



**A Study on the current status of
Minimum Wages, Occupational
Health and Safety of Domestic
Workers in Chennai, Kannagi
Nagar, Perumbakkam,
Chemmanchery and Padappai.**



Contents

List of Tables.....	3
List of Figures.....	4
Abstract.....	5
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Aim of the study.....	6
3. Objectives of the study.....	6
4. Sample design and Size.....	7
5. Methodology.....	7
6. Descriptive Analysis of Field Data and Findings.....	7
6.1.Socio- Demographic Analysis.....	7
6.1.1. Age.....	7
6.1.2. Marital Status.....	8
6.1.3. District.....	9
6.1.4. Years of Experience.....	10
6.2.Employment status pre and post pandemic.....	11
6.2.1. Job loss during the pandemic.....	11
6.2.2. Influence of pandemic in the employment status.....	13
6.2.3. Number of houses worked pre and post covid.....	14
6.2.4. Working hours of domestic workers pre and post pandemic.....	15
6.2.5. Type of work- pre and post pandemic.....	17
6.2.6. Pay scale and hourly of the domestic workers.....	18
6.2.7. Status of yearly bonus.....	20
6.2.8. Status of weekly offs.....	21
6.2.9. Willingness to have a contract with the employer.....	23
6.3.Occupational Health and Safety issues of the Domestic Workers.....	25
6.3.1. Ability to use toilet in the employer's house.....	25
6.3.2. Usage of chemicals in workplace.....	27
6.3.3. Occupational health and safety equipments provided.....	28
6.3.4. Occupational health concerns faced and the causes.....	30
6.3.5. Availability of medical facility at workplace.....	33
6.3.6. Employer's willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries.....	34
6.3.7. Transportation expenses covered by the domestic worker.....	35
6.3.8. Awareness of minimum wages specified by the government.....	37
6.3.9. Efficiency of current minimum wages.....	39
6.3.10. Recommendation of minimum wages.....	40
6.3.11. Occupational Health and Safety recommendations.....	42
6.4.Recommendations of the domestic workers to the government.....	43
7. Recommendations of the study.....	45
8. Conclusion.....	46
References.....	48

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Age categories of the respondents.	7
Table 2: Marital status of the respondents.	8
Table 3: District of the respondents.	9
Table 4: Years of experience of the respondents.	10
Table 5: Job loss faced during pre and post pandemic by the respondents.	11
Table 6: No of households worked during the pre and post pandemic.	13
Table 7: No of households worked during the pre and post pandemic	14
Table 8: Working hours during the pre and post pandemic.	15
Table 9: Type of work done during pre and post pandemic.	17
Table 10: Salaries received during the pre and post pandemic.	18
Table 11: Status of receiving yearly bonus.	18
Table 12: Status of receiving weekly offs.	22
Table 13: Willingness to have a contract with the employer.	24
Table 14: Ability to use toilet in the employer's house.	25
Table 15: Usage of chemicals in workplace.	27
Table 16: Occupational health and safety equipment provided.	29
Table 17: Causes of the Occupational health and safety issues.	31
Table 18: Availability of medical facility at workplace.	34
Table 19: Employer's willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries.	35
Table 20: Transportation expenses covered by the domestic worker.	36
Table 21: Awareness of minimum wages specified by the government.	38
Table 22: Efficiency of current minimum wages.	39
Table 23: Recommendation of minimum wages.	41
Table 24: Occupational Health and Safety recommendations from the government.	43
Table 25: Recommendations of the domestic workers to the government.	44

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Age group of Domestic Workers.	8
Figure 2: Marital Status of the Domestic Workers.	9
Figure 3: Districts of the respondents.	9
Figure 4: Years of experience.	10
Figure 5: Job loss during pre and post pandemic.	11
Figure 6: No of households worked pre and post pandemic.	14
Figure 7: No of houses worked pre and post pandemic.	15
Figure 8: No of hours worked pre and post pandemic.	16
Figure 9: Type of work of pre and post pandemic.	18
Figure 10: Salaries pre and post pandemic.	19
Figure 11: Hourly wages pre and post pandemic.	19
Figure 12: Yearly bonus received.	20
Figure 13: Weekly offs.	22
Figure 14: Willingness to have a workplace contract.	24
Figure 15: Access to toilets at workplace.	26
Figure 16: Usage of Chemicals.	27
Figure 17: Access to occupational health and safety equipment.	29
Figure 18: Health issues faced.	32
Figure 19: Causes of the health issues.	32
Figure 20: Access to medical facility.	34
Figure 21: Employers' Willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries.	35
Figure 22: Transportation charges to workplace.	36
Figure 23: Awareness about the current minimum wages specified by the government.	38
Figure 24: Efficiency of current Minimum wages.	39
Figure 25: Recommendation for minimum wages.	41
Figure 26: OHS recommendations.	43
Figure 27: Other recommendations.	44

Abstract

The study report on the current status of Minimum Wages and Occupational Health and Safety of Domestic Workers in Chennai, Kannagi Nagar, Perumbakkam, Chemmanchery and Padappai covers a wide range of issues faced by domestic workers in their workplace. Even though there are researches conducted in this area, earlier to analyse the minimum wage issue, only a few researchers have made an attempt made to study the overall status of domestic workers and their concerns. This document analyse in detail, the plight of domestic workers, their current economic status, health concerns, their work environment and their needs.

This study was done among the domestic workers belonging to Chennai, Kanchipuram, and Chengalpattu districts of Tamil Nadu. They were interviewed and their responses were collected through surveys. A total of 582 domestic workers were surveyed and 25 domestic workers were interviewed for the study. The responses show that- A commendable number of respondents are widows, single women or women who are living on their own which implies that they themselves are the major source of income in their families. Every question thus amplifies the voices of domestic workers as well as their families.

1. Introduction

Domestic Work is termed as “work performed in or for a household” (ILO, 2011). The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 189 lays down specific basic rights and principles that aim at achieving decent work for domestic workers. However, not all countries are following these mandates laid down by ILO. India is one such country. Some states have identified domestic workers as a part of their larger workforce some have not yet. Efforts are made across the nation to bring about legislations for ensuring the rights of domestic workers and merge them with other existing workforce.

In recent times, there has been a drastic increase in the number of female domestic workers in India. One of the major reason for this is, the rural-to-urban migration that has happened in the past decades. The number of women domestic workers is constantly growing in the informal sector of urban India. Domestic work has remained unorganized, unrecognized and unrewarding for domestic workers. Domestic workers are denied minimum wages, ideal working hours, safe working conditions and other benefits in the absence of trade unions and state intervention. The female domestic workers do not have supportive legislation and social support under the existing condition. They face various exploitation and multi-faceted abuses every day. All these factors lower their living standards and also has a significant impact on the value and dignity they receive in society.

Recently Tamil Nadu government increased the minimum wages of unskilled domestic workers to 37 rupees per hour and skilled domestic workers like home nurses and gardeners to 38, 39 rupees respectively. This amount is insufficient for any common individual to support a family. Their basic needs like food, shelter, health services, etc. are lagging. Additionally, a considerable category of domestic workers are single mothers. Therefore, ensuring a decent wage and bringing legislation for the same is very crucial for the upliftment and empowerment of the domestic workers and subsequently their lives.

2. Aim of the study

To Study the current status of Minimum Wages and Occupational Health and Safety of Domestic Workers in Chennai, Kannagi Nagar, Perumbakkam, Chemmanchery and Padappai.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To study the socio-demographic details of the domestic workers,
- To analyse the current socio-economic status of domestic workers,
- To know about the influence of the pandemic on the employment status of domestic workers.
- To know about the current wages of the domestic workers,
- To understand the occupational health and safety issues faced by domestic workers,
- To draft recommendations to the government upon the minimum wages and occupational health and safety issues pertaining to domestic workers.

4. Sample Design and Size

The samples for the study includes women domestic workers from Chennai, Perumbakkam, Kannagi Nagar, Chemmanchery and Padappai. The sample size of the study was 582 and the samples were selected through a purposive sampling method.

5. Methodology

Survey and Interview method of data collection was carried out among the domestic workers. A Questionnaire was prepared for collecting quantitative data. The data collected was arranged and analysed for the purpose of the research. This study thus involves the responses of domestic workers from different places which is collected through a common pre-designed questionnaire. The research has also captured the struggles of the domestic workers through an interview. Few of the components have been incorporated with the responses of the workers to given an in-depth understanding.

6. Descriptive Analysis of Field Data and Findings

6.1 Socio- Demographic Analysis:

In this part of analysis, the socio demographic details of the domestic workers such as age, place, years of experience, marital status, etc. are analysed

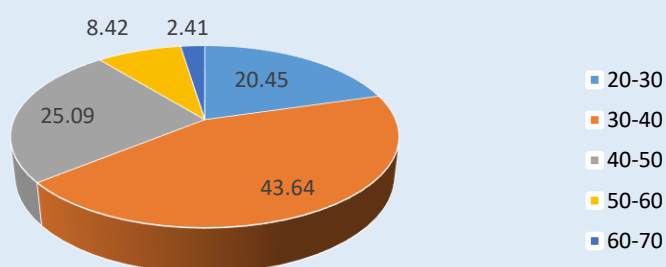
6.1.1 Age:

The given table represents the categories of age groups of the surveyed domestic workers. It is evident that the majority of the Domestic Workers belong to the age category of 30-40, constituting 44 percentage of the total respondents, 25 percentage of the DWs belong to 40-50 age, 20 percentage belong to 20-30 years, 8 percentage belong to 50-60 years and 2 percent of the DWs belong to the age category 60-70.

Table 1. *Distribution of respondents based on age*

Categories	Age group of Domestic Workers	%
20-30	119	20.45
30-40	254	43.64
40-50	146	25.09
50-60	49	8.42
60-70	14	2.41
Total	582	100

Figure 1: Age group of the Domestic Workers



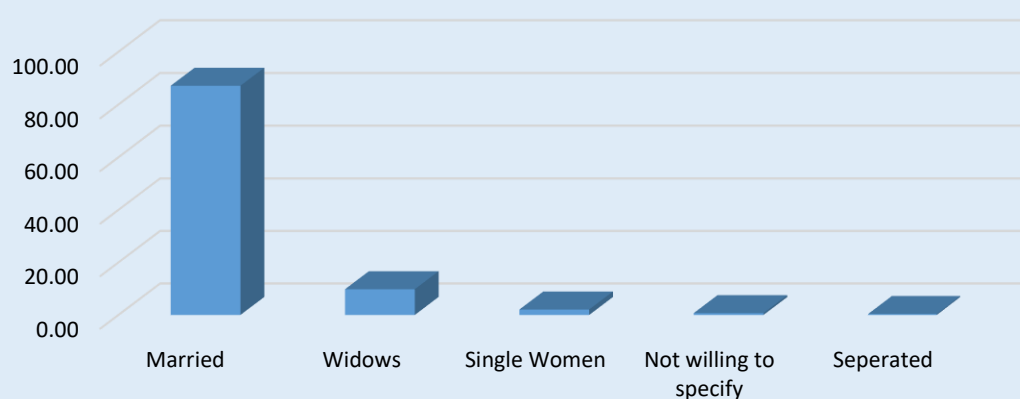
6.1.2 Marital Status

Among 582 domestic workers surveyed, 507 are married, which constitutes 87.11 percentage of the total sample, 57 of them are widows constituting 9.79 percentage, 12 of them are single women which is 2.06 percentage, 4 Domestic Workers weren't willing to specify their marital status which establishes 0.69 percentage and about 2 domestic workers (0.34 percentage) are divorcees.

Table 2 *Distribution of respondents based on marital status*

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Married	507	87.11
Widows	57	9.79
Single Women	12	2.06
Not willing to specify	4	0.69
Separated	2	0.34
Total	582	100

Figure 2: Marital Status of the Domestic Workers



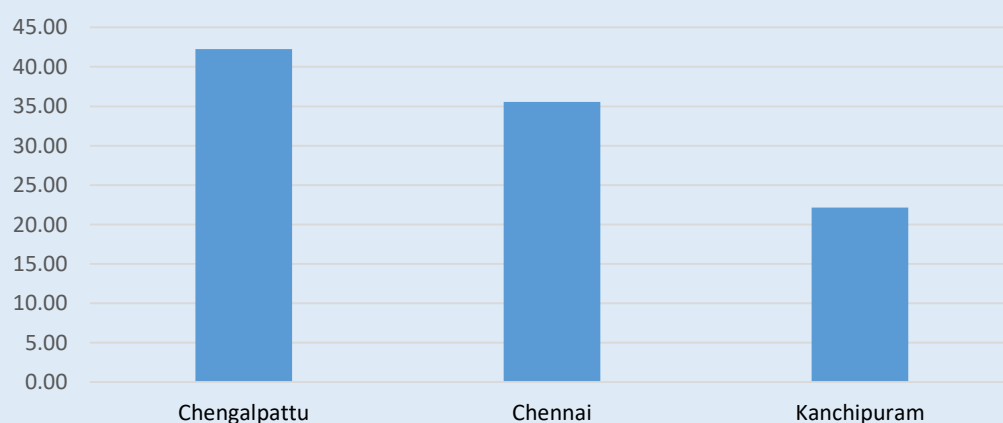
6.1.3 District

The below pie chart represents the districts of the respondents. The survey was carried out in 3 districts which includes Chengalpattu, Chennai and Kanchipuram. About 42 percent of respondents were from Chengalpattu, 36 percent from Chennai and 22 percent from Kanchipuram.

Table 3 *Distribution of respondents based on district*

Districts	Frequency	%
Chengalpattu	246	42.27
Chennai	207	35.57
Kanchipuram	129	22.16
Total	582	100

Figure 3: Districts of the respondents



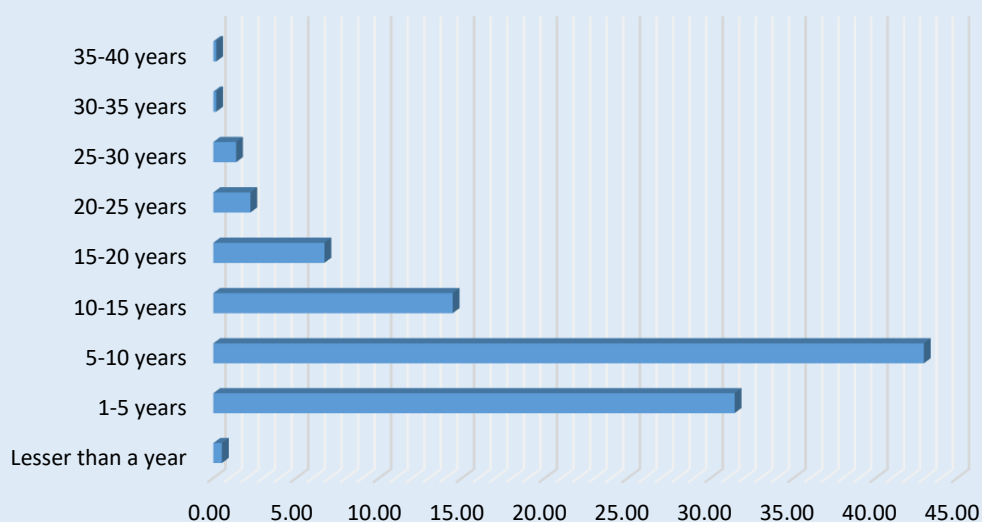
6.1.4 Years of experience

Years of experience of the domestic worker has been surveyed. Their experience range from less than a year to 40 years. The respondents who have 5-10 years of experience contribute the highest which is 42.96 percentage. Following this 31.44 percentage of domestic workers have 1-5 years of experience. The below table gives a clear picture of the years of experience of the surveyed individuals.

Table 4 Distribution of respondents based on years of experience

Years of experience	Frequency	%
Lesser than a year	3	0.52
1-5 years	183	31.44
5-10 years	250	42.96
10-15 years	84	14.43
15-20 years	39	6.70
20-25 years	13	2.23
25-30 years	8	1.37
30-35 years	1	0.17
35-40 years	1	0.17
Total	582	100

Figure 4: Years of experience



6.2. Employment status pre and post pandemic:

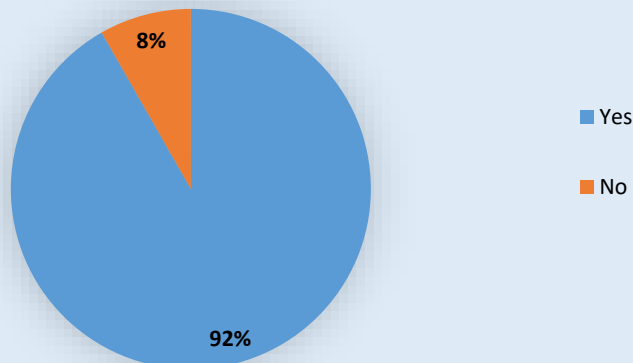
6.2.1. Job loss during the pandemic:

Job loss among domestic workers was a major issue during the pandemic and had a significant impact on their life and livelihood. Majority i.e. 91.75% of the surveyed respondents has expressed that they have faced job loss during the pandemic. While remaining 8.25 percentage did not face job loss.

Table 5. *Distribution of respondents based on job loss faced during pre and post pandemic*

Job loss	No of Domestic Workers who faced job loss during pandemic	%
Yes	534	91.75
No	48	8.25
Total	582	100

Figure 5: *Job loss during pre and post pandemic*



Interviewer (I): Can you share about the problems you have experienced during Covid-19 pandemic? Have you lost any jobs during the period? If yes, How many?

Respondent (R1): My family was terribly affected during COVID-19 pandemic, we had to quarantine in order to protect ourselves and we were isolated by the community people. I lost my job in one house because of covid. They have now given the job to another worker

and now I am unemployed, I am depending on my children to lead a life.

Another respondent mentioned that...

R2: Our family situation got worse during the pandemic. I lost my job. We were at home for 2 years without employment opportunities, even my husband who worked as a plumber lost his job. Before Covid I was working as a cook in two houses, my income is Rs. 108 per day. After the government lifted the lockdown, I started searching for a new job as a cook in nearby households; but couldn't find a suitable job. Due to health issues I prefer working as a cook, rather than a maid. After few months of searching I got a job as the pay was low I denied that job.

R3: All I can say is that I suffered a lot, and that suffering cannot be expressed in words. The suffering was mental, physical and financial. My husband and I also lost our jobs. We had no money to buy our basic needs. One of my employer did not allow me to continue my job in their house as they were afraid about the spread of the diseases. I have been in home for a long time without any employment. I worked in 3 houses before covid and because of covid I lost my job in 2 houses.

R6: Some employer fired us saying- "don't even come to my door-step we'll get infected" some other tortured us giving all the works in their home- I'm old and I'll do work as I can. Some employers left the place without even paying us- they moved to other places. We were left with no proper income.

Some Respondent 13, 15 and 25 said...

R13: During the pandemic my employer fired me, I had to stay at home because of this. There was no salary. After the lockdown was lifted, I went to the same employers to join back, but they said that they were able to do the work by themselves and did not need me anymore. I lost my job in 2 houses. And currently after a huge struggle I am working in 2 houses.

R15: I worked in 3 houses before the pandemic and because of pandemic I lost my job in 2 houses. Only after the government lifted the lockdown I was able to go for work regularly. Until that my family was financially struggling. Now I am working in 3 houses out of which 2 houses are new.

R25: I am 60 years old. I lost my job due to covid. My employer fired me after the covid

outbreak, only when any emergencies arises, they'll call me. I'll rush when I'm called because we don't have any other option. I used to give all the extra auto fare, tie up my own mask and be there the next minute. They haven't even provided me a mask or an amount for travel, while asking their ignorant remarks would make me feel worried whether I'd lose this source of income too. Thereafter, I chose Silence.

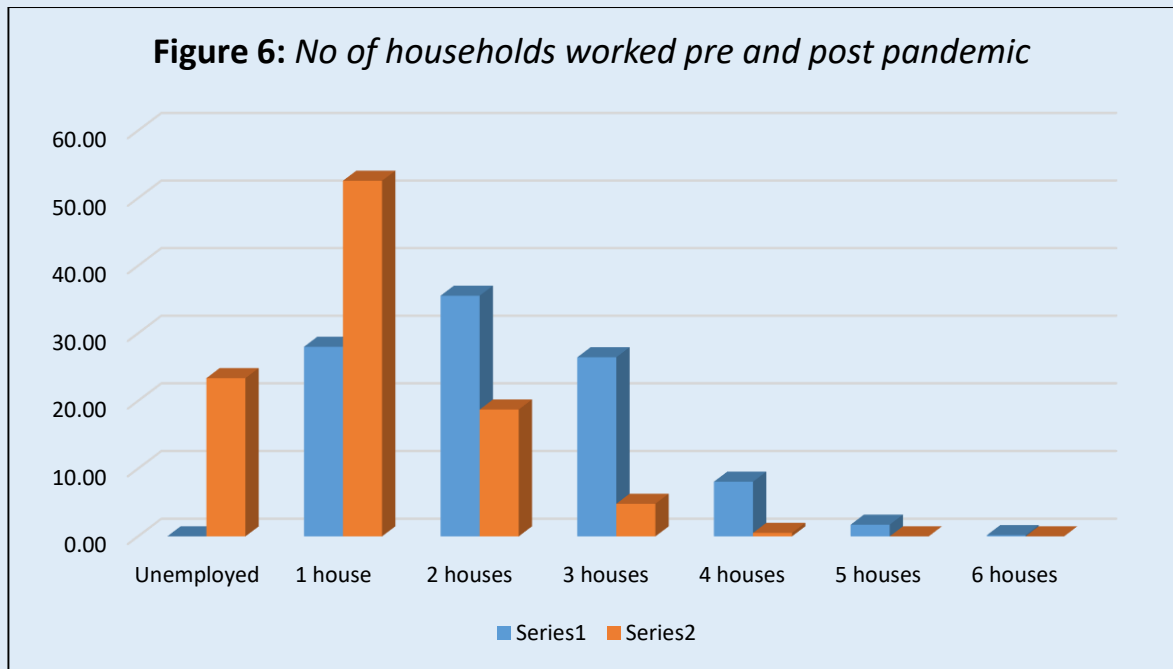
6.2.2. Comparative analysis on the impact of pandemic in the employment status of domestic workers (before-after)

Determining the impact of the pandemic on the lives of domestic worker is very crucial, hence a comparative analysis on the pre & post pandemic employment status was done to give a clearer picture. The below table shows the impact of the pandemic on their employment.

A comparative analysis on the employment status of the respondents shows that there is a rise in the unemployment from 0 to 23.37 percentage despite the decrease in number of COVID -19 cases. The number of domestic workers who work in only one house has increased from 28.01 percentage to 52.58 percent which creates a 26.12 percent difference. The maximum number of houses the respondents have worked up to 6 houses before the pandemic was 0.17%, this has reduced to 0.

Table 6 *Distribution of respondents based on no of households worked pre and post pandemic*

No of houses	No of houses working before COVID-19	%	No of houses working after COVID-19	%
Unemployed	0	0	136	23.37
1 house	163	28.01	306	52.58
2 houses	207	35.57	109	18.73
3 houses	154	26.46	28	4.81
4 houses	47	8.08	3	0.52
5 houses	10	1.72	0	0
6 houses	1	0.17	0	0
Total	582	100	582	100

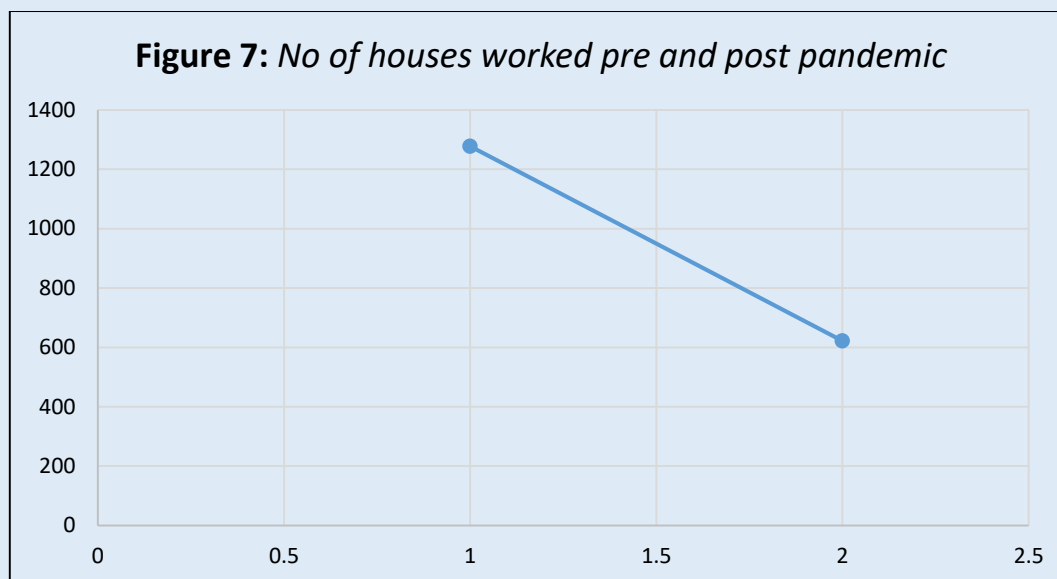


6.2.3 Comparative analysis on the number of houses worked pre and post covid

As the survey has proved that there has been a drastic increase in unemployment among the surveyed domestic worker, it is essential to determine the number of houses that the worked pre and post pandemic. The below table shows that the surveyed domestic workers have worked in a total of 1278 before the pandemic, while the number of houses they have been working after the pandemic (during the survey period) is only 622.

Table 7. *Distribution of respondents based on no of households they are working pre and post pandemic*

Total number of houses worked	Frequency
Total houses worked Pre-pandemic	1278
Total houses worked Post-pandemic	622



6.2.4 Analysis on the working hours of domestic workers pre and post pandemic

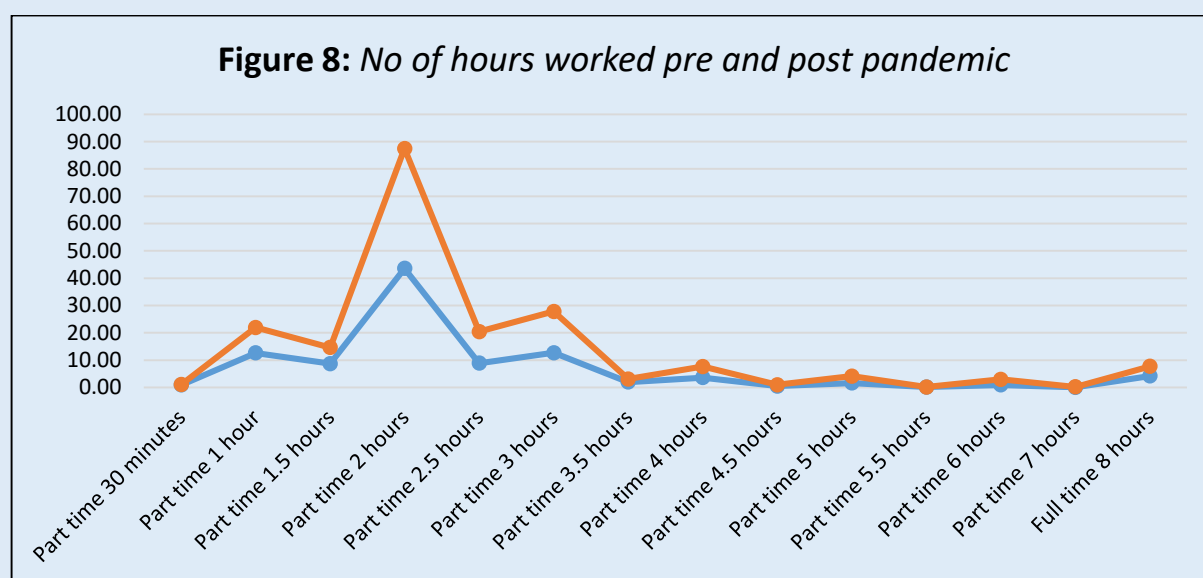
The term “Working hour” is the period of time that a person spends as a paid labour. The World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization estimated that globally in 2016 one in ten workers were exposed to working 55 or more hours per week and 745,000 people died as a result of various underlying diseases. The study intended to determine the number of hours a domestic worker worked in pre and post covid context. The below table provides a clearer picture and the number of working hour ranges between Part time 30 minutes to Full time 8 hours.

Table 8. Distribution of respondents based on their working hours of pre and post pandemic.

No of hours worked	Frequency (pre-pandemic)	%	Frequency (post-pandemic)	%
Part time 30 minutes	11	0.86	1	0.16
Part time 1 hour	159	12.44	58	9.32
Part time 1.5 hours	111	8.69	37	5.95
Part time 2 hours	556	43.51	273	43.89
Part time 2.5 hours	113	8.84	72	11.58
Part time 3 hours	162	12.68	94	15.11
Part time 3.5 hours	25	1.96	7	1.13
Part time 4 hours	47	3.68	25	4.02

Part time 4.5 hours	6	0.47	3	0.48
Part time 5 hours	21	1.64	16	2.57
Part time 5.5 hours	2	0.16	0	0.00
Part time 6 hours	11	0.86	13	2.09
Part time 7 hours	0	0.00	1	0.16
Full time 8 hours	54	4.23	22	3.54
Total	1278	100	622	100

It is evident that most of the domestic workers tend to work for 2 hours in a household contributing 43.51 percent during the pre Covid period and 43.89 percent post covid. With 2 hours being the highest number of hours worked, following that Part time 3 hours has a drastic change in both pre and post pandemic with ranges 12.68 and 15.11 percentage respectively. It was also found that most of the workers are part timers as they have to take care of their families after their work. Also a very small portion of respondents, 4.23 percent and 3.54 percent of them work as full time workers.



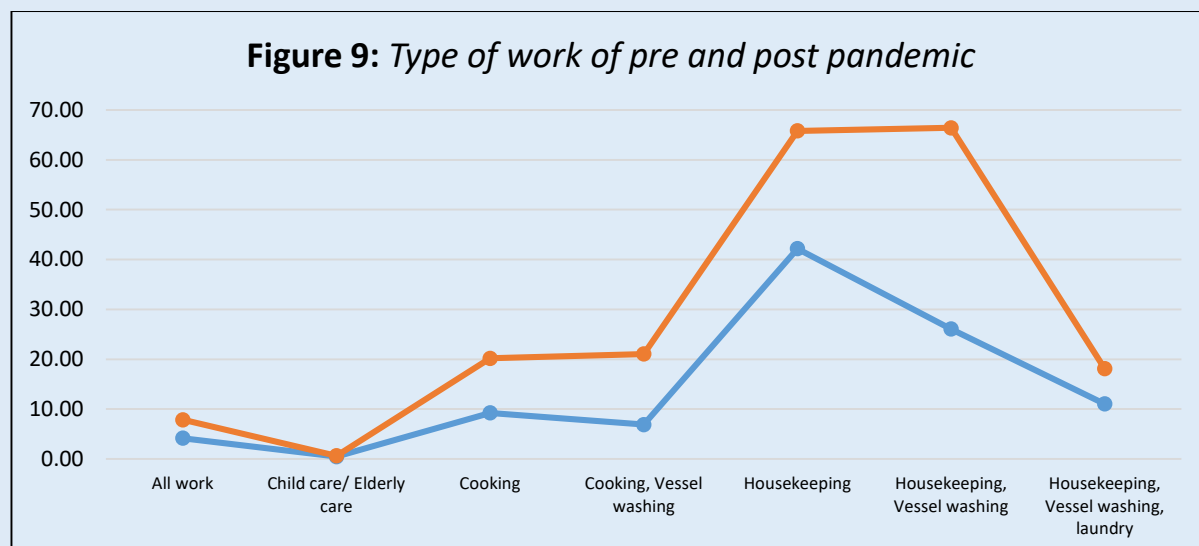
6.2.5 Analysis on the type of work- pre and post pandemic

Domestic workers perform various types of household services for their employer. Their work mostly involves household care, cooking, laundry and ironing. In some cases they also take care of children and elderly. The contribution and skill of domestic worker is mostly unrewarded. The study intends to analyse the type of household chores performed by the domestic workers during the pre and post pandemic period.

Table 9 *Distribution of respondents based on the type of work of pre and post pandemic*

Type of work	Frequency (pre-pandemic)	%	Frequency (post-pandemic)	%
All work	53	4.15	23	3.70
Child care/ Elderly care	6	0.47	1	0.16
Cooking	118	9.23	68	10.93
Cooking, Vessel washing	88	6.89	88	14.15
Housekeeping	539	42.18	147	23.63
Housekeeping, Vessel washing	333	26.06	251	40.35
Housekeeping, Vessel washing, laundry	141	11.03	44	7.07
Total	1278	100	622	100

It is determined from the above table that before the pandemic, 42.18 percent of the work performed only housekeeping, while after the pandemic only 23.63 percent workers were involved in housekeeping. The term housekeeping includes dusting, sweeping and mopping the workplace. Post pandemic there has been a shift in this where in 40.35 percent of the work done is housekeeping and Vessel washing indicating that the workers have chosen to increase their work to earn more, while it was 26.06 percent before the pandemic. The least type of work done by the surveyed domestic workers both during the pre and post pandemic has been identified as Child/ Elderly care constituting less than 1 percent in both pre and post pandemic phase.



6.2.6 Analysis of the pay scale and hourly of the domestic workers:

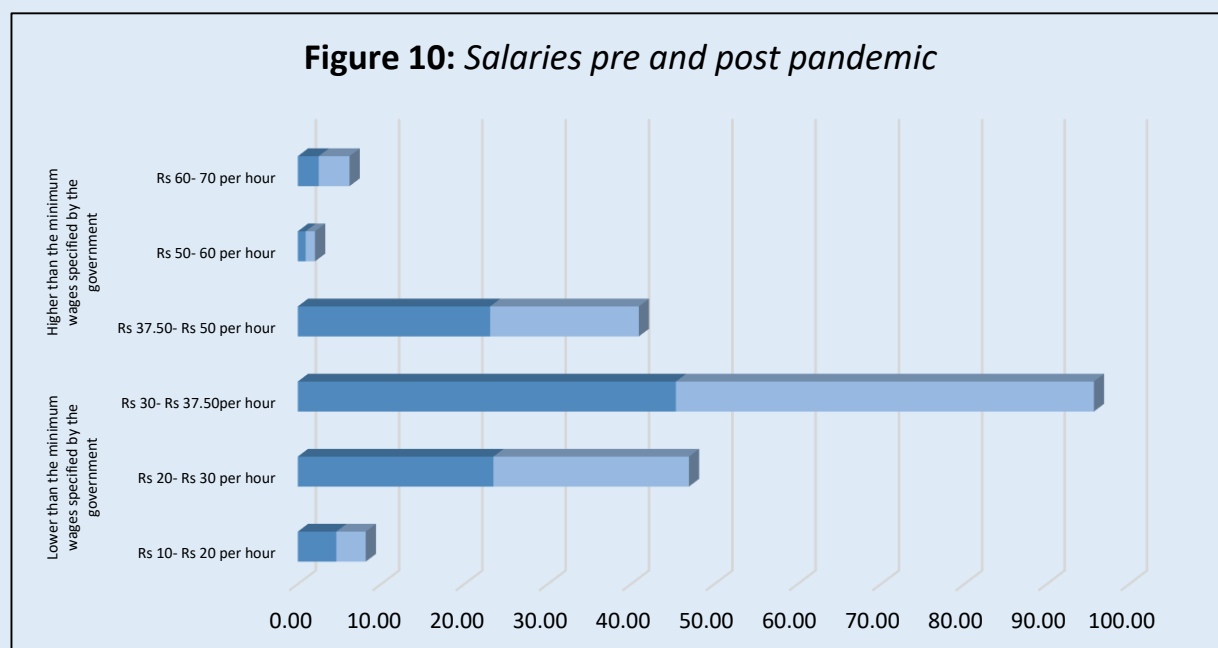
A decent work can be determined by the productive work in conditions of decent pay, freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Domestic work is not an exemption to this criterion. After the struggles by the Domestic Workers' Union in Tamil Nadu the Tamil Nadu Government included the Domestic Workers in the Minimum Wages Act but it is very low not up to the standard of ILO convention. The minimum wage that has been fixed by the government is Rs 37 per hour. This amount prescribed by the government is not insufficient for them to run their families. However, the domestic workers are empowered by TNDWWT, to receive Rs 80 per hour as a salary. Also, few of them do not receive even the minimum amount prescribed by the government. The below tables show the pay scale and hourly pay received by the surveyed domestic workers.

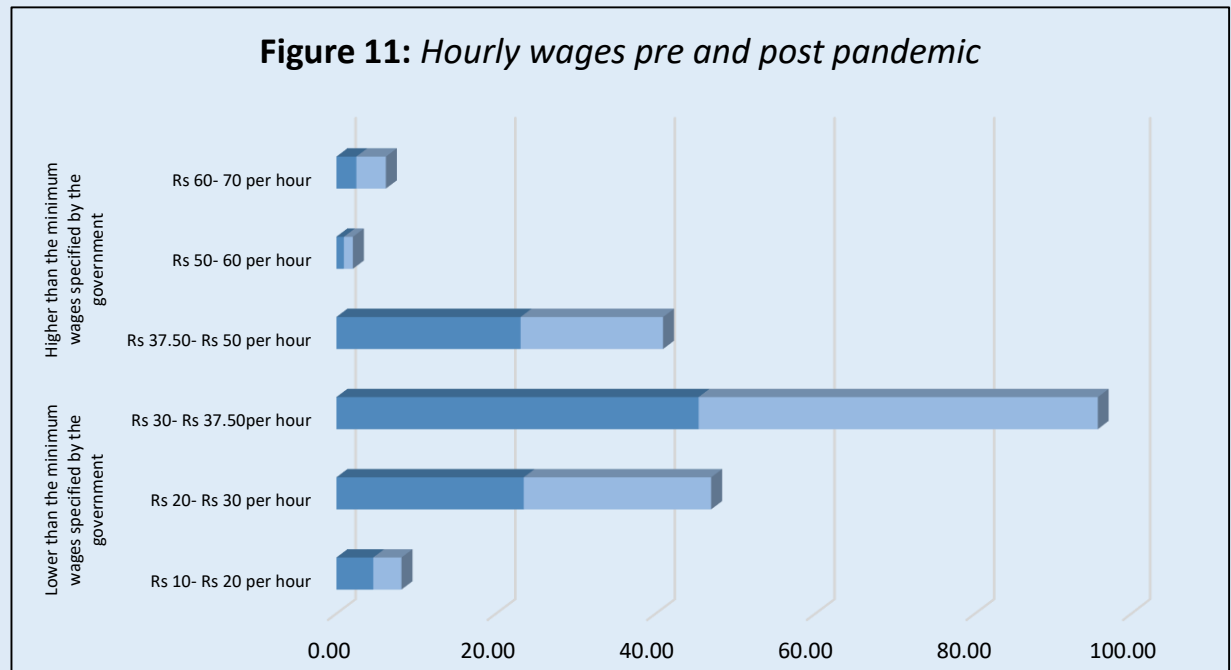
Table 10. Distribution of respondents based on their salaries pre and post pandemic

Salary	Frequency (pre-pandemic)	%	Frequency (post-pandemic)	%
Lesser than 1000	156	12.21	44	7.07
1000-2000	632	49.45	299	48.07
2000-3000	310	24.26	181	29.10
3000-4000	69	5.40	44	7.07
4000-5000	49	3.83	28	4.50
5000-6000	20	1.56	7	1.13
6000-7000	9	0.70	2	0.32
7000-8000	26	2.03	13	2.09
8000-9000	4	0.31	3	0.48
9000-10000	3	0.23	1	0.16
Total	1278	100	622	100

Higher/ Lower Minimum wage	Hourly wages	Frequency (pre-pandemic)	%	Frequency (post-pandemic)	%
Lower than the minimum wages specified by the government	Rs 10- Rs 20 per hour	59	4.62	22	3.54
	Rs 20- Rs 30 per hour	300	23.47	146	23.47
	Rs 30- Rs 37.50per hour	580	45.38	313	50.32
Higher than the minimum wages specified by the government	Rs 37.50- Rs 50 per hour	295	23.08	111	17.85
	Rs 50- 60 per hour	12	0.94	7	1.13
	Rs 60- 70 per hour	32	2.50	23	3.70
Total		1278	100.00	622	100.00

Figure 10: Salaries pre and post pandemic





While calculating the salary per hour received by the domestic worker, it was categorised as lesser and more than the minimum wages specified by the government. The data reveals that domestic workers receive lesser than the minimum wages specified by the government (starting from Rs 10 to Rs 37.50 per hour) constituting about, 71.47% during the pre-pandemic period and this has significantly increased to 77.33 percentage during post pandemic period. On the contrary 26.52 percentage and 22.68 percentage of them received more than the minimum wages during pre- pandemic and post pandemic period respectively. The workers stated that they have been able to get minimum wages more than the specified amount because of the intervention of TNDWWT in giving them awareness about current minimum wages and their right to bargain it from their employers.

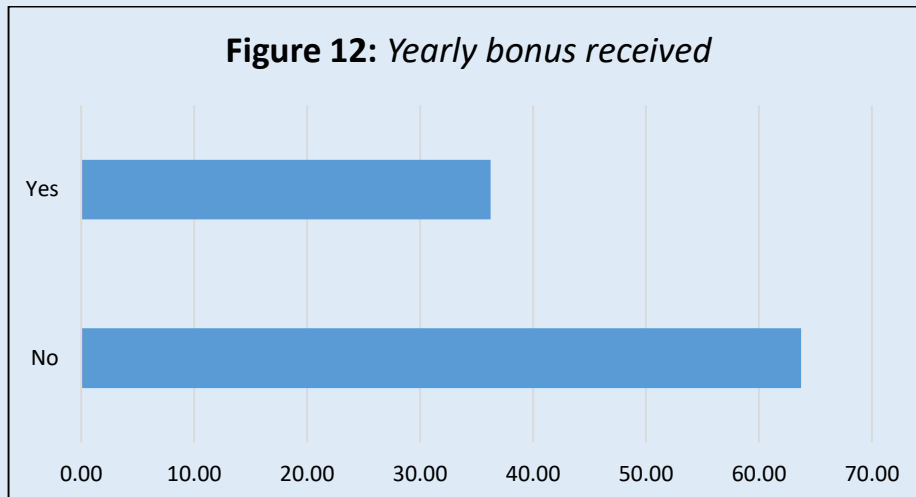
6.2.7. Analysis on the status of yearly bonus

Yearly bonus for a Domestic worker is a basic right just like any other worker as it is a means of recognition or reward for the work done by them. The study aims to understand the pattern of bonus given to domestic workers and derived the following results.

Table 11. *Distribution of respondents based on the status of yearly bonus*

Yearly bonus	Frequency	%
No	371	63.75
Yes	211	36.25
Total	582	100

Majority of the workers (63.75 %) expressed that they are not given with any bonus and 36.25 percent of them has stated that they receive bonus during festival as cash or kind. Kind mostly include a saree and at times a sweet box. The interview questionnaire has captured the workers' efforts in receiving their bonus and the reactions towards it from their employers.



I: What do you have to share related to the annual bonus you receive? How did your employer react when you asked for bonus?

R5: I have been employed in a company on a contract basis. Even if I ask for bonus the company owner will say ask the contractor to get the bonus through agency. I do not receive any bonus from my employer or through the agency.

R4: I haven't received any annual bonus so far. But I used to ask my employer for it during festival seasons, but my employer hasn't given any bonus till now.

R6: Yes, I have received bonus during festival season. They will give my one-month income as bonus.

R10: They will not provide bonus but they will give money when I need. They will buy saree for me during festivals which is not what I want.

R12: In one of the houses that I work, they give me a yearly bonus, but it would be a half of my salary. Whereas in another house the employer has not given any bonus. Even if ask for bonus, the employer won't reply.

R13: My new employer says that only after working for 6 months, they can give me 75% bonus and after 1 year they would give bonus yearly on basis. I have not received any bonus so far. If I ask the employer, they say that I have not

been working here for a long time so I cannot receive bonus.

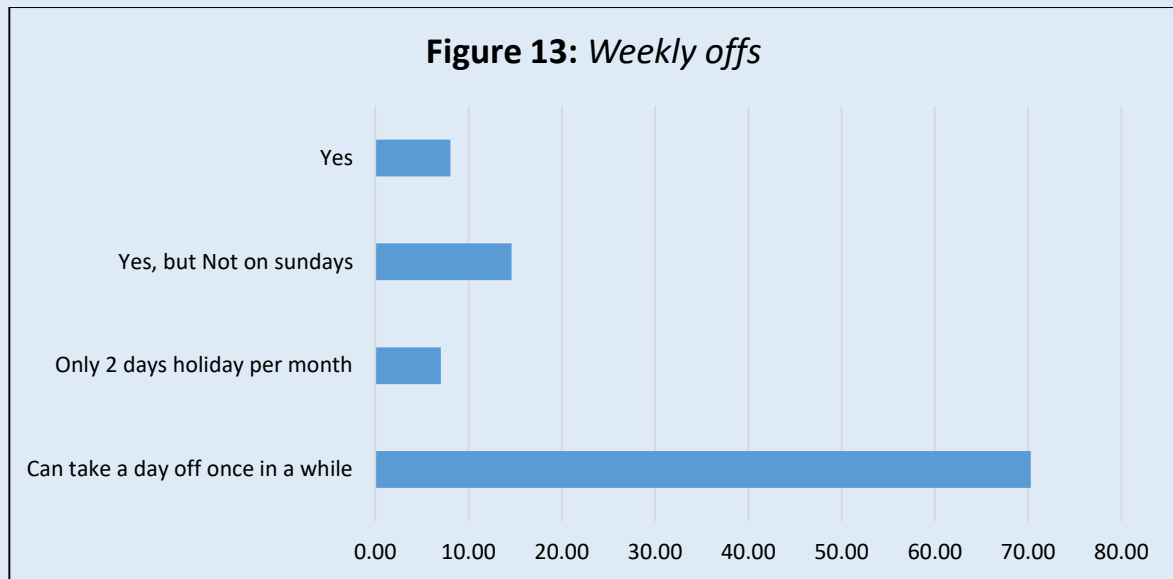
R15: I was able to receive my bonus from 2 employers out of the 3. The 3rd employer said that they are not willing to give any bonus.

6.2.8. Analysis on the status of weekly offs

Weekly offs are an essential part of a job as it enables an employee to focus on their life outside of their work and will give the employee a space to re-energise themselves for the upcoming week. It is a parameter that determines the decent work of a Domestic worker. The Domestic Workers Recommendation 201, 2011 mentions that “(1) Weekly rest should be at least 24 consecutive hours. (2) The fixed day of weekly rest should be determined by agreement of the parties, in accordance with national laws, regulations or collective agreements, taking into account work exigencies and the cultural, religious and social requirements of the domestic worker and (3) Where national laws, regulations or collective agreements provide for weekly rest to be accumulated over a period longer than seven days for workers generally, such a period should not exceed 14 days for domestic workers. But many domestic workers does not have access to weekly offs. The study aims to analyse data on the status of the weekly offs for the domestic workers.

Table 12. *Distribution of respondents based on the status of weekly offs*

Weekly off	Frequency	%
Can take a day off once in a while	409	70.27
Only 2 days holiday per month	41	7.04
Yes, but Not on Sundays	85	14.60
Yes	47	8.08
Total	582	100



The above table and graph illustrate that 70.27 percent of the workers are allowed to take a day off once in a while for any personal emergencies. 14.60 percentage of the workers are allowed to take weekly off on a day other than Sunday. 7.04 percent of the workers are permitted to take two days off per month while 8.08 percentage of the surveyed workers are given weekly offs on Sundays.

I: Do you get weekly leave? What are the problems you have faced while asking for it?

R10: Yes, I used to take a day off for each weak in one house. But I am not allowed to take leave without prior permission even if there is any emergency situation. I work as a cook in a firm and my role is to make chapatti every day, and the employers sells the chapattis that I make in retail market. So if I take leave without informing they wouldn't be able to make as many Chapattis.

Some respondents mentioned...

R13: I have spoken to my employer and got weekly offs on Sundays. Despite this my employer asks that they stay at home only on Sundays, if I take an off on the same day then they have to take care of the house work. But I have strongly stated that I will not be able to work on Sundays as I want to spend some time with my family.

R15: There is no weekly offs for me. My employer permits me to take 2 days off per month. Despite of this, if I ask for leave they question me a lot and then only permit me.

R25: My employer does not grant me any weekly holidays. I am permitted to take 2 days off a month. Even for that, my employer deducts salary from my total income during the month calculating the number of leave taken.

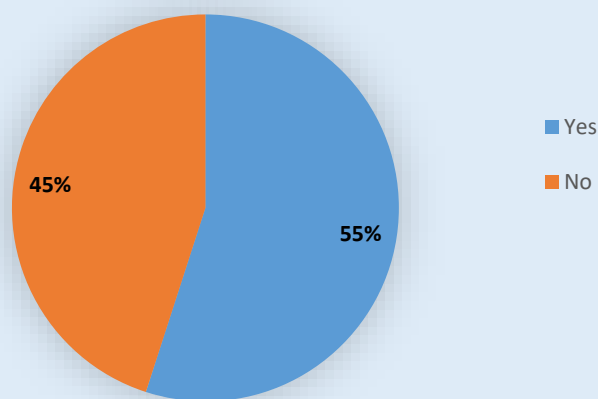
6.2.9. Analysis on the willingness to have a contract with the employer

Employment contracts are very important in safeguarding the rights of both the employer and employee. A domestic workers' agreement should contain components such as job description, working hours, remuneration, specifications about leave, and notice period. It is noteworthy to mention about the International Labour Organization's Convention 189 where in the need for an employer and employee contract. The study targeted to determine the willingness of domestic workers. Out of the 582 surveyed domestic workers, 54.98 percent of the workers have shown their willingness to have an agreement with their employers, but their employers are not willing to have an agreement. About 45.02 percent of the workers were not willing to have a contract as the agreement would make it hard for the workers to quit their jobs.

Table 13. *Distribution of respondents based on the willingness to have a contract with the employer*

Willingness to have an agreement with the employer	Frequency	%
Yes	320	54.98
No	262	45.02
Total	582	100

Figure 14: *Willingness to have a workplace contract*



I: What do you think about entering employment-agreement with the employers? What will be your employer's reaction when you say about employment-agreement?

R1: I am willing to have an agreement. I must approach my employer; I don't know what will be their reaction.

R4: Yes, I am willing to put agreement but I have hesitation to initiate agreement with my owner.

R7: I have not yet asked my employer about signing an agreement. I am scared to ask them as they would not like it and it will affect my job.

R13: I would really like to have a fair agreement with the employer, but none of the owners are willing to sign up agreements. I have never asked about the agreement to my employer. But they have their own agreement to ensure that we domestic workers work for at least 3 months without quitting.

R15: I am willing to have an agreement with the employer. It will ensure my workplace safety. If asked my employers they might say that they are not willing to have an agreement and if I ask they might tell me to quit my job.

6.3. Occupational Health and Safety issues of the Domestic Workers

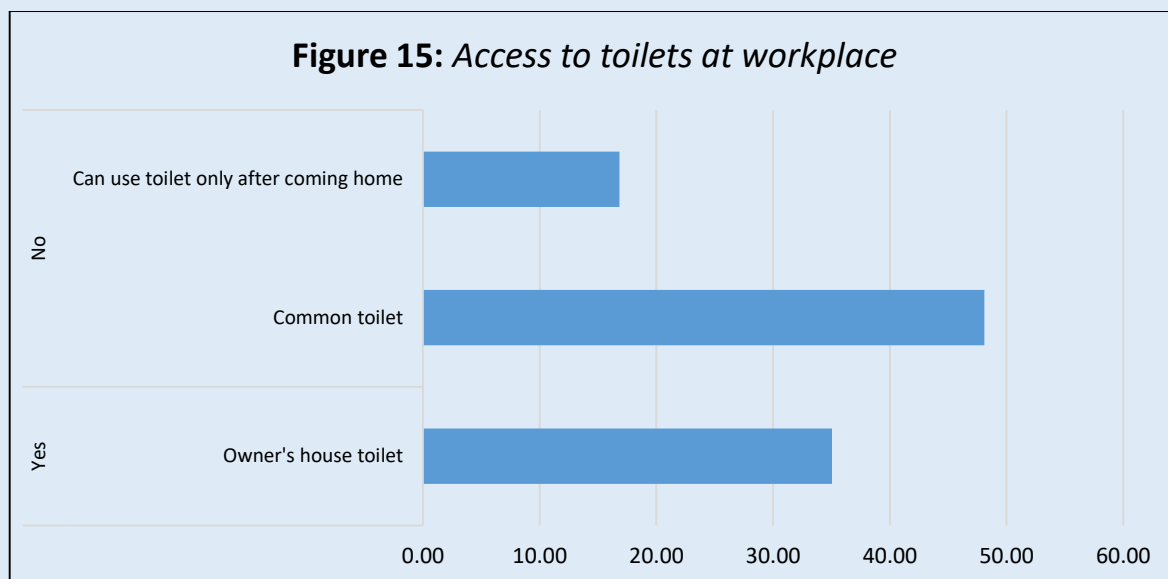
Health and Safety risks for domestic workers usually occur because the workers are involved in cooking with open fire, handle harmful chemical agents without proper equipment, lifting heavy weights and much more. But health is one major concern which is ignored and does not cover informal workers like domestic workers. The prime reason for the Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) regulations does not protect domestic workers as their work place is often a private home. The survey focused on the OHS issues faced by domestic workers based on factors like, ability to use toilets at the workplace, usage of chemicals, provision of workplace safety equipment, occupational health concerns faced by domestic workers, availability of medical facilities at the workplace and the employer's willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries.

6.3.1 Analysis on the ability to use toilet in the employer's house

Access to adequate toilet facilities is a basic human need and right which should be available freely in any setting including the workplace. But domestic workers face issues with using the toilets in their workplace as the employers do not allow them to use it. The irony in this case is that the employers want the domestic workers to clean their toilets but prohibit them from using it which is a form of discrimination. The study aims to capture the current scenario of the worker's ability to use toilets in their workspace.

Table 14. *Distribution of respondents based on the ability to use toilet in the employer's house*

Ability to use toilet in the employer's house	Toilet usage	Frequency	%
Yes	Owner's house toilet	204	35.05
	Common toilet	280	48.11
No	Can use toilet only after coming home	98	16.84
Total		582	100



The above table and graph indicates that only 35.05 percent of the workers are able to utilize the toilets at the workplace, while 64.95 percent of the workers were unable to utilize their workplace toilets and had to use a common toilet/ public toilet or had to control their need to urinate leading to various underlying urinary diseases.

Q1: Are there rules regarding the use of restrooms in your workplace? What are the terms? What is the reason they say for it?

R5: I am not allowed to use their house toilets. There is a watchmen working in the same apartment. He has been provided with a hut, backside of which he has a small restroom. I have to use that restroom in case of an emergency.

R15: Some employers allow me to use their house toilets, but others do not allow me to use it. In such cases I have to rely on common toilets.

R16: We are given a separate toilet on the terrace. We cannot use the same toilet as others. They are employers and we are employees, so we cannot use their toilet.

R18: No, it's different. In the flat I work, there is an arrangement made like this- a separate toilet is built below for the Domestic workers. We have to use them only. All the domestic workers there are using the same toilet.

R20: Right now, my employers let me go to the toilet, which is built outside their home. I have also seen people who let us go in the toilets inside their home. Both type of employers exists.

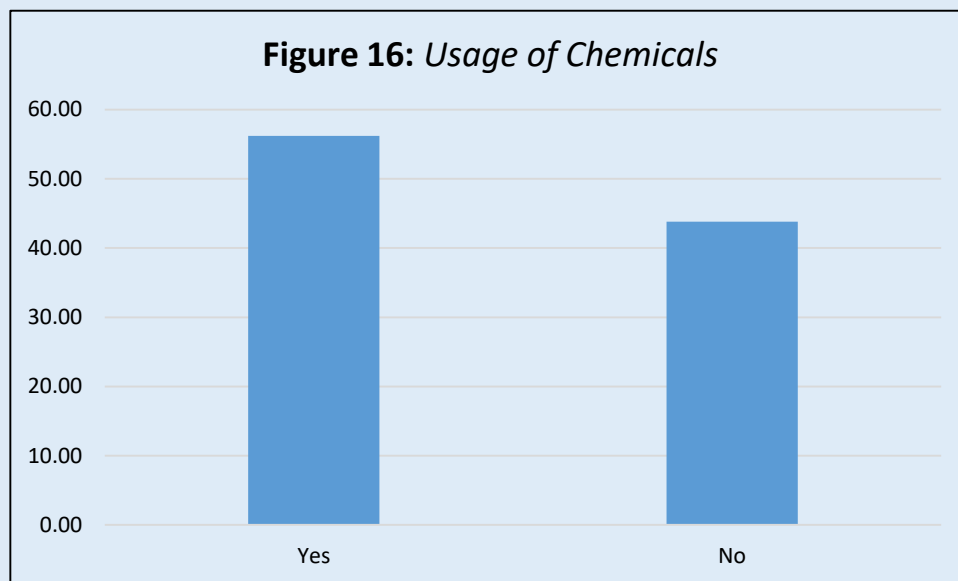
R22: My employer would say me that I shouldn't use their common toilet. It was initially hard to digest. But, later I got used to the system. I understood that there is a dimension like this- we are employees and they are employers, we are seen as inferior to them this is a truth and that cannot be changed.

6.3.2 Analysis on the usage of chemicals in workplace

Handling chemicals in work is a common practice for a domestic worker. The Chemicals used by the workers include products such as acid, laundry detergents, bleaches, dishwashing products and other household cleaners, as it can help improve cleaning efficiency and ensure hygiene in the workplace. According to the study, 100 percent of the workers use chemicals at their workplace in one or the other form.

Table 15. Distribution of respondents based on the usage of chemicals in workplace

Usage of Chemicals in workplace	Frequency	%
Yes	582	100
No	0	0
Total	582	100



I: What are the problems you face while handling chemicals like acid which can be harmful to

health?

R3: I use Harpic to wash toilets and bathroom. Even my employer won't force to use harmful chemicals such as acid. Sometimes using of Harpic may lead to headache and nasal discharge.

R4: As I am involved in cooking, I don't have to handle such harsh or harmful chemicals.

R5: They will instruct me to use such products. I use harmful acids to clean the toilets.

R8: While using the chemicals, I feel like sneezing-coughing and all. They tell me to use bleaching powder again and again. But using it would cause skin irritation for me, itching after that is horrible. I have informed the employers about this multiple times- they will refer to the previous workers and ignore our problems

R10: I usually have difficulty breathing while using these chemicals. The odour of these chemicals are so disturbing for me. But there is no other option than just adjust with it.

R13: I am not having any other health issues. Not yet, I have heard of people having trouble. But I am provided with a Harpic solution while washing toilets and all.

R17: I get skin allergies and infections after using chemicals. That is the main reason behind my leave. I often get this issue when my hands and legs' skin breaks out. I struggle with this issue. It's painful these days. I won't be able to do my household works even

R23: I am not having any other health issues like lung issues yet. But I often get skin issues. My hands are the ones which get affected the most. It gets bubbles and rashes, sometimes it breaks out. I am used to those things.

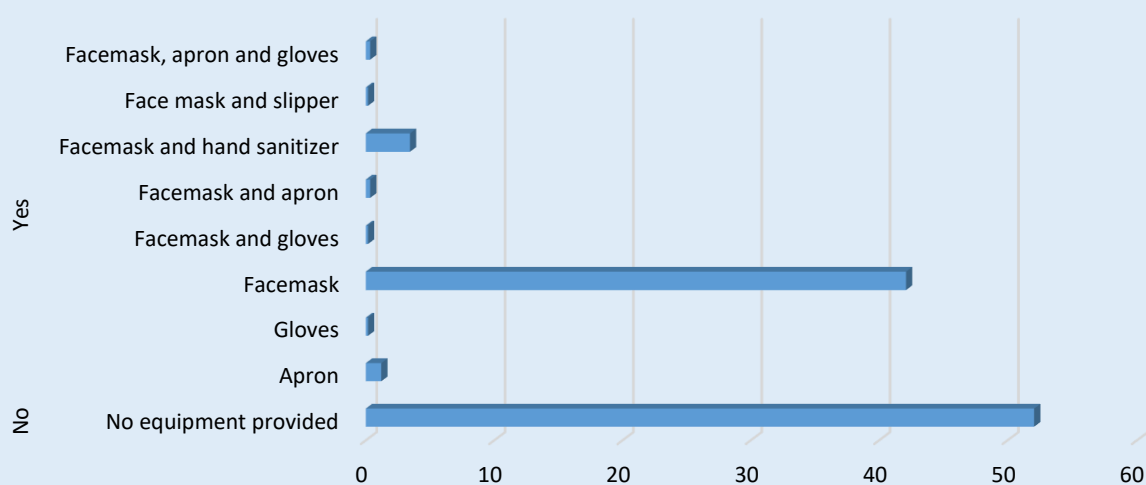
6.3.3. Analysis on the occupational health and safety equipment provided

The below table analyses the occupational health and safety equipment used by the surveyed domestic workers. About 52.06 percent of the workers have not been provided any safety equipment at their workplace. While 46.56 percent of the workers agreed to be using workplace safety equipment. Most of the workers' safety equipment used include face masks as a reason for the pandemic. Other equipment includes Apron, Gloves, hand sanitizers and gloves that contribute a very small portion of the workers.

Table 16. *Distribution of respondents based on the occupational health and safety equipment provided*

Provision of workplace safety equipment	Type of equipment provided	Frequency	%
No	No equipment provided	303	52.06
Yes	Apron	7	1.20
	Gloves	1	0.17
	Facemask	245	42.10
	Facemask and gloves	1	0.17
	Facemask and apron	2	0.34
	Facemask and hand sanitizer	20	3.44
	Face mask and slipper	1	0.17
	Facemask, apron and gloves	2	0.34
Total		582	100

Figure 17: *Access to occupational health and safety equipments*



I: Does your employer provide you safety equipment to work? What equipment do they provide?

R2: They provide but there is no need for such safety equipment while cooking. Apart from this first-aid kit are always available in their house. If there are any emergencies they will make arrangements.

R10: Yes, those facilities are available in their house. Safety equipment such as gloves, mask, first aid kit, etc. is available.

R15: I am not having any other health issues like lung issues yet. But I often get skin issues. My hands are the ones which get affected the most. It gets bubbles and rashes, sometimes it breaks out. I am used to those things.

R19: After corona they are providing masks and gloves but before they won't give that equipment.

R20: There are no such issues that are bothering my health. I am not facing any such issues by using these chemicals.

R22: I usually have difficulty breathing while using these chemicals. The odour of these chemicals are so disturbing for me. But there is no other option than just adjust with it.

R25: While using the chemicals, I feel like sneezing-coughing and all. They tell me to use bleaching powder again and again. But using it would cause skin irritation for me...itching after that is horrible. I have said the employers about this multiple times- they'll refer to the previous workers and ignore our problems

6.3.4 Analysis on the occupational health concerns faced and the causes

Domestic workers have hectic work schedules and they also face burden of other physical tasks daily. They are also forced to use various chemicals at their workplace. The salary they receive is usually insufficient, and they come from lower economic strata. All these factors contribute towards their occupational health. The data derived points out that out of the 582 domestic workers 105 workers do not face any health issues. The rest of the 477 workers have stated that they have faced multiple health concerns such as Allergies/ skin allergies, Knee pain, Hip pain, Back Pain, Foot pain, Joint pain, heel crack, Dizziness, Urinary Tract Infection, Blood Pressure and Breathing issues. When enquired about the causes of the health issues the major reasons stated by the workers were. continuous working hours, heavy workload, controlling urination, standing for too long while doing household chores, due to controlling urination, long working hours, not wearing footwear while using

chemicals, working with water for a long time and traveling for a long time. The highest number of people who experience health issues stated that it was caused due to heavy workload (206 people), while the second highest is being contributed by people who stated that they have been standing for too long while working (153 people).

Table 17. *Distribution of respondents based on the occupational health concerns faced and the causes*

Occupational health concerns	Type of health issues	Frequency	Causes of the health issues	Frequency
No	No health issues	105	No issues experienced	105
Yes	1. Allergy	5	1. Continuous working hours	8
	2. Skin diseases	7	2. Controlling urination	5
	3. Knee pain	282	3. Controlling urination and standing too long	2
	4. Hip pain	194	4. Due to heavy workload	206
	5. Back pain	248	5. Due to acid use	10
	6. Leg pain	19	6. Due to heavy workload and using chemicals	3
	7. Foot pain	11	7. Standing too long while working	153
	8. Joint pain	1	8. Long working hours	69
	9. Heal crack	12	9. Long working hours and not wearing foot wear while using chemicals	1
	10. Dizziness	20	10. Not wearing footwear while using chemicals	2
	11. Urinary Tract Infection	9	11. Traveling and Due to long working hours while doing household chores	6

12. Blood Pressure 91

12. Usage of chemicals, Long working hours 8

13. Breathing problems 12

13. Working with water for long time 4

Figure 18: Health issues faced

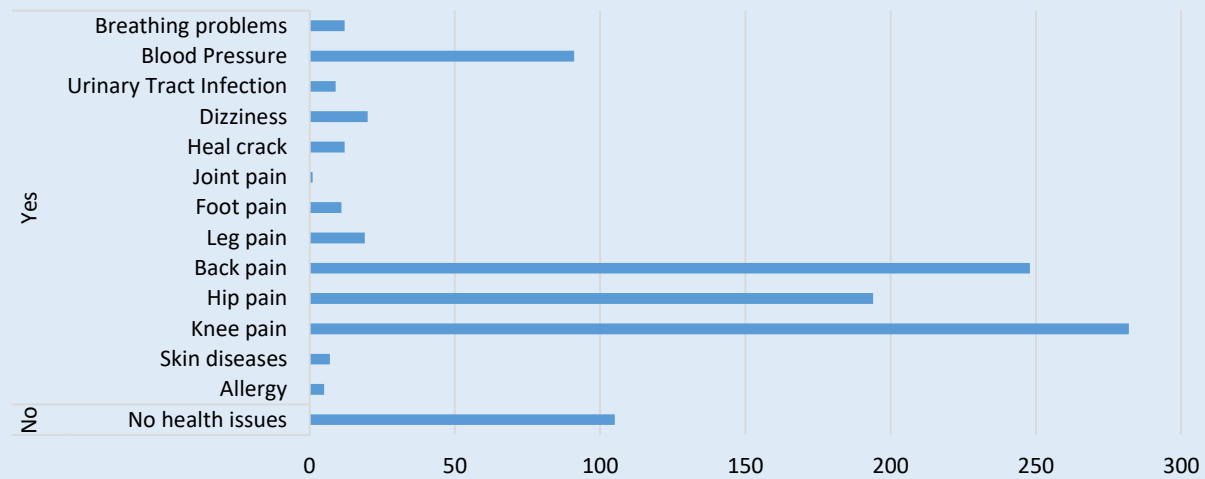
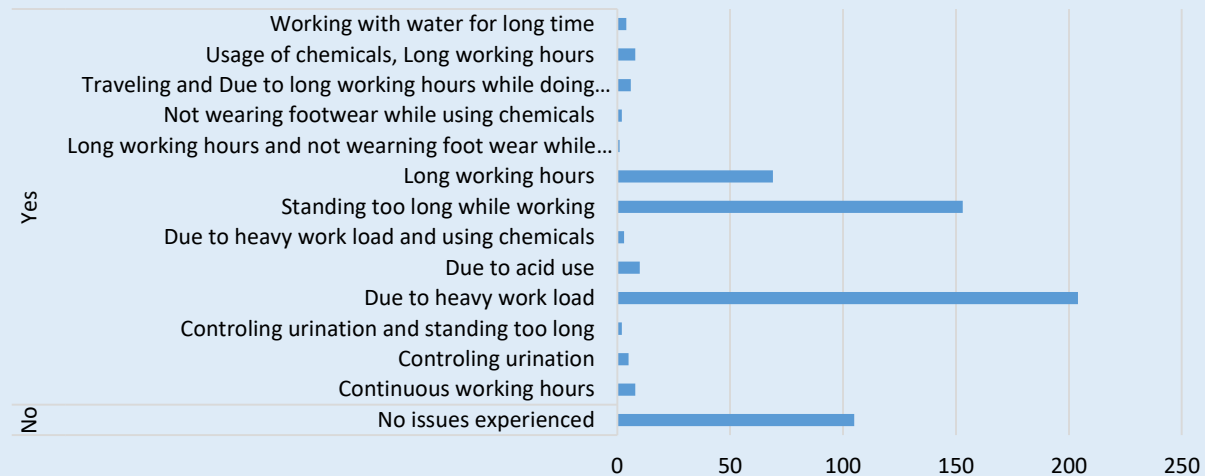


Figure 19: Causes of the health issues



I: What are the problems you face while handling chemicals like acid which can be harmful to health?

R1: Yes, I have been using acid to clean toilets at my employer's house. I get throat infection because of this. The fumes caused by the acid makes it hard for me to breath while cleaning the toilet.

R5: Throughout the day I keep standing at my work place. Because of this I have leg pain and back pain.

R6: There are no such issues that are bothering my health. I am not facing any such issues by using these chemicals.

R8: While using the chemicals, I feel like sneezing-coughing and all. They tell me to use bleaching powder again and again. But using it would cause skin irritation for me , itching after that is horrible. I have said the employers about this multiple times- they'll refer to the previous workers and ignore our problems

R14: I usually have difficulty breathing while using these chemicals. The odour of these chemicals are so irritating. But there is no other option than just adjust with it.

R17: I am not having any other health issues. Not yet, I have heard of people having trouble. But I am provided with a Harpic solution while washing toilets and all.

R18: I get skin allergies and infections after using chemicals. That is the main reason behind my leave. I often get this issue when my hands and legs' skin breaks out. I struggle with this issue. It's painful these days. I won't be able to do my household works even

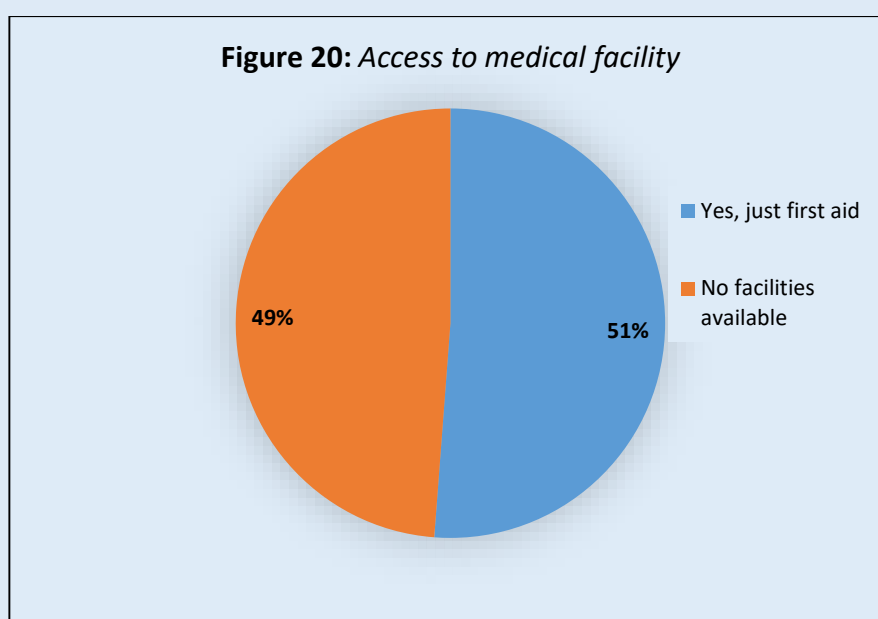
R24: I am not having any other health issues like lung issues yet. But I often get skin issues. My hands are the ones which get affected the most. It gets bubbles and rashes, sometimes it breaks out. I am used to those things.

6.3.5 Analysis on the availability of basic medical facility at workplace

Basic medical facility at work is essential to cope up with emergency situations. While domestic workers' workplace being a private home, the possibilities of medical facility is less. The study determined the current situation of workers' access to basic medical facility and concluded that 51.20 percent of the workers had access to first aid kits at workplaces, while 48.80 percent had no access basic medical facility at their workplaces.

Table 18. *Distribution of respondents based on the availability of medical facility at workplace*

Availability of Medical facility	Frequency	%
Yes, just first aid	298	51.20
No facilities available	284	48.80
Total	582	100



6.3.6 Analysis of the employer's willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries

According to the International Labour Organization's Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) , the contingencies covered under the employment injury benefit include the accident-at-work or employment-related diseases such as sickness, temporary incapacity for work resulting from such a condition, total or partial loss of earning capacity, likely to be permanent, and the loss of support suffered by dependents as the result of the death of the breadwinner. The study with an aims to analyse the status of the Workplace security of the domestic workers and willingness of the employers to bear the cost of workplace injuries.

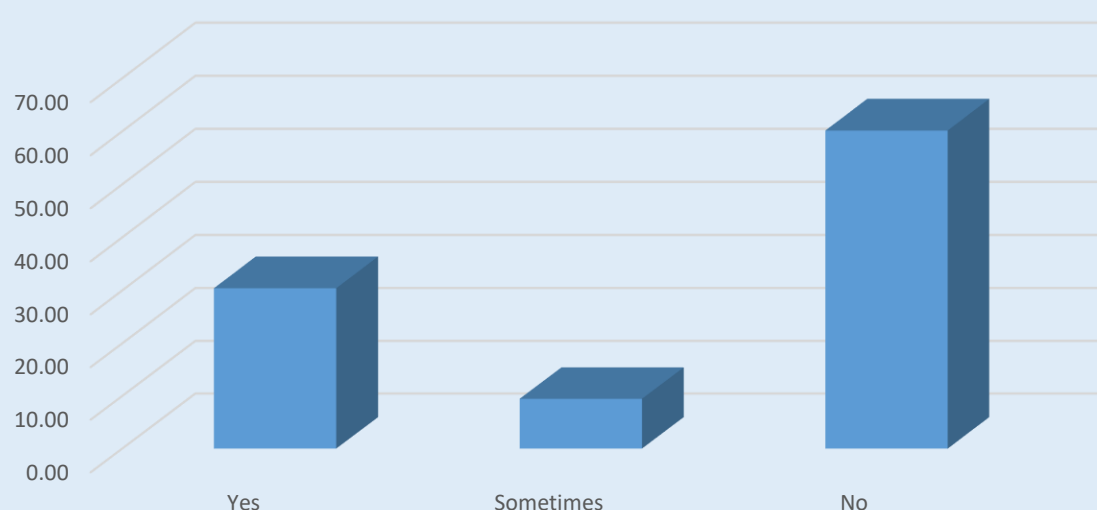
The below table and graph shows the employers' willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries. While asked the workers mentioned that 60.14 percent of the employers are not willing to bear the cost of workplace injuries. 30.41 percent of the workers mentioned that

their employers would bear the cost of workplace injuries. The remaining 9.45 percent of workers mentioned that their employers would help them sometimes.

Table 19. *Distribution of respondents based on the employer's willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries*

Employer's willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries	Frequency	%
Yes	177	30.41
Sometimes	55	9.45
No	350	60.14
Total	582	100

Figure 21: *Employers' Willingness to bear the cost of workplace injuries*



6.3.7 Analysis on the transportation expenses covered by the domestic worker

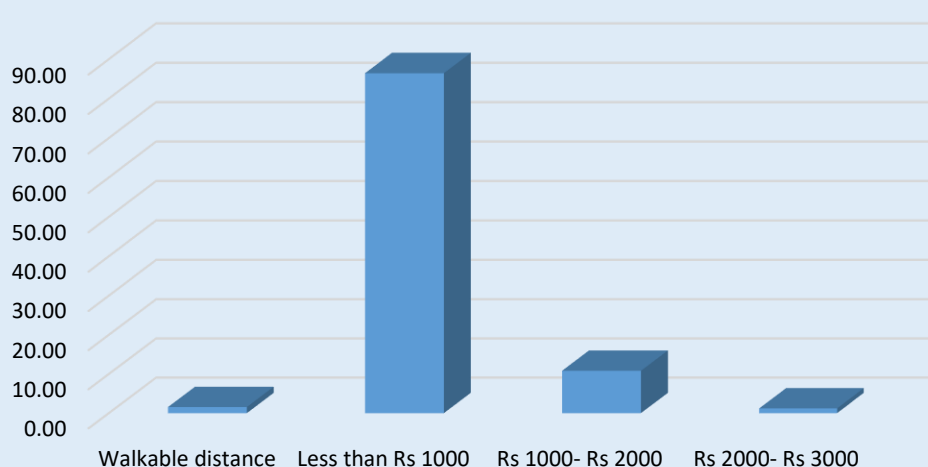
Commuting refers to a worker's travel from home to work and vice versa. The below table makes it evident that 86.43 percent of the surveyed workers spend less than Rs 1000 for commuting while 10.82 percent of the workers spend Rs 1000 to Rs 2000 per month.^{1.55}

percent of the workers that live within walking distance from their workplace, while 1.20 percent of the workers spend Rs 2000 to Rs 3000 per month.

Table 20. *Distribution of respondents based on the transportation expenses covered by the domestic worker*

Transportation charges to workplace	Frequency	%
Walkable distance	9	1.55
Less than Rs 1000	503	86.43
Rs 1000- Rs 2000	63	10.82
Rs 2000- Rs 3000	7	1.20
Total	582	100

Figure 22: *Transportation charges to workplace*



I: What will the employer do if any injuries occur while doing household work?

R2: Yes, they have supported me with my medical expenses. I met with an accident while cooking; my hand got injured. They have taken the whole medical treatment cost. But they won't encourage me if it happens continuously, and they won't be in charge of treatment costs.

R3: My employer would support me throughout the phase. She will give me an amount for treatment. If it is a small injury. They tell me to take care of myself. If it is a serious issue, they

will give me paid leave. There is no bad attitude from them regarding this.

R4: Even if they provide medical expenses if I got injured, they will cut the spent amount while giving my salary on hand.

R7: My employer mostly does not care about my situation. She tells me to do my work and then leave if I express some serious discomfort. She will not even pay me for my medical expenses there or give a paid medical leave if in need.

R9: If injuries occur... she will tie up the injury with a cloth and I will have to complete the work I started. They will not give me leave or even give me any medicines or even an amount to consult a doctor.

R12: No they don't provide me with any other help. We will have to manage our problems alone.

R20: We do not expect anything great from their side. But If something happens like burns or something, she gives ointment. If something else happens she will just give advice and leave- this is what happens usually. They do not provide me leave or medical support. Instead, they say its common that these things will be happen in workplace.

6.3.8 Awareness about the current minimum wages specified by the government.

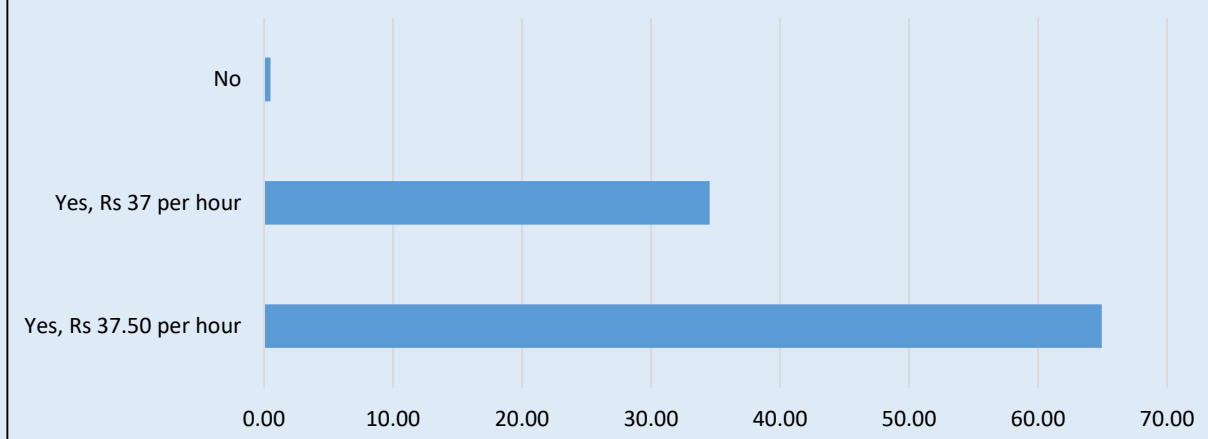
According to the International Labour Organization, Minimum wages is defined as the minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay wage earners for the work performed during a given period, which cannot be reduced by collective agreement or an individual contract. As per the Indian Constitution, 'Minimum Wage' has been defined as the level of income for skilled and unskilled workers which ensures a sustaining standard of living while also providing for some measure of comfort. A minimum wage not just supports the bare level of employment, but also seeks for viable continuous improvement. It aims at preventing exploitation of labour. These minimum wages standard is set by the respective country or state government.

The study implicates that most of the workers are aware about the minimum wages set by the state government. Among the respondents 64.95 percent mentioned that the minimum wages set was Rs 37.50 per hour, while 34.64 percent of them thought that the minimum wages was Rs 37 per hour. Less than a percent of the workers had no awareness about the minimum wages of the government.

Table 21. *Distribution of respondents based on the awareness of minimum wages specified by the government*

Awareness upon the current minimum wages specified by the government	Frequency	%
Yes, Rs 37.50 per hour	378	64.95
Yes, Rs 37 per hour	201	34.54
No	3	0.52
Total	582	100

Figure 23: *Awareness upon the current minimum wages specified by the government*



I: Do you know about the minimum wages fixed by the Tamil Nadu government for domestic workers? How much is it?

R1: Yes, it is about Rs. 37, I know this because, I never failed to attend the regular group meetings and programs conducted.

R2: Yes, I know the minimum wages is Rs. 37. I came to know only by attending regular area meetings and other programs.

R3: Yes, we are aware of that Tamil Nadu government has set Rs. 37.50/hr. We came to know only by attending programs and meetings conducted by the organization.

R19: Yes. It is 47 rupees now. But that is not enough. It would be better if it is at least 75

rupees.

R21: It is around 47 rupees now. But we need at least 80 rupees for living a decent life. Government should consider our day to day expenses as well.

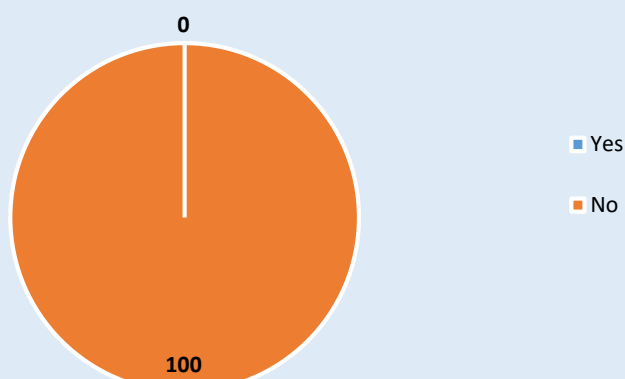
6.3.9. Analysis on the efficiency of current minimum wages to cope up with the current economic situation

The study aims to perceive the efficiency of current minimum wages to understand current economic situation of the surveyed the domestic workers. A recent study report published in The Times of India on May 2022, suggested that- Around 92% of Indian households' average monthly expenses went up 10% within three months. The economic situation has changed drastically post-pandemic but the least efforts have been taken by the government to support the poor-unorganised workers to survive the situation. It is proven that 100 percent of the surveyed workers have expressed that the minimum wages set by the government is insufficient to meet their expenses especially after the pandemic.

Table 22. *Distribution of respondents based on the efficiency of current minimum wages to cope up with the current economic situation*

Is the current minimum wages enough to cope up with the economic situation	Frequency	%
Yes	0	0
No	582	100
Total	582	100

Figure 24: Efficiency of current Minimum wages



I: Share your opinion on today's economic situation and whether the minimum wage set by the government is suitable for the current scenario?

R3: It is not enough. In this current situation Rs 37 per hour is barely enough for leading a normal life.

R5: For sure it is not sufficient for today's economic situation. Because there after a huge increase in the price due to inflation. As we are living in below poverty line, we could not able to meet our basic needs.

R7: As domestic work is undervalued, even this Rs.37.50/hr is not enough for us. As like every skilled employee & other professional, we are also working hard to fulfil our needs. I suffer to serve my family because our day-to-day expenditure is more than our income.

R11: In this current situation it is not enough to run a family. But the employers are not willing to give this money of Rs 40 per hour.

R15: It is not enough to run the families as many things are getting price hike.

R16: I am not aware of the minimum wages. But in this current scenario this is not enough for managing for additional medical expenses.

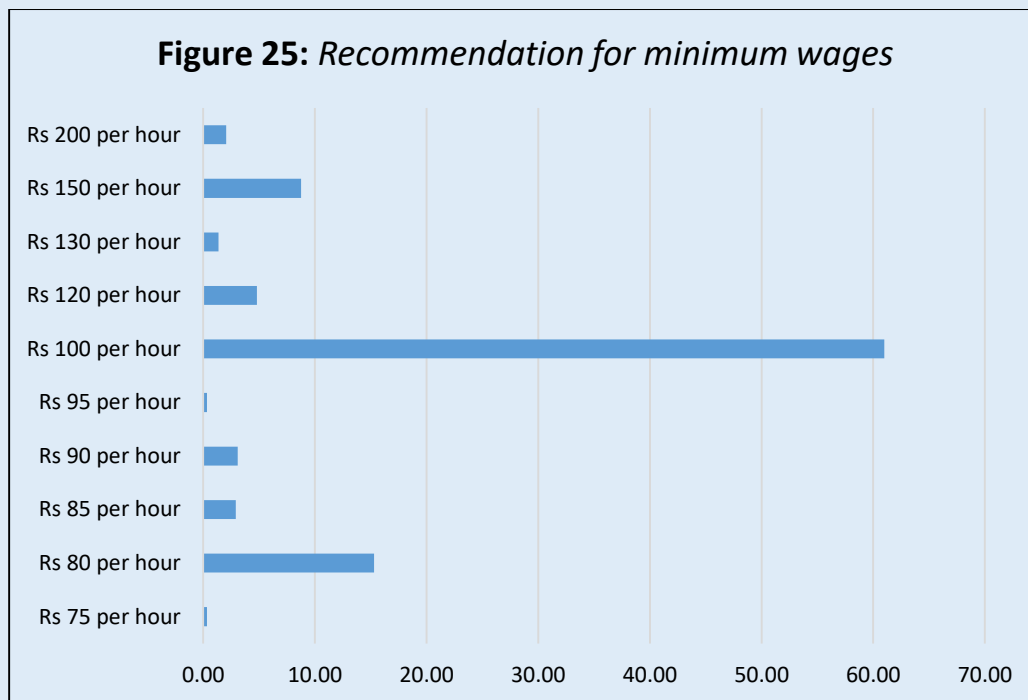
R25: In this current situation rupees 37 is not enough for us to run the family to meet essentials.

6.3.10. Analysis on the recommendation of minimum wages by the domestic workers

Minimum wages of a domestic worker as mentioned earlier is set by the union or the state government. It was evident that the surveyed workers completely disagreed with the standard set by the government. The recommendation for the minimum wages, ranged from Rs 75 per hour to Rs 200 per hour. The survey concludes that 61 percent of the surveyed workers recommended that the government should change the minimum wages standard as Rs 100 per hour, 15.29 percent recommended Rs 80 per hour, 8.76 percent suggested Rs 150 per hour. Summing up the recommendation that constituted less such as Rs 75, Rs 85, Rs 90, Rs 95, Rs 120 and Rs 200, it was found that less than 7 percent of the surveyed domestic workers recommended them.

Table 23. *Distribution of respondents based on the recommendation of minimum wages by the domestic workers*

Suggestion for minimum wages	Frequency	%
Rs 75 per hour	2	0.34
Rs 80 per hour	89	15.29
Rs 85 per hour	17	2.92
Rs 90 per hour	18	3.09
Rs 95 per hour	2	0.34
Rs 100 per hour	355	61.00
Rs 120 per hour	28	4.81
Rs 130 per hour	8	1.37
Rs 150 per hour	51	8.76
Rs 200 per hour	12	2.06
Total	582	100



I: If the government were to revise the minimum wage, how much rupees per hour do you think it should be raised? Why?

R1: We demand Rs. 100 per hour. Only with this amount we can somehow manage our family needs.

R6: We expect Rs. 150 per hour as minimum wage. The government should make these changes considering the economic situation.

R7: We are also employees just like any other work. We request government to increase the minimum wages up to Rs. 200 per hour. Even though the government increases wages per hour for Rs. 200 that will be enough to lead a normal life in this present economic situation.

R14: If Rs. 100 is allotted means it would be helpful to run the family because a tablet is also getting price hike.

R18: If it is 85 rupees means it would sufficient to lead a proper life.

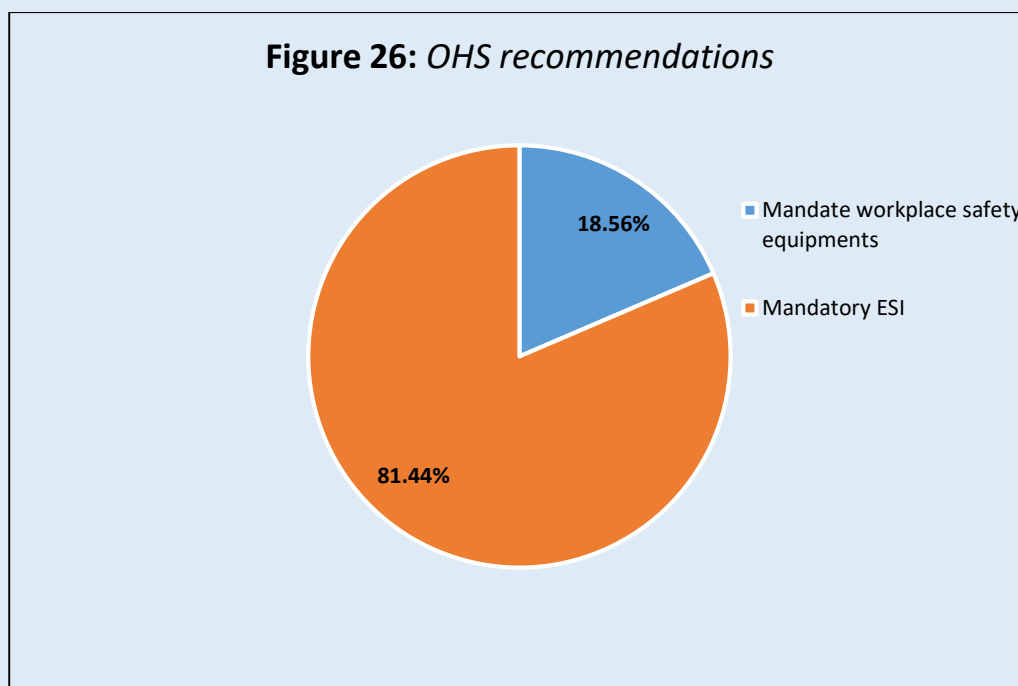
R23: If it is 100 rupees per hour means it would be very helpful for us to meet our basic needs.

6.3.11. Analysis on the Occupational Health and Safety recommendations to the government

The ILO Constitution sets forth the principle that workers must be protected from sickness, disease and injury arising from their employment. According to the most recent ILO global estimates, 2.78 million work-related deaths are recorded every year, of which 2.4 million are related to occupational health concerns. Despite the evidences proving the issues of poor OHS, the situation persists due to lack of policies and laws that protect the Occupational Health of domestic workers. The study aims to capture recommendations from the domestic workers upon their need pertaining OHS issues. The analysis shows that workers were precise with their recommendation limiting to suggest only two major inputs viz., Mandatory ESI.

Table 24. *Distribution of respondents based on the Occupational Health and Safety recommendations from the government*

Occupational health and safety recommendations from the government	Frequency	%
Mandate workplace safety equipment	108	18.56
Mandatory ESI	474	81.44
Total	582	100

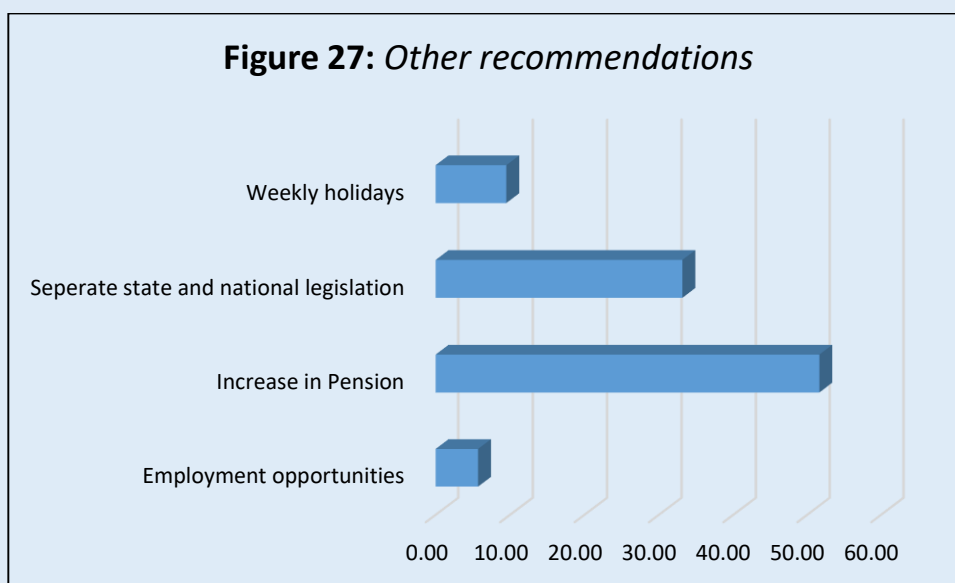


6.4 Recommendations of the domestic workers to the government

The surveyed workers have recommended the need for various reforms that benefit the government. According to the study, 51.64 percent of the workers recommended the government should increase the pension amount, 33.16 percent of the workers recommended the government should formulate a separate state and national legislation, 9.50 percent of the workers recommended that the government should mandate weekly holidays for domestic workers, 5.70 percent of the workers suggested creating employment opportunities for the workers to help them economically.

Table 25. *Distribution of respondents based on recommendations of the domestic workers to the government*

Recommendations of other programs, acts, amendments to the government to implement for the benefit of domestic workers	Frequency	%
Employment opportunities	33	5.70
Increase in Pension	299	51.64
Separate state and national legislation	192	33.16
Weekly holidays	55	9.50
Total	579	100



I: What other schemes do you expect from the government to be implemented for the welfare of domestic workers? (Say only regarding domestic work)

R2: We need separate wing or separate laws and policies for a domestic worker in national level.

R8: Government would like to consider our livelihood status because most of workers like me are from vulnerable communities who do not have proper means of livelihood or those who lack economic opportunities. State government or central government should make policies for the overall well-being includes health, education of our children.

R9: They need separate laws in state and national level for domestic workers.

R14: Government must provide safety for people belonging to lower economic strata like provision for educational loans for the children of domestic workers.

R16: If government provide pension it will helpful for my family to meet my basic needs.

R21: I want weekly day off like other sectors providing compulsory holiday for their employees. They government must make as a mandatory rule for domestic workers like me to provide bonus once in a year.

R23: It would be great if the government provides us with a pension. Because most of us I know are very poor and are leading very unhealthy family lives, nobody will take care of us in future as well. We all have to go to the streets after this healthy phase of life. It would be great if we at least have a decent amount as pension.

R24: PF, ESI is one thing we need. When asking about this, they say that those are for company work, we are doing just domestic work right. But we have tried asking...for asking bonus, their answer was that they're not used to giving bonuses for employees.

R25: We would like to have a bonus at least once a year. We are seen as inferiors when asking about the bonus to our employers. We do not have anyone else to support us other than the government and our job.

7. Recommendations of the study

With the above analysis the study concludes with the following recommendations:

- The study suggests the utmost need is to ensure provisions for weekly leave, annual leave, maternity leave for the domestic workers. Ensuring these rights helps in achieving social justice.
- The study amplifies the need for social protection among domestic workers by incorporating them in various government schemes such as ESI etc.
- Discrimination and treating female domestic workers as inferior ones is an act of oppression that has to be dealt legally. Strengthening of legal framework to prevent such instances is future. A Local complaint committee should give priority to the women in informal workforce considering their vulnerability and lack of protection.
- Government should ensure that domestic workers have enough access to job and take necessary measures to address sudden job loss.
- The study recommends the government to consider the models of countries which pioneer in protecting the domestic workers through specific policies and laws.
- Government should ensure that the benefits provided for domestic workers are reaching them. For instance, Rs. 2000 which was provided for them during the times of COVID -19 has not reached more than 40% of domestic workers.
- The registration and welfare schemes provided for the domestic workers should be simplified as most of the domestic workers are illiterate. Additionally, the eviction and related migration has left them with complex documents that requires a lot of time and efforts to be worked on-which would be impossible for elderly and illiterate category of domestic workers. This complex system existing hinders the domestic workers to register themselves in the unorganised sector welfare board and avail the deserved benefits.
- Government should ensure a good healthy environment for domestic workers, by implementing and mandating Occupational Health and Safety equipment and measures.
- There is an utmost need to ensure the social security of domestic workers by mandating the Employees' State Insurance.
- The study emphasizes the need for Increasing the Minimum Wages of domestic workers from Rs. 37.50 to Rs. 100 or above.

- Elderly domestic workers are the most struggling community; they still have to work due to the insufficient income. In this context, increasing their pension amount from 1000 to 3000 can be beneficial.
- The study emphasises a strong need for a separate legislation for the domestic workers and the utmost need to ratify the ILO Convention 189 which would solve most of the issues faced by the domestic workers.

8. Conclusion

This document is prepared by Tamil Nadu Domestic Workers' Welfare Trust on the efforts to analyse the current status of domestic workers and the legalities available for them. Quantitative data was collected from 582 domestic workers using a structured questionnaire and qualitative data from 25 domestic workers were collected through the Direct interview method. The study results highlights several facts on the physical, social and financial problems faced by domestic workers while doing their work and tagging themselves as domestic workers.

The questions asked to the domestic workers about their employers' attitude regarding the usage of toilets, injuries at the workplace, yearly bonus and paid leave brings out the roots of silenced hierarchy that deepens the interpretation of the social problems faced by the poor-unorganised workforce in India. However, there are domestic workers who are proud and happy about their workplace-which is still a dream for many. The domestic workers' need for proper legislation and decent pay is clearly evident from this study.

We initiated this study report as Domestic Workers constitute a significant component of the fast-moving urbanization phase of India. We anticipate that the report would support policy makers, activists, researchers Civil Society Organizations and domestic workers, not only to understand the different perspectives of the study but also to address the specified findings at the policy level.

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