl household workers were selected through purposive sampling procedure. Among them 12 were identified as girl child labour whose age was of below 14 years.

Tool: An Interview Schedule pertaining to information seeking behaviour related to age, educational status and problems of the sample household workers was prepared by the investigator.

Statistics: Simple percentage and tables have been used to analyse the data in descriptive way.

Analysis of Data and Results

Factors Responsible for Migration to Urban Area

After the interaction with the sampled working girls, it was clear that all the girl household workers were migrated to Guwahati only because of their parent's rearing incapability. They are taken to the city by their parents searching jobs. So the responsible factors which were identified on the basis of the collected data through interview are-

- Parent's Illiteracy and ignorance
- poor financial condition of the family
- Family tradition of working in others' home
- Lack of interest to education
- maximum number of children in one family
- Ethnic clashes and communal violence

Educational Profile of the household workers

Table 1: Educational Profile of Migrant Girl Household Workers

| Level of Education | Count | % |
|--------------------|-------|----|
| Illiterate | 29 | 58 |
| Just Literate | 9 | 18 |
| Primary Pass | 8 | 16 |
| Under Matriculate | 4 | 08 |
| Matriculate& Above | 0 | 0 |

Total= 50, 100%

Majority (58%) of the Girl Domestic Workers are found illiterate. 18% girls were found as to be of just literate category. About 16% of the workers reported themselves as educated being primary pass. A small proportion that is only 8% of the girl Workers have educational qualification as under matriculate. Not a single worker was found to be of matriculate level.

Problems of Girls household workers

On the basis of the interviews with household workers, the following problems were identified-

1. The salary or rate of wages is very low. Almost all the workers expressed about their deplorable wages.
2. All the respondents (100%) showed high level of insecurity feeling in their profession
3. Illiteracy is a common problem among all.
4. Lack of marketable skills among the household workers because of which they can't demand for high wages.
5. Lack of confidence in securing other productive jobs.
6. Long and unregulated working hours.
7. Less freedom with more exploitation was expressed by all.
8. No paid holidays was observed in case of all the workers
9. They cannot enjoy any paid sick leave
10. 50% responded that they have immense work load
11. They frequently suffers from health problems because of lack of nutritional food
12. They cannot have self-respect and suffers from Social exploitation
13. All the domestic servants (workers) responded that their family life were not satisfactory
14. In some cases, their family members also exploit them for personal and monetary gains.
15. Problem of Marriage is a common problem among the unmarried female domestic workers

Prospects

- Prospect of working as a domestic worker through NGO
- Skill Training prospect
- Prospect of imparting vocational education
- Prospect of girls' economic empowerment.
- Prospect of Increasing security if education can be imparted

Recommendations of the Study

1. Government should be strict in prohibiting the child labour as 12 children (among the 50 sample) were identified as of below 14 years age.
2. There is need to bring a law for female household workers to guarantee a minimum wages paid to them,

the quantum of work, hours of work, and other facilities to be given as per the worker's interest.

3. It is essential to curb unlawful activities, especially the economic exploitation of Girl workers through Compulsory registration at Govt. Labour Commission offices.
4. Independent and Special Cells should be opened in the public relation offices of NGOs in Guwahati for solving the problems/difficulties faced by workers to continue their education and to fight against illiteracy and exploitation
5. Counselling Centres should be opened for the benefit of Girl household workers.

Summary and Conclusion

The household work or domestic service is an unorganized and unregulated form of work which has an individualistic nature. In urban areas, the demand for domestic servants has been increased due to the lack of time and physical inability of the housewives and also due to the emerging modern lifestyle among the city habitants. It is worth emphasizing that more wages and education have to be increased and it is urgent need particularly in those cities that have a high incidence of women service holder or female employment in organized sector.

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