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A Comparative Study of Stress Level of Organized and Unorganized Domestic Workers from Pune City

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Abstract

Background: Domestic workers face many difficulties but there is a paucity of Indian work in this area.

Aim: To study the difference in the stress faced by domestic workers who are members of an organization and those who are not member of any organization.

Methods: This cross-sectional study included 30 domestic workers from organization and 30 not from organization selected by random sampling with their informed consent. All the workers were interviewed individually, and socio-demographic questionnaire and depression, anxiety, stress 21 scale was filled up. The data was analyzed by chi square test and Mann-Whitney U test.

Results: The female domestic workers from organization were significantly older in age, earned significantly less and significantly more were widowed. There were no differences in education level, religion, number of family members, residence, habit of tobacco use and chronic illnesses. Almost half the domestic workers had high levels of anxiety, depression and stress. Age is negatively correlated with income. Anxiety is negatively correlated with size of family. Stress is positively correlated with anxiety and depression

Conclusion: Domestic workers not belonging to organization had significantly higher pay and higher stress levels compared to those belonging to organization.

Keywords: Domestic workers; Anxiety; Depression; Stress

Introduction

To maintain the house almost every family perform certain chores daily, like cooking, cleaning used utensils, washing clothes, dusting the furniture, sweeping and wiping the floor, taking care of young children, care of sick or elderly persons and many more. In 'Indian culture' usually all these tasks are done by the 'women' in the family. Earlier days we were leaving in a joint family and the workload was distributed. In modern nucleus family both husband and wife needs to earn money for meeting the increased expenses and increasing aspirations. This puts extra burden on the lady of the house due to our male oriented culture. The lady has two options, either do all these tasks on own and get physically as

well as mentally stressed or hire these services by paying the money. As a result of the transformation in class relations and breaking of the joint family, paid domestic work has become a necessity for a considerably large section of the urban population today. This created a new profession called "domestic worker". A domestic worker (DW) is one who carries out the household chores like cleaning utensils, washing clothes, sweeping and cleaning the floor, cooking, look after small children, assist the employer in kitchen etc., on part time or full time basis, for one or more employer, for nominal wages. As per tradition, domestic work was considered to be an 'unpaid work' performed mainly by women in the family. The new segmentation of domestic work in the form of an outsourced activity has raised the importance of

the occupation higher than ever before. Often, migrant workers or economically weaker sections of the society participate in it. The duties of DWs are tedious and less paying. Therefore, DWs are mostly women hailing from economically poor families. As there is no minimum wages fixed and as the minimum wage act does not cover the DWs, the employer are free to pay what they want to, irrespective of quantum and hours of work.

In the recent past the trend shows that all big cities of India have become centers to recruit poor women as domestic workers. Most of the middle class employed women, have shifted their household workload to the poor working women as their maids. Domestic work is one of the oldest and most important occupations for millions of women around the world. The term “domestic service” is particularly difficult to define since the duties of DWs are not well defined. Most DWs are not organized into trade unions and have no representative voice, their exact number in India is not known. Although, this is beginning to change but organizing DWs is not easy. The nature of the job as well as the worker-employer relationship makes it difficult to negotiate collective bargaining agreements with their employer. Female DWs are a neglected group among the unorganized sector. For decades they have been exploited and only in recent years NGO’s are taking up the cause of women domestic workers. Often it is observed that women DWs face several problems in their personal and occupational life. Despite long and irregular hours they have low pay and donot have job security. If they take leave for genuine reasons, they may lose their job. Some of them work more than two houses and due to excessive work and poor nutrition, they become sick. Being in the unorganized sector, labour laws do not apply to them. In the absence of labour unions, they have to survive on the generosity of the employers. In many developed countries of Europe and America there are laws and social security for DWs. Unlike these countries in transition economies such as India have no laws to fix their wages or hours of work; they have no basic rights, no amenities or social security, not even leave or a paid holiday as in any other jobs.

The employer family then appoints such woman on verbal agreement on:

- Tasks to be done daily as well as some special tasks to be done periodically say once a week or month etc.
- Daily Reporting time as well as minimum/maximum working time.
- Monthly remuneration as well as ex-gratia payments.
- Terms especially regarding informed or uninformed absence.
- This work is considered as ‘Self-employment’
- Generally she will not get any help from any family member neither she can ask for any helping hand.

Such woman then becomes the vital factor of the employer family. Both parties then depend on each other. Family depends

on this woman to complete all the daily chores and the woman depends on family as source of income.

There are many research reports from other countries many of them focusing on problems faced by migrant domestic workers [1-5]. However, only few studies have been carried out in India [6-8]. In view of the paucity of Indian studies the present study was conducted to assess and compare problems, depression, anxiety, and stress faced by women domestic workers who are members of the organization and those who are not member of any organization.

Material and Methods

This cross sectional, analytical study was carried out in Pune city. Mixed method was used for this study. The research proposal was approved by the institutional ethical committee. It was explained to the participants that the purpose of this survey is solely for educational research purpose and the collected information is confidential and not shared with any other person or institution. With this assurance written informed consent was obtained from all the interviewed women.

Sample

The sample consisted of 30 domestic workers who are members of the organization and 30 freelance domestic workers included by random sampling. Spoke personally with each of them, gathered the information from them and recorded in the questioner.

Tools for Data collection

Socio-Demographic data sheets and personal interviews

Interviewed each of the selected woman, informed the importance and objective of the study before filling up the socio-demographic sheet.

DASS 21

Filled up questioner based on DASS 21. The DASS is a 42 item self-report instrument designed to measure the related negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and tension/stress. Patient is interviewed with a list of 42 questions on a 4point rating scale (0-3) and there are specific questions designated for each. Internal consistency of the DASS sub-scales was high, with Cronbach’s alphas of 0.88, 0.82, and 0.90 for depression, anxiety, and stress sub-scales respectively. Cronbach’s alpha of total scale is 0.93 [9].

Brief information about the domestic workers organization

Maharashtra Asanghtit Kamgar Sanghatana, Pune established on 23rd July 2019. Objective of this organization is to fight for the

rights of these un-organized workers and ensuring that they get the benefits of government schemes and required legal support. About 7000 women household workers are member of this organization. Organization facilitates the detail information regarding all the government schemes and guides the members to get the benefits of these schemes. Organization celebrates various festivals like Makar Sankranti, Raksha Bandhan Diwali round the year. Founder and senior members of the organization contribute the expenses for these activities. These members also participate in the Alandi / Dehu to Pandharpur Palkhi Wari and promote the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. These women distribute snacks and other useful items to the participants of the 'Wari'. They also build friendly relations with the Pune City Police by tying 'Rakhi' on occasion of 'Raksha Bandhan'. Many of these women work as "Police Mitra" to support the police force. These women expressed their happiness of being member of the organization. They participate in various events and hence get opportunity to meet other members, make friendship, exchange views and thoughts. This enables them free communication with others. They also share the difficulties faced and get solutions from other's experience.

Procedure

All the subjects included in the study were explained that the purpose of this survey is solely for educational research purpose and the collected information is confidential and not shared with any other person or institution. With this assurance written

informed consent was obtained from all the subjects. Initially the subjects were interviewed and the demographic data sheet was filled up. Thereafter the DASS 21 was administered individually to the subjects. All the scales were scored as per the test manual and data entered on excel sheet.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS 21(IBM, Chicago, USA). Frequency data was analyzed using chi square test. Ordinal data between the two groups of subjects was compared using Mann Whitney U test. Spearman's rho was used for correlation. $P < 0.05$ was considered for statistical significance.

Results

The study included 30 female domestic workers from organization and 30 free-lance domestic workers. The female domestic workers from organization were significantly older in age, earned significantly less and significantly more were widowed. There were no differences in education level, religion, number of family members, residence, habit of tobacco use and chronic illnesses (Table 1).

Nature of work is same whether the woman is a member of an organization or not. It depends on employers requirement. Most of them work in multiple houses. The hours of work are not fixed, as it depends on the jobs she has to do. This is same in case of organized or unorganized. Maintaining punctuality is most stressful to them.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of organized and unorganized domestic workers.

Characteristics		Unorganized	Organized	T test, chi square test, Fishers exact test, Mann Whitney U test	P
Age	Mean	32.93	47	$t = -5.130$; $df = 58$	$P = 0.000$ S
	SD	8.35	12.49		
	Range	23-54	28 - 70		
Religion	Hindu	24	25	2.487	$P = 0.288$ NS
	Buddhist	4	1		
	Muslim	2	4		
Education	Illiterate	6	9	4.815	$P = 0.186$ NS
	Primary	6	9		

	Below Matric	12	11		
	Matric & more	6	1		
Marital status	Unmarried	0	2	13.997	P=0.0009 S
	married	28	15		
	widow	2	13		
Family Members	Mean	4.53	4.13	MW U=444.500	P=0.934 NS
	SD	2.05	1.96		
	Range	2 to 10	1 to 9		
Resident of	Pune	6	8	0.373	P=0.542 NS
	Outside	24	22		
Monthly income	Mean	9600	3083.33	t= 7.644; df=58	P=0.000 S
	SD	4522.74	1160.29		
	Range	3000-25000	1000-5000		
Monthly Income Distribution	≤2000	0	8	Fishers exact test	P=0.00 S
	2001-5000	2	22		
	5001-10000	19	0		
	10001-15000	7	0		
Tobacco	Yes	3	0	0.2373	P=0.07 NS
	Nil	27	30		
Chronic illness	Yes	8	5	0.884	P=0.347 NS
	Nil	22	25		

Average remuneration of DW belonging to organization (Rs. 3083.33) was significantly less than that of DW not belonging to organization (Rs. 9600). These are mostly decided on the area of the house and number of family members residing together. Remuneration also differs according to the locality of work place. Payments are usually higher in the high profile locality. For

increase of payment also there is no any rule, it is decided by the employer and DW. The member women of the organization are more confident and smarter. Members of the organizations get more benefit of knowledge regarding government schemes rather than financial benefits. In case of some trouble or difficulties faced at work place, member gets wholehearted support from

other members and organization. They also have option of changing the job in case of any difficulties faced. There is no job security whether it is organized or unorganized. The Women domestic workers from Pune are aware regarding their right of two days paid leaves in a month as well as annual ex-gratia payment of a month's salary. However, leave depends on the relationship of the employer and the woman domestic worker. There is no rule for leave. It applies to woman whether she is member of any organization or not.

The Women household workers from Pune face more stress at home rather than the work place. Spouse's bad habits and vices, children's education and health, and unhealthy atmosphere at

home are the most stressful things for these women. These women are well aware regarding importance of children's education & health. They are prepared to put more dedicated and honest efforts at their own home as well as at work place. Almost every woman knows the importance of savings and they all hold saving bank account in nearby Bank. Most of these women hold valid identity documents, like Adhar Card, Voter's Card, Ration Card. Few of them also hold PAN card. Only a minority of the DWs were residents of Pune. Most of them have migrated from Beed, Solapur, Parabhani and Mulshi in search of job, as they have lost their lands in construction of dams. Nobody complained about physical or sexual abuse.

Table 2: Depression Anxiety Stress Scale scores of domestic workers from organized and unorganized sector.

DASS 21		Unorganized	Organized	Mann Whitney U value	P
Stress	Mean	14.33	10.2	286.500	0.015 S
	SD	7.07	7.56		
	Range	4 to 14	0 to 30		
Anxiety	Mean	9.27	10.47	446.000	0.952NS
	SD	5.08	8.19		
	Range	0 to 22	0 to 34		
Depression	Mean	10.67	9.53	368.000	0.222 NS
	SD	6.79	8.63		
	Range	2 to 32	0 to 32		

Table 3: Severity of Depression Anxiety Stress Scale scores of domestic workers from organized and unorganized sector.

DASS 21		Unorganized	Organized	Fishers Exact test P value
Depression	Normal	14	18	0.236 NS
	Mild	6	6	
	Moderate	9	3	
	Ex. Severe	1	3	
Anxiety	Normal	11	11	0.992 NS
	Mild	3	3	
	Moderate	13	13	
	Severe	2	2	
	Ex. Severe	1	1	
Stress	Normal	11	20	0.091 NS
	Mild	14	7	
	Moderate	2	2	
	Severe	3	1	

On the DASS-21 the female domestic workers who did not belong to organization had significantly higher levels of stress. The two groups had no differences in anxiety and depression (Figure 1 and Table 2). There were no significant differences between the two groups regarding distribution of depression, anxiety and stress (Figure 2 and Tables 3 and 4).

Correlations of age, size of family, income, anxiety, depression and stress revealed:

- Age is negatively correlated with income, as age increases income decreases.

- Anxiety is negatively correlated with size of family, where size of family is big anxiety is less and where size of family is small anxiety is more.
- Stress is positively correlated with anxiety and depression. When Stress increases accordingly anxiety and depression increases.

A multiple linear correlation by enter method was performed to find out the predictors of stress. The multiple linear regression model summary and overall fit statistics reveals that the adjusted R^2 of the model is .556 with the $R^2 = 0.594$ (Table 5).

Table 4: Correlations of age, family members, monthly income, stress, anxiety and depression in domestic workers.

			Age	family	income	stress	anxiety	Depression
Spearman's rho	Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.044	-.366**	-.110	.139	.014
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.737	.004	.402	.291	.915
	family	Correlation Coefficient	-.044	1.000	-.017	-.146	-.369**	-.141
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.737	.	.900	.265	.004	.281
	income	Correlation Coefficient	.366**	-.017	1.000	.207	-.132	.165
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.900	.	.113	.314	.208
	stress	Correlation Coefficient	-.110	-.146	.207	1.000	.572**	.656**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.402	.265	.113	.	.000	.000
	anxiety	Correlation Coefficient	.139	-.369**	-.132	.572**	1.000	.487**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.291	.004	.314	.000	.	.000
	depression	Correlation Coefficient	.014	-.141	.165	.656**	.487**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.915	.281	.208	.000	.000	.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5: Multiple regression analysis: Model Summary^b.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin- Watson
1	.771 ^a	.594	.556	5.02857	1.558
a) Predictors: (Constant), Depression, monthly income, Family members, Age, Anxiety					
b) Dependent Variable: Stress					

Table 6: Multiple regression analysis: ANOVA^a.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1998.261	5	399.652	15.805	.000 ^b
	Residual	1365.472	54	25.287		
	Total	3363.733	59			
a) Dependent Variable: Stress						
b) Predictors: (Constant), Depression, Income, Family, Age, Anxiety						

This means that the linear regression explains 59.4% of the variance in the data. The Durbin-Watson $d = 1.588$, is between the two critical values of $1.5 < d < 2.5$. Therefore, one can assume that there is no first order linear auto-correlation in our multiple linear regression data. The linear regression's F-test has the null hypothesis that the model explains zero variance in the dependent variable (in other words $R^2 = 0$). The F-test is highly significant; thus we can assume that the model explains a significant amount of the variance in stress in domestic workers (Table 6). Table 7 shows the multiple linear regression estimates including the

intercept and the significance levels. The statistical significance of each of the independent variables can be seen from t and Sig columns. In the present study find that only anxiety and depression are significant. We can also see that depression has a higher impact than anxiety by comparing the standardized coefficients ($\beta = .527$ versus $\beta = .343$). The information in table 7 also allows us to check for multicollinearity in our multiple linear regression model. Tolerance should be > 0.1 (or $VIF < 10$) for all variables which is true in this case.

Table 7: Multiple regression analysis: Coefficients^a.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.638	3.474		1.047	.300		
	Age	-.069	.056	-.116	-1.226	.226	.843	1.186
	Family	.267	.365	.071	.731	.468	.806	1.240
	Income	.000	.000	.122	1.298	.200	.856	1.168
	Anxiety	.382	.149	.343	2.570	.013	.422	2.372
	Depression	.515	.117	.527	4.409	.000	.527	1.898
a. Dependent Variable: Stress								

To summarize, a multiple regression by enter method was run to predict stress in domestic workers from age, income, number of family members, anxiety and depression. These variables statistically significantly predicted stress, $F(5, 54) = 15.805$, $p < .000$, $R^2 = 0.594$. Only depression and anxiety added statistically significantly to the prediction, $p < .05$.

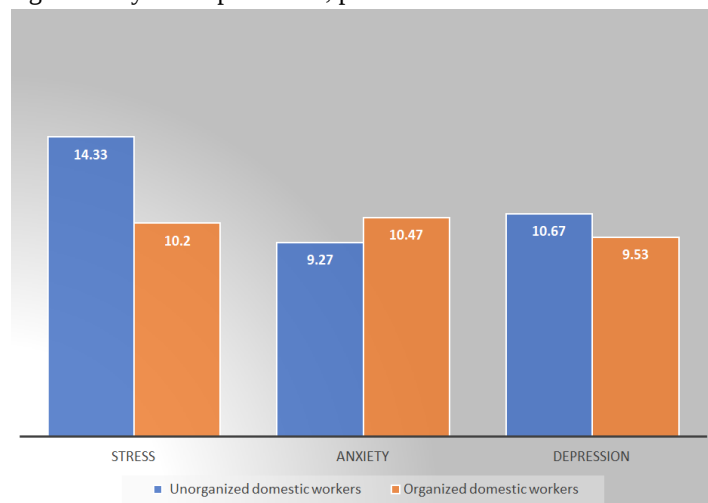


Figure 1: Mean stress, anxiety and depression in organized and unorganized domestic workers.

Discussion

The finding that the domestic workers in an urban metropolis belonged to poorer sections of society with limited or no educational attainments are in agreement with earlier studies [7]. In a large survey of DWs in Mumbai it was found that 25% worked in one house while the remaining worked in 2-4 houses [7]. This is in agreement with our findings. However the average remunerations in the present study were much higher than previous study in Mumbai which may be due to differences in location of study [7]. Unlike in many other countries where there are many foreign migrant workers in India most of the DWs are migrants from rural areas who have been displaced or migrated due to poverty. This finding is in agreement with earlier studies [7].

Domestic worker do the jobs like cleaning utensils, washing clothes, sweeping & cleaning the floor, cooking, and looking after small children etc. The nature of the work is same whether the woman is a member of an organization or not. This finding is in agreement with earlier studies [7]. Hours of the work are not fixed as it depends on what jobs she has to do. It is also depend on requirement of the employer. The employer can ask the domestic worker to do only cooking or only cleaning utensils and sweeping & cleaning the floor. It also depend on the domestic worker that

how much time she takes to do the jobs. This is same for both the women, who are member of any organization or nonmember. Monthly payment of domestic worker depends on many factors. If the woman works at posh location/ elite area, she gets more payment than woman who works at other / middle class locality. The payment of the domestic worker is also depending on size of the family (number of members in family) and size of the flat. For e.g. when there is a big family, a big flat then charges of cleaning utensils and sweeping and cleaning the floor are more.

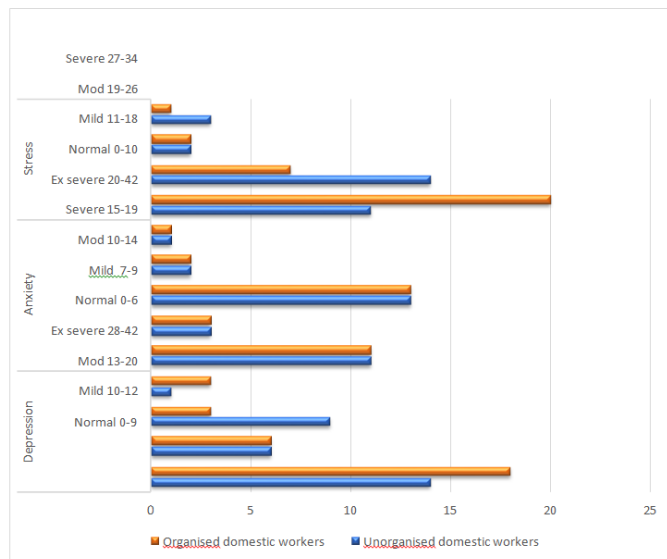


Figure 2: Distribution of depression, anxiety, stress in organized and unorganized domestic workers.

In the present study younger domestic workers who were not organized had higher income compared to older DW from organization. This finding is in contrast to the findings of a study from Chennai which reported significantly higher wages in areas where unions were active [6]. One reason for this is that most of the younger DWs work in multiple houses, with some of them working for up to four or five households. This involves much greater physical effort. The ability to work in multiple houses declines with age which may explain the lower incomes of older female DWs. None of the workers received regular increments and periodic increase in wages depend on negotiations with the employers. This finding is in agreement with the earlier study [6]. Increase in payment is also decided by both of them, the employer and the domestic worker, as there is no any fix rate of rise in payment. Some employers increase payment once in a year and some may increase, once in two years, it varies person to person. This finding is in agreement with earlier studies [7].

If anything goes wrong the employer can remove the domestic worker without notice as there is no written agreement. This applies to both members and non-members of organization. This is in agreement with previous studies [7,8]. Many times it

happens that if any other employer offer them more payment they leave the current job. Hence there is no job security. But a woman who is member of the organization and faces any difficulty she can get support from other co-members of the organization. There is no rule for leave, but here in Pune domestic workers are aware that 2 leaves in a month and amount equal to their salary as a Diwali Bonus is their right. For more leave and other facilities, it depends on their relationship and mutual understanding with their employer. Here in Pune, bargaining power of domestic worker is good as they have more options. Terms and conditions are decided between both of them, the employer and the domestic worker, before accepting the job. This is same in the case of both member and non-member of the organization. In an earlier study it was found that majority (90%) never faced sexual harassment which is in agreement with absence of sexual harassment in the present study [9]. Many people have done research on different aspect of domestic worker's life. Some researchers tried to study socio-economic conditions of domestic workers, where as some have focused on minimum wages, safe working conditions, health problems. Some researchers are on family related problems and harassment in work place. Some researcher studied on how domestic work has remained unorganized and unrecognized. Some examined status of domestic worker. It is observed thatsofarthe psychological side of the domestic worker has not been touched, so this study was aimed at examining problems, stress anxiety and depression level of domestic workers. The presence of high levels of depression, anxiety and stress in the DW points to the fact they were under psychological stress and would benefit from intervention.

As a result of prolonged working hours there is less time for sleep, rest and relaxation. Long and unstable working hours combined with low wages result in increased stress in DW as seen in our study. This is associated with increased utilization of health services. Among DW high workload and lack of control over the job are associated increased job stress and higher rates of unhealthy behavior like using tobacco and higher risk of chronic physical illnesses such as cardiovascular disease [10].

Conclusion

Female DW in Pune faces many types of challenges and stress. The DW who is members of organization has much less of stress compared to those who are not members of organization.

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