

Occupational health hazards: Domestic Workers - Maids

Conversion of text based information on occupational health hazards to visual narratives



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Approval Sheet:

Project “Occupational Health Hazards of Domestic Workers - Maids”

by Apurva Hadap and Manasi Shetye is approved, in fulfilment of the requirements for Project from DST, mentored at Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay titled Conversion of text based information on occupational health hazards to visual narratives.

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Declaration:

We declare that this report represents our ideas in our own words and wherever others ideas or words have been included; we have adequately cited and referenced the original sources.

We also declare that we have adhered to all the principals of academic honesty and integrity and have not misinterpreted or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in our report.

We understand that any violation of the above will be a cause for disciplinary action by DST and IDC can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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Signatures:

Apurva Hadap & Manasi Shetye

Acknowledgement:

We wish to acknowledge our gratitude to our Guide Prof. Mandar Rane and Dr.G.G Ray who has always been there to support our ideas and not letting us give up hope during the complete journey of our project.

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We thank AKSHARA- NGO, Sarva Shramik Sanghatna Organization working for the rights of domestic workers and NSC : National Safety Council for giving us required information and guidance regarding the domestic workers.

We also wish convey our gratitude to thank Staff members and Principal of Art and Design Department, Sophia Polytechnic, Mumbai for their support and encouragement and our gratitude to our entire batch mates for being a constant support in reviewing our project work and giving valuable inputs.



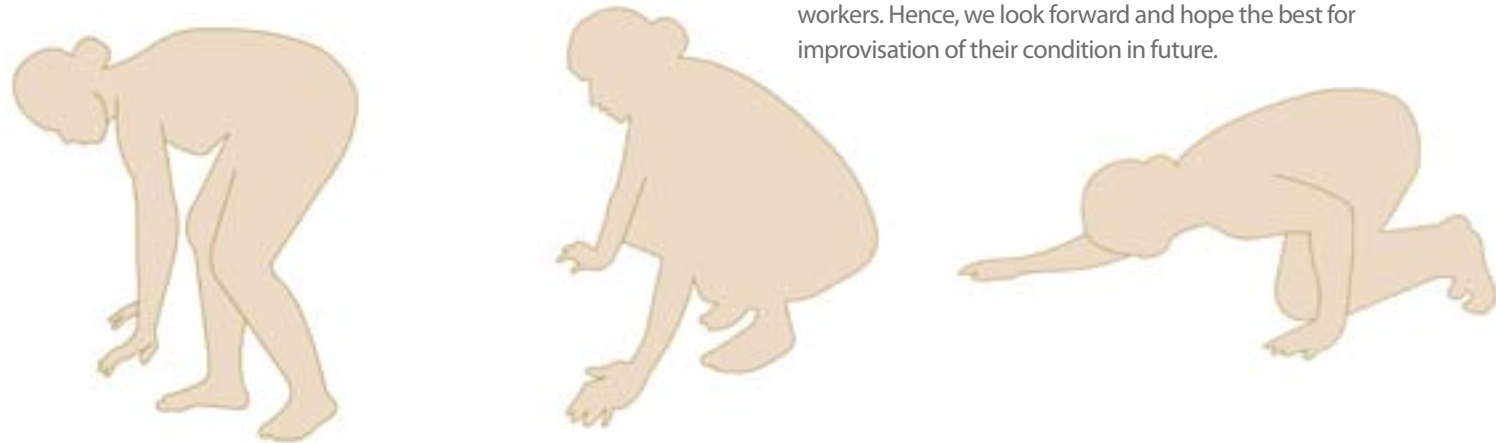
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Introduction:

Domestic work refers to house work such as, Sweeping, Cleaning, Washing clothes, Cooking, Caring of children & such other work which is carried out for an employer for remuneration. Domestic work is definitely undervalued in society! Is it because society believes that it is an easy job that anyone could do?

Even their health is a neglected issue Is it because care taking responsibilities are traditionally assigned to women. Hence, we would like to introduce our project with explaining the term occupational health hazards in detail and also other elements as follows. Occupational hazard refers to a risk or danger as a consequence of the nature of working conditions of a particular job. Every occupation is associated with certain risks because of which the person can get certain diseases, injuries. This can happen suddenly or may take years.

Current working postures of Domestic workers while mopping:



In simple words -“Occupational Hazards” mean damage to health or injuries at work place. We also came to know that Statistics of employed domestic workers (Male-Female) National estimates for 2004-05 suggests 4.75 million workers were employed in private households, 3.5 millions of these were urban women.

Despite such significant presence, domestic work is slow to receive recognition as professional work. We as students have been working on this project since a long time and have discovered many relevant issues. These are later discussed in detail & we have tried to bring out some solutions through audio visual medium.

This research has given us ample of information regarding their lifestyle and health hazards of the domestic workers. Hence, we look forward and hope the best for improvisation of their condition in future.



Current working postures of Domestic workers while mopping:

Brief – Overview of the Project:

We researched in the suburbs of Mumbai and we came across certain problems faced by the domestic workers so we classified their problems into 3 categories, namely Social, Economic & Health related problems.

Social Problems

- The invisibility and low social status awarded to this sector is compounded by the fact that a large number of domestic workers belong to lower caste and ethnic minority communities.
- Domestic workers are not covered under any labor laws and there are no legal and policy regulations to ensure the protection of workers employed in this sector.
- Unfortunately, domestic workers have many responsibilities and very few rights. That has to do with the undervaluation of domestic work.
- In economic terms, household work is often not considered to be “regular employment” which explains why these workers in many instances do not enjoy the same labor rights as other workers.

- In sociocultural terms, it is seen as typical “woman’s work” because it is in their nature to look after the house and care for the family.
- These stereotyped views and the gender-biased approach to domestic work tend to reinforce the undervaluation of domestic work.

Economic problems

- They are from lower socio- economic group.
- Occupation of their spouses are not enough to satisfy their basic requirements, and some of them even resort to alcoholism.
- Family problems like number of children and their education, expenses and medical expenses.
- No job security, no Gratuity, no pension, no financial security.

Health hazards and problems faced at workplace

- The main problem is that, they work alone, as they don’t have any co-worker to share their burden.

- They have high risk of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD).
- They don’t have any control over the working environment.
- They face verbal and physical abuse.
- Injuries caused by shifting or lifting things.
- Continuous contact with water causes skin problems.
- Use of cleaning products containing irritants.
- Tend to have low hemoglobin levels, hence prone to anaemic conditions.

A small presentation was held at IDC for the Project and then with the approval of the committee (IDC faculty + DST - Department of Science & Technology) on any of the related topic of Occupational Hazards wherein their main focus was on women. The study and research done for this project is totally in relation to occupational hazards of the domestic workers.

Data Collection:

Outdoor research
1.“Akshara” NGO

(working on gender equality)

We visited their library and we got some information about this issue is as follows,

- Domestic workers generally work in isolation. They have no co- workers at work sight, who can advice them about their rights. Many are immigrants to the very limited knowledge of laws
- One step towards empowering workers is educating them about their rights. A Contract and agreement abroad includes the following,
 - Hours and wedges includes work schedule
 - Holidays and vacation time
 - Personal days and sick days
 - Health benefits
 - Length of employment or how much notice must be given to terminate the contract
 - If not contract at least a confirmation letter from the employer
 - Domestic workers and their employer’s are using this agreement throughout New York City.

2. Sarva Shramik Sanghatna
(Organization working for the rights of domestic workers)

We came across some facts, An act for domestic workers was passed in 2008 (Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act, 2008) and the rules for the same act was made in 2010 (Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board Rules,2010)

Even though the act is passed, no actions were taken to execute it.

On the contrary it was taken to the ILO (International Labor Organization) but the Indian representative refrained them from giving the beneficiaries of the convention to the domestic workers.

Benefits of the act

1. Education aid for their children
2. Medical aid during illnesses
3. Maternity benefits
4. Insurance cover in case of accidents

3. NSC : National Safety Council
We visited this place to check the available material to our topic.

We found some information about domestic workers and our major issue Lower Back pain. From the encyclopedia of “International Labour Organization.” We also found some posters, not exactly related to our topic but they can be a guiding principle if we resort to a poster as a media.

Bibliography

- Readings on women workers in India, Preeti Bhat
- The Trade in Domestic workers, edited by Noeleen Heyzer, Geertje Lycklama a Nijeholt and Nedra Weerakoon.
- Rights begin at home -Protecting yourself as a domestic worker
- Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health & Safety - Fourth edition
- The Handbook of Health & Safety Practice

Questionnaire Design

We did a questionnaire to actually interact with the domestic workers and study their problems in person

Research questionnaire

Name: _____

Age: _____

Address: _____

Type of work: _____

Place of work: _____

Working since when? _____

Hours of work everyday: _____

Hours of work in a week: _____

Wages: _____

Meal timings: _____

Health problems faced by them: _____

Symptoms: _____

Problems faced at home: _____

Any past experience related to health hazards: _____

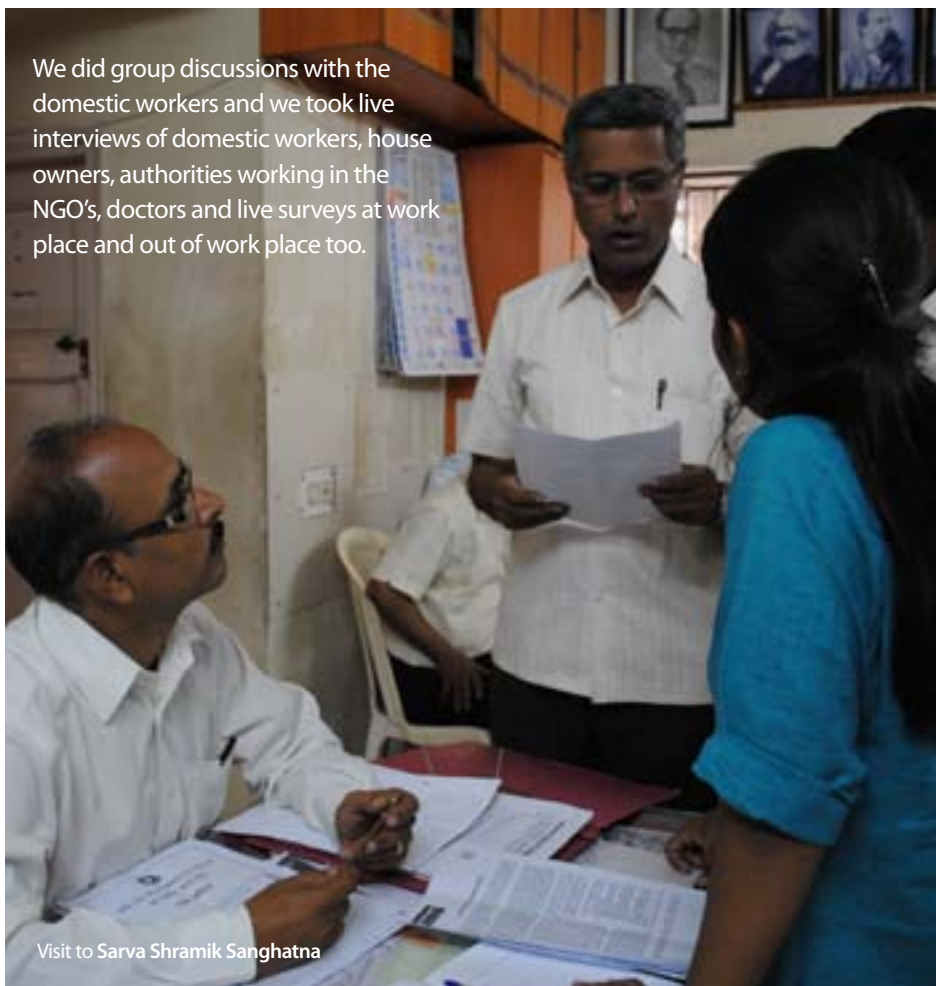
Medical check ups done when and how many times? _____

Occupation of their spouses: _____

Do they resort to alcohol? _____

As a remedy do they wish to seek social or legal help? _____

Are they connected to any trade union or NGO? _____



We did group discussions with the domestic workers and we took live interviews of domestic workers, house owners, authorities working in the NGO's, doctors and live surveys at work place and out of work place too.

User Studies:

The study is limited to the selected area in suburbs of Mumbai. The study is based on primary survey data as well as secondary research data. Setting our objective of the study for this project has been mentioned below,

- To identify general characteristics of domestic workers.
- To examine working condition and perception towards education, work and social life.
- To account their financial status and their skills.
- To explore socioeconomic issues of domestic workers.
- Communicating information and scientific data to low literate audience or in the language they would understand better and test the comprehension of visual narrative.

Findings and Insights:

The findings of the study will serve to assist future action programmes as well as to provide much needed background information. Either the Government or the non government organizations should devise a suitable proposal to monitor and make use of these unorganized domestic workers who are indispensable for the society.

Problems which this project addresses:

- Creating Awareness.
- Dissolve misconceptions.
- Informing people.
- Developing appropriate mass communication media for creating awareness on Occupational Health to the illiterate women work force.
- Gives authentic information and proposes solutions.
- Creating protocols for the chosen occupation.
- Communicating about tools already available.
- Giving clear view about hazards and making aware in advance.

- Displaying the video in all the related areas of domestic workers and inducing behavioral changes for better health in future.

Suggestive measures :

The care to be taken while working

1. Wrong bending causes back pain

2. While working bend gradually.
No sudden bending

3. After the age of 30 try to
avoid forward bending.

4. Use appropriate tools while
working.

5. And leafy vegetables and milk
should be included in the diet.



Awareness about the proper diet:

Along with proper postures while working
diet of the domestic worker should include
leafy vegetables, fruits like banana



These are the wrong postures of Domestic workers while mopping

which is easily affordable and last but not
the least intake of milk to fulfill calcium
requirements.

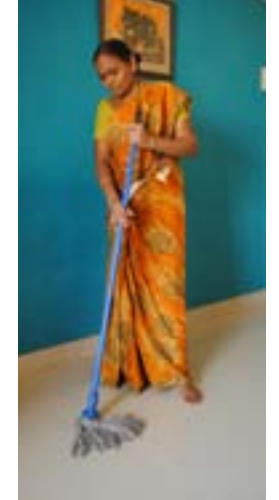
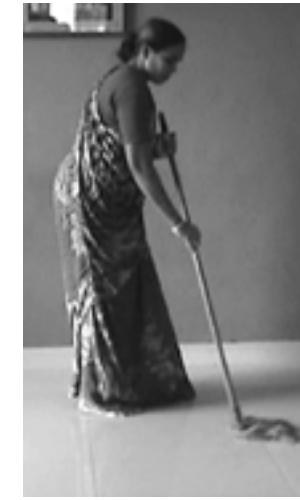
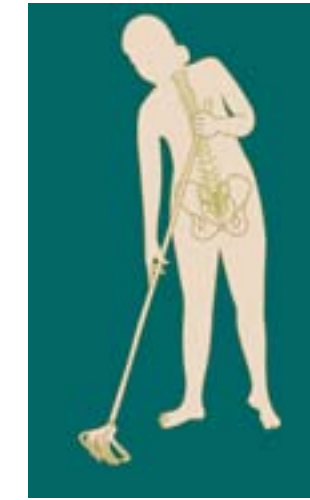
Cause of Back pain:

In human spine there lies a jelly like
substance between two vertebrae of the
spine (inter vertebral disc) and it makes
the movement of the spine easier.
Till the age of 25 movement of the spine
is very easy, bending forward and coming
back to normal position is easier.

But as the age grows after the age
of 25 years the substance between
two vertebrae gets converted into
a stone like hard disc and when we
bend too much, that disc shifts from
its place, hitting the spinal cord causes
severe back pain, even the possibility
of paralysis cannot be neglected.

**Our project helps spread awareness
about right postures while mopping:**

Use of tool helps improve the
posture of the Domestic workers.
Now you can see this domestic worker
is using a proper tool while mopping,



as suggested by the doctor. Bending has
been reduced due to the use of this tool.
If such kind of tool is regularly used, then
back pain will be automatically reduced.



Choice of Visual Medium:

The overview of the project is mentioned earlier. The aim here is to create an awareness of the Occupational Health Hazards experienced by the women domestic workers. According to the above survey we found out that as most of the women working as domestic workers are illiterate or have very basic education.

Hence print media would be unsuccessful medium of communication in order to create awareness amongst the domestic workers. And looking at their educational status we decided to choose Audio- Visual medium of communication for them.

So we concluded making a documentary on the occupational health hazards of domestic workers. For their better understanding we decided to conduct the documentary in the regional language i.e. Marathi.

Conclusion:

We are thankful to all the domestic workers, house owners, doctors and NGO's for supporting us in our field of work.

Hence after viewing this video we are hoping to see a positive response from the organizations, house owners and domestic workers to look into this matter in future for the betterment of the domestic workers.

मोलकरीण स्वच्छतेचा आधारस्तंभ



Department of Science & Technology
<http://www.dst.gov.in>

Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
<http://www.iitb.ac.in>

www.idcdstprojects.com/domesticworkers.php

Abundant information exists on occupational health hazards in form of research and medical publications. But it rarely translates into holistic conceptual understanding of health hazards on part of general public, given varying literacy levels and lack of exposure. A major roadblock in the dissemination process is the complex and textual nature of such information.

IDC + DST projects on occupational health hazards aim at tackling these problems by converting the text based information into visual narratives such as films, presentations, posters that will communicate the information, to an audience, especially women in a language they understand.

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