



Research Paper

# The Socio-Economic Profile of Women Domestic Workers in Mizoram: A Sociological Study

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## ABSTRACT

The majority of women domestic workers are not well-researched, and their contributions are frequently overlooked in academic studies. Their efforts are frequently overlooked, and numerous studies do not adequately highlight their contributions. With detailed research on their residences and marital status, this sociological study explores the study of women domestic workers in Mizoram. This study demonstrates that the majority of Mizoram's female domestic workers were state natives and were primarily young, single women.

**KEY WORDS:** Place of domicile, marital status, sociology, women domestic workers, Mizoram.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

For thousands of women worldwide, domestic work is one of the most significant and traditional informal jobs. Women with less education, low incomes, and few alternative options can easily enter the field of domestic employment, which leads to a gender-based undervaluation of domestic work. In their own homes, these domestic workers also carry out the customary unpaid caregiving and housework duties. Women domestic workers with intersections of race, gender, class, and geography are the focus of studies on gender and intersectionality.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory of “intersectionality” was introduced by Crenshaw (1989) to feminist theory. In her paper written in 1989, Crenshaw for the University of Chicago Level Forum, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”, she discussed Black Feminism, and puts across the fact and the experience of being black and of being a woman, which are considered independently, but which include the interactions frequently at play with each other. So, intersectionality refers to a sociological theory that outlines how an individual may face multiple types of overlapping discrimination depending on their race, gender, age, ethnicity, physical ability, class or any other characteristics that might place them in a minority class (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality is a feminist theory, a methodology for research, and a springboard for social justice. It develops from the premise that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and how soon enough operations of structures of power come into being.

One of the pivotal ways to understand the sociological condition of domestic workers would be the concept of “intersectionality”. Intersectionality is an analytical framework in order to identify how interlocking systems of power impact those who are marginalised in society. Intersectionality considers that various forms of social stratification such as class, race, sexual orientation, age, disability and gender, do not exist separately from each other but are interwoven together. While the theory began as an exploration of the oppression of women of colour within society, today the analysis is potentially applied to all social categories including social identities usually seen as dominant when considered independently.

Savita (1993) in her thesis ‘Sociological Study of Maidservants in Kolhapur City’ has studied the maidservants on the lines of the following objectives: i) to study the socio-economic condition of maid servants in Kolhapur city, ii) to find out the working and living conditions, iii) to examine the educational status and health condition of maid servants in Kolhapur city. A sample of 200 maid servants and 50 employers were selected as respondents for the study by using first quota sampling. Most of these maidservants are the sole breadwinners,

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however some children also work as part-time basis. Majority of the female heads of the employer family are dissatisfied with the domestic workers because these domestic workers are not punctual, they are irregular, and also not hygienic. They gossip a lot and are unreliable, according to the employers.

Brites (2013) presents that in the case of paid domestic workers, there is existence of inequality of gender, class, race, ethnicity and geographical background. The article touches upon such factors as women's entry into the labour market and studies about domestic workers across Brazil and Latin America on matters regarding their recruitment, unionisation, lack of legal protection, their transformations and processes, and migrations and global care chains.

Perez & Llanos (2017) highlight the role of migrant Indonesian domestic workers who are women working in a patriarchal society serving to deepen their social exclusion. This feeds into a politics of intersectionality where their role as outsiders in the public domain is cemented by their status as poor, as migrants, and as women, whereas their role as insiders in the private domain excludes them from acting as political subjects. "The abuse and disrespect that some of the country's 1.2 million domestic workers endure goes largely unchecked and unreported, mainly because it happens behind the closed doors of their employer's private property" (2017).

Oakley (1974) a British sociologist and supporter of Women's liberation Movement (women's lib) argues that the position that women hold in the family and in the society is mirrored in the number of women getting employed in various fields in the employment sector. Very often, the jobs that women take up are an extension of their domestic role pertain to caring for, cleaning or tidying up after others, waiting on, and serving.

Pedrazza (1991) in "Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender" brings to light the factors affecting the process of migration of women on a large scale. It tries to perceive the themes of interaction of ethnicity, class and gender in the process of migration. The literature highlighted are thematic in nature with concerns of gender and migration, largely contributing to the study of Sociology of Immigration.

## **RESEARCH GAP**

The study gap about the marital status and place of birth or nativity of domestic workers demonstrates how these two criteria affect their personal lives, legal rights, social dynamics, and labour market experiences. Very little study has been done on domestic workers in Mizoram; the majority of the studies that are now accessible have been on domestic workers in India and elsewhere. Research gaps can be filled in several important areas, including:

1. Research on the vulnerabilities faced by migrant domestic workers compared to native workers, such as exploitation, poor working conditions, and restricted access to support services.
2. Migrant workers endure language challenges, fear of deportation, and lack of legal expertise compared to native labour.
3. Studies might examine the particular difficulties married and single domestic workers encounter that may affect their work-life balance, such as balancing hard work schedules with family obligations and the disparate expectations of their occupations.
4. There is a lack of study on the impact of domestic workers' nativity on their earnings and general financial security. Examining if migrant workers might earn less than native-born workers, or whether married women domestic workers might earn more because they are thought to be more stable, or less because they require more time off, etc.

Filling in these gaps can assist guide policy, enhance support networks, and promote improved working circumstances that cater to the requirements of domestic workers who are married or unmarried, as well as native and migrant workers.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative method to conduct a sociological study of domestic workers in Mizoram including their place of residence and also their marital status. Simple random sampling was used to locate 226 women domestic workers for this study who currently work in Aizawl, Mizoram. The result was then entered into excel sheet where coding was done and then the results were entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software where frequency and percentages were calculated. The results obtained were then analysed.

### **DOMICILE**

The place of domicile or residence is the place where people live, a dwelling or home used as a main residence, either originally or currently. To have a permanent place of residence is to have a sense of identity or belongingness automatically protecting us from unwanted harm and burden. This question is important for the respondents as they are asked about their native place of residence, and whether they hail from within Mizoram or are from outside the state, or are from the rural, urban or semi-urban locality.

**Table 1: Native of Mizoram**

Whether Domestic Workers are Natives of Mizoram					
Domestic Worker	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Live In/ <i>Riak</i> <sup>2</sup>	98	87.5	14	12.5	112
Live-out/Lang	95	83.3	19	16.7	114
Total	193	85.40	33	14.60	226

Majority of the live-in/ *riak* domestic workers are natives of Mizoram. This is 87.5 percent of the total number of domestic workers under study totaling 98 of the 112 full time domestic workers. Only 12.5 percent of them are from outside the state of Mizoram.

On the other hand, among the live-out/lang domestic workers, 83.3 percent of them are from the state of Mizoram. This is a total of 95 of 114 in numbers live-out/lang domestic workers taken up for study. And it is revealed that 16.7 percent of the total number of live-out/lang domestic workers are from outside the state of Mizoram.

In conclusion, there is a clear indication that the domestic workers both live-in and live-out are from within the state of Mizoram.

### MARITAL STATUS

Marital status is the legally defined marital state. The union of two persons sanctioned by society and the congregation is known as marriage. Marriage is the joining of two people in a bond that putatively lasts until death, however, in practice is often cut short by separation or divorce. Knowing the marital status of a person helps us to know whether the person is married to another person, or not. In this study the marital status of the domestic workers will be taken into account to ascertain whether there are more married or unmarried or divorced or separated categories of domestic workers. The domestic workers are asked to answer a question about their marital status, whether they are married, unmarried, widow, separated or divorced.

**Table 2: Marital status of domestic workers**

Domestic Worker	Marital status										Total
	Married	%	Unmarried	%	Widow	%	Separated	%	Divorced	%	
Live In/ <i>Riak</i>			108	96.4	1	0.9			3	2.7	112
Live-out/Lang	19	16.7	82	71.9	3	2.6	6	5.3	4	3.5	114
Total	19	8.41	190	84.07	4	1.77	6	2.65	7	3.10	226

Data incorporated in Table 2 implies that 96.4 of the total live-in domestic workers are unmarried. This further indicates that unmarried girls are more employable in their particular field as they can devote more time towards the household chores. At the same time, the unmarried girls are offering better services as they are not disturbed by any other social disabilities such as responsibility in the family, financial problem or mental health issues, etc.

Among the live-in domestic workers, only 2.7 percent are divorced which shows that women with personal issues are not likely to be chosen by the employers. At the same time, the divorced women themselves are not comfortable to be engaged in other's household works and would rather try to find other jobs to support themselves in other economic activities.

Meanwhile, widows who are live-in domestic workers comprises only 0.9 percent of the total number of live-in domestic workers which means that the salary offered out of the household works are not enough to support themselves and their children who depend upon them. So, they prefer to work elsewhere in other daily engagements works such as vegetable street vendors, house-to-house vegetable sellers, etc.

A very interesting finding the researcher can point out here is that, married and separated women are not as much engaged as live-in domestic workers in Aizawl city. Some of the determining factors for this are, married girls and women are compelled to support themselves and their own families mentally and physically in 24/7 hours. Though they need to earn extra pay to support themselves, it is a huge challenge and cannot manage time to be engaged as live-in domestic workers.

Meanwhile, no separated women are chosen as live-in/*riak* domestic workers under the study. The main reason is that most separated women are struggling with psychological issues with regards to their personal affairs that makes them uncomfortable to be able to reside with their employers and be immersed in the employers' family administration. Having to face hardship and personal break down from their past life experiences, they

<sup>2</sup> *Riak* is a Mizo word which means 'live-in'

have not completely regained confidence with themselves and most of the separated domestic workers are not willing to resume in any economic activities.

As shown in the above table, 71.9 percent of the live-out/lang domestic workers are unmarried. This clearly indicates that unmarried girls are the most preferred to be employed in domestic works. As unmarried girls are free and available to help and render their services to others, they are more compatible to be chosen to do the household chores in the homes of their employers.

Contrary to the findings of live-in/*riak* domestic workers (where no married women are chosen for domestic works), 16.7 percent of the live-out/lang domestic workers are married. This further implies that married women are extremely in need to find part-time jobs to financially support themselves and their families. The study also reveals that married women resolve many financial issues and expenditure of the families such as, children's school fees, house rent, household daily needs, medical, water, electricity bills, etc. out of their personal pockets earned by engaging themselves as live-out/lang domestic work.

Interestingly, widows, separated and divorced women are on the look-out for jobs with easy entry and are engaged as live-out domestic workers. The study shows that there are 2.6 percent widows who are live-outs/lang, while 5.3 percent and 3.5 percent are found with respect to separated and divorced women.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the majority of the women domestic workers are from Mizoram and are employed in the state's district capitals; even more of them reside with their families. The majority of female domestic workers in Aizawl, Mizoram, are single, indicating that domestic labour is primarily assigned to and associated with young, single women, as married, divorced, and separated women only make up a small portion of the population.

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