

**UNVEILING THE INVISIBLE: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL
LIVES OF MALE DOMESTIC WORKERS IN TRIVANDRUM
DISTRICT**

*A Dissertation submitted to the University of Kerala in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Masters of Arts Degree Examination in Sociology*

SUBMITTED BY

Name : **FARSANA THASLEEM N**
Exam Code : 56018405
Candidate Code : 56022115010
Subject Code : SO 245

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

Dr. NISHA JOLLY NELSON



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
LOYOLA COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
SREEKARIYAM, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
UNIVERSITY OF KERALA**

2022-2024

DECLARATION

I, **Farsana Thasleem N**, hereby declare that the dissertation titled **“UNVEILING THE INVISIBLE: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL LIVES OF MALE DOMESTIC WORKERS IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT”** is based on the original work carried out by me and submitted to the University of Kerala during the year 2022-2024 towards partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Sociology Degree Examination. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title of recognition before.

Place: Thiruvananthapuram

Ms. Farsana Thasleem N

Date: 09/09/2024

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**UNVEILING THE INVISIBLE: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL LIVES OF MALE DOMESTIC WORKERS IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT**” is a record of genuine work done by FARSANA THASLEEM N, a fourth semester, Master of Sociology student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that is hereby approved for submission.

Dr. Nisha Jolly Nelson

Research Supervisor

Department of Sociology

Loyola College of Social Sciences
Sreekariyam, Thiruvananthapuram.

Recommended for forwarding to the University of Kerala

Dr. Nisha Jolly Nelson

Head, Department of Sociology

Loyola College of Social sciences

Sreekariyam, Thiruvananthapuram.

Forwarded to the University of Kerala

Dr. Sabu P Thomas S J

Principal

Loyola College of Social Sciences
Sreekariyam, Thiruvananthapuram.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank all those who helped me to accomplish this study. I thank the Almighty, for giving me enough strength, patience, perseverance and the right attitude to pursue this study satisfactorily. I thank my family, who supported me through thick and thin, motivating me and enabling me to complete this endeavour.

*This study would not have happened without the guidance and support of my research guide, **Dr. Nisha Jolly Nelson**, Head of the Department of Sociology, Loyola College of Social Sciences, Thiruvananthapuram. I admire her optimism and the faith she had in me for undertaking this dissertation. I express my sincere gratitude towards her for her timely guidance, useful comments and constant encouragement.*

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Saji P Jacob, former Principal of Loyola College of Social Sciences, whose insightful guidance and leadership were instrumental in shaping my academic journey. I am profoundly thankful to Dr. Hashim Thadathil, Dr. Andrew Michael, and Dr. Vinumol Devassy, faculty members of the department, for their support, mentorship, and the wisdom they shared throughout this endeavour.

I am indebted to all the participants who have participated in this research, and my friends who spared their precious time and energy to help take this project to fruition.

I am privileged to be a student of Loyola College that has provided me such a great learning experience and has sparked my interest in research field.

Farsana Thasleem N

MA Sociology

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ABSTRACT

The labour force in domestic work has traditionally been female-dominated, often leaving male domestic workers underrepresented and invisible in both academic discourse and public policy. This study aims to explore and understand the social lives of male domestic workers in Thiruvananthapuram (TVM) district, Kerala, providing a critical lens on their lived experiences, challenges, and societal interactions.

The research search into the socio-economic background of these workers, examining how socio-economic factors influence their entry into and sustenance within the domestic work sector. Through qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and participant observation, the study captures the narratives of male domestic workers, focusing on their everyday lives, social networks, and the strategies they employ to navigate a profession typically associated with women.

The findings reveal the complex dynamics of masculinity within domestic spaces, highlighting the stigmatization and gender-based discrimination these men face. The study also examines the impact of their work on their social identity, relationships, and sense of self-worth. Furthermore, it elucidates on the coping mechanisms and solidarity networks they build to resist marginalization and assert their presence in a gendered labour market.

By bringing these hidden stories to the forefront, the research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the gendered division of labour in domestic work and calls for more inclusive policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by male domestic workers in the region. This study not only challenges the traditional gender norms but also advocates for the recognition and dignity of all workers, regardless of gender, in the domestic sphere.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the years there has been a significant increase in the number of domestic workers in India, particularly in urban areas. According to ILO (International Labour Organization) a domestic worker is an individual engaged in household tasks within the private residence in exchange for payment.

The terms "Domestic Worker" and "maid" are often used interchangeably. "Maid" traditionally refers to a female domestic worker who is employed to perform household chores such as cleaning, cooking, and laundry. The term domestic worker is more inclusive and can refer to any individual, regardless of gender, who is employed to perform similar household tasks. Domestic worker is a broader term that can encompass a range of roles including caregivers, house keepers, and other domestic service providers. In many contexts, domestic worker is considered a more respectful and inclusive way to refer to individuals who work in private households. That it is safe to say that we can break it down into the two words "Domestic" referring to home and "Worker" being someone who performs tasks.

Domestic workers are a vital component of the unorganized sector delivering essential services ranging from cleaning and looking after children to child care and elderly assistance, thereby playing crucial roles in families. Despite their contributions the labour of domestic workers often goes unnoticed and is undervalued. These domestic workers remain largely invisible within the broader social framework. It is essential to acknowledge that domestic workers make substantial contributions to the economy. Recognizing the significance of their role within the unorganized labour force is a crucial step towards enhancing their working conditions.

1.2 HISTORY FROM NO WORK TO WORK WITH RIGHT

During the colonial era, the use of indigenous and later Afro-descendant servitude, survived into modernity in the form of socially discriminated and scorned domestic employment. Until the end of the 20th century most of the countries in the region legally discriminated against domestic workers, helping many of the ideas, oppressions and prejudices of another era to continue to this day.

In general, the jurisdictions for assigning fewer rights to domestic workers compared to other forms of employment were based on three central jurisdictions. That domestic work should be considered a special form of occupation since employers do not generate profits based on the work of the people they employ. The domestic employment was a kind of favour done to women without specific qualifications, by a supposedly generous person who provided a place to live and food. The difficulty of those who employ domestic workers to pay wages similar to any other employment. From the beginning of the 21st century most of the Spanish speaking countries in the region began to equate the labour rights of domestic workers with other type of work. These advances were argued in the questioning of the very concept of work and the incorporation of the gender perspective in the economy. The alliances built between feminists in the various spaces for international debate global and regional agreements were promoted that incorporated instruments for the practical application for conceptual changes.

In 1995 from the Fourth World Conference on women held in Beijing the values of household and care work was established as well as the importance of quantifying and registering it with time use surveys and the implementation of satellite accounts of unpaid work in the home and care. Since then and especially in the following decade, regional and international agreements and instruments have incorporated provisions that commit states to recognised full rights.

1.3 THE RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC WORKERS - STEP BY STEP

- 1995

Recognized the value of domestic and care work.

- 2007

Promoted equality of conditions and labour rights between work and other types of employment.

- 2010

Promoted equality of labour rights regulating their protection and eradicating child domestic work.

- 2011 (ILO convention 189)

Strengthened the trend towards global commitments to changing the historic

inequalities around domestic work.

- 2015

To adopt legislature and administrative measures to promote regulation of domestic employment.

- 2020

Urged the adoption of measures to ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of all women domestic workers.

- 2021

Recognized the right of every person to a workplace free of violence and harassment.

1.4 THE MALE AS A DOMESTIC WORKER

The concept of a male domestic worker can be recognised as unconventional. The evolving scenery of gender equality and the changing dynamics of the modern workforce challenge these stereotypes. Embracing the role of a male domestic worker not only rebel against gender norms but also contributes to the progression of a more inclusive society. Firstly, it's crucial to disprove the misconception that domestic work is exclusively meant for women. Historically, gender roles have assigned tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and caregiving to women, maintaining the idea that these responsibilities are inherently feminine. This conviction disregards the skills and capabilities of men in these areas. By entering the domain of domestic work, men can destroy these stereotypes and demonstrate their competence and proficiency in traditionally female dominated tasks.

The demand for domestic workers continues to grow in our brisk society. With dual income households becoming increasingly common and individuals leading busy lives, the need for domestic assistance go beyond gender boundaries. Male domestic workers can offer unique perspectives and skills, enriching the diversity of the profession. Their presence in the domestic workforce not only provides employment opportunities but also promote inclusivity and equality. Furthermore, embracing the role of a male domestic worker promotes gender equality on multiple forefronts. It challenges the stigma associated with men performing household chores and caregiving responsibilities, prepare the way for a more balanced distribution of domestic duties within households. Additionally, it empowers men to pursue careers in fields

traditionally dominated by women, breaking down barriers and encourage a more equitable society. It's essential to acknowledge the existing challenges and prejudices that male domestic workers may face. Societal stereotypes and ingrained biases can create barriers to entry and hinder their acceptance in the profession. The emergence of male domestic workers signifies a shift towards a more inclusive and egalitarian society. By challenging traditional gender roles, embracing diversity, and promoting equality, male domestic workers contribute to the progression of a society where individuals are valued for their skills and abilities rather than their gender.

1.5 MALE DOMESTIC WORKER: NATIONAL LEVEL

Underemployment, a growing youth population, degrees of de-industrialisation, and migration out of the agrarian sector due to technological development, land reforms and climate change have contributed to expansions of domestic-care work in India. A feminised domain since the late colonial period, the workforce composition is shifting, with larger numbers of men entering. This runs counter to previous trajectories in the sector. Early colonial-era British households were often dependent on male staff. Gradually, however, male workers became ridiculed and the presence of non-white male bodies in private space became constructed as a threat to white femininity (Chakraborty, 2019). Contrastively, female ayahs (lady's maids) were sentimentalised for their sacrificial qualities and usefulness (Blunt, 1999; Chakraborty, 2019). This triggered a process of feminization that commenced in the 1930s and consolidated by the 1960s (Sinha & Varma, 2019). Whilst not a sole force, colonialism impacted paid domestic labour by introducing contract relations and producing dynamics that continue to shape labour relations, policy and regulation today (Haskins & Sen, 2022).

In contemporary India, representations of domesticity remain dominated by multigenerational, patrilineal families where caregiving is associated with women (Samanta, 2019; Uberoi, 2006). However, middle-class transformations have affected family demographics, gendered expectations and intensified demand for domestic-care services. To degrees, outsourcing domestic-care labour resolves tensions in middle-class families stemming from women seeking careers and men resisting taking on domestic-care work (cf. Lundström, 2013). Consequently, the sector continues expanding, inculcating female and male workers (Neetha, 2021). For women, this runs counter to patterns of decreasing labour force participation in other sectors (Sarkar et al, 2019). For men, industrial decline, increasing demand for male workers, and potential for salaried income, have drawn increasing numbers

Transformations in the sector have not, however, been linear. COVID-19, for example, resulted in lost jobs, changed working practices and viral exposure. While paid domestic-care work is long associated with ‘pollution’ (often rooted in caste prejudice) the pandemic exacerbated stigmatised imaginaries, resulting in intensified spatial demarcation and embodied transformations (mask-wearing, distancing etc.). Our research suggests consequences were also gendered. Men were more likely to retain live-in posts due to perceived ability to run outside errands but often had to do more diverse chores and were unable to return home, amplifying familial distance. Familial distance, pre, during and post Covid, also conflicted with some of the ideals outlined in the previous section, that centred on a ‘caring masculinity’ rooted in fatherhood, elderhood and duty to ageing relatives.

When negotiating norms of masculinity, MDCWs (in India and beyond) often experience ‘unmanning’ (Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010) where employers envisage them as childlike, effeminate, docile and asexual (cf. Dávalos, 2020; Chopra, 2012; Qayum & Ray, 2010). Nepali MDCWs in India are, for instance, almost always referred to as ‘boys’ in public and media discourse (Sharma, 2008). Additionally, caste-based intersections and rural origins of many MDCWs, enable employers to construct servitude as ‘natural’, create stereotypes of MDCWs as not being ‘real men’ and facilitate characterizations of ‘backwardness’. (Bartolomei, 2010; Singha, 2019). Some employers, however, prefer male hires due to assumptions of strength, skill and less ‘gossipiness’ (Bartolomei, 2010). Men are seen as having broader competences and as requiring skilled work to remain satisfied, while women are assumed to be content with unskilled labour (Ray, 2000). Our research verified that MDCWs can, at times, use masculine privilege to demarcate tasks or evade paid social reproduction work. Female workers tended to occupy more diverse roles in homes but MDCWs were often used more versatily outside.

Likewise, male workers sometimes found themselves inculcated in elder care – even when not the initial role – by dint of being seen as capable of supporting those with limited mobility. These labour divisions exist between independent workers but also within spousal teams working for private households (Grover, 2018).

Men, as with women, have also become incorporated into Global Care Chains (GCCs) that connect the Indian national setting to other parts of the world (Grover et al, 2018). Here, too, MDCWs experiences are highly gendered. European migration regimes have, for example, situated domestic-care labour as a legitimate route of entry. Consequently, men from South Asia and elsewhere have joined the sector to fulfil migration aspirations but often have to

perform a masculinity that meets employers' ethnic stereotypes of an effeminate, asexual and unthreatening Asian male body (Näre, 2010; Kilkey, 2010). Despite the trans nationalization of domestic-care work, and other changes in the sector, for the majority of India's MDCWs the materialities of everyday work are dominated by informality and remain embedded in more localised forms of domestic migration.

Much is still to be understood. However, it is clear that men, as with women (Chambers, 2018), experience blurred employment boundaries covering roles from cooks and drivers to child-minders and elder-attendants. Relationships with employers' families may be built on trust and intimacy or segregation. MDCWs may be embroiled in familial politics, 'deep act' emotional labour (Hochschild, 1979: 33), develop close bonds with employers' children or be discursively situated as 'part of the family'. Often, relations of affection and control co-exist ambivalently, disciplining employees by cementing loyalty and subservience. Simultaneously, representations of MDCWs as compliant and docile, gives little sense of agency and perpetuates passive stereotypes (cf. Yeates, 2009). Challenging these representations - while maintaining an awareness of structural constraints and social/cultural forces - forms the basis of the following empirical section that utilises thick description to draw the article's narrative into the experiences of Rishi and other MDCWs.

1.5.1 PROBLEMS FACED BY MALE DOMESTIC WORKERS

In contemporary societies, domestic work remains a critical component of household management, yet it is often undervalued and overlooked. While the majority of domestic workers are female, an increasing number of men are entering this field. Despite their growing presence, male domestic workers face a unique set of challenges that can hinder their professional and personal well-being. This essay explores the various problems encountered by male domestic workers, including societal stigma, discrimination, and lack of professional development opportunities.

- Societal Stigma

One of the primary issues faced by male domestic workers is societal stigma. Domestic work has traditionally been associated with women, and this gender stereotype persists in many cultures. Men entering this field often confront societal prejudice and are sometimes seen as deviating from traditional gender roles. This stigma can lead to a lack of respect and recognition for their work, reinforcing the notion that domestic tasks are inherently feminine. As a result, male domestic workers may struggle with low self-esteem and face social isolation.

- Discrimination and Gender Bias

Discrimination is another significant challenge for male domestic workers. Gender bias manifests in various ways, including unequal treatment compared to their female counterparts. For instance, male domestic workers may be assigned more physically demanding tasks or be subjected to harsher scrutiny regarding their professional performance. They might experience difficulties in gaining employment due to preconceived notions about their suitability for domestic roles. This bias can impede their career advancement and contribute to an overall sense of inequality in the workplace.

- Health Challenges

Male domestic workers frequently encounter numerous health-related issues due to the nature of their job. The physical demands of domestic work, such as heavy lifting, long hours of standing, and repetitive tasks, can lead to musculoskeletal disorders. These workers are at a higher risk of developing back pain, joint issues, and other chronic conditions due to the strenuous activities involved in household maintenance and care.

Moreover, domestic workers often work in environments that may not adhere to basic health and safety standards. They may be exposed to hazardous substances, such as cleaning agents, without adequate protective gear. This exposure increases the risk of respiratory problems, skin conditions, and other health issues.

Access to healthcare is another significant concern. Many male domestic workers lack health insurance or sufficient financial resources to cover medical expenses. This lack of access to healthcare can result in untreated conditions, exacerbating their health problems.

- Lack of Professional Development Opportunities

Male domestic workers often encounter limited opportunities for professional growth and development. The domestic work sector, in general, lacks formal training programs and career advancement pathways. This gap in professional development is exacerbated for men, who may face additional barriers to accessing resources or training that are more readily available to women. Consequently, male domestic workers may find it challenging to enhance their skills or seek promotions, impacting their long-term job satisfaction and financial stability.

- Economic Vulnerability

Economic vulnerability is another pressing issue for male domestic workers. Many domestic workers, regardless of gender, are employed informally and lack job security, health benefits, and fair wages. For men in this field, the economic instability can be particularly acute due to the lack of institutional support and the prevalence of underpayment. This vulnerability can exacerbate financial stress and limit their ability to achieve economic stability and security.

- **Work-Life Balance**

Maintaining a work-life balance can also be challenging for male domestic workers. The demanding nature of domestic work often requires long hours and irregular schedules, which can encroach upon personal time and family life. For men who may have traditional expectations or responsibilities within their own families, managing these demands can lead to significant stress and conflicts between their professional and personal lives.

Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to challenge traditional gender norms, promote equality and respect in the workplace, and improve support systems for all domestic workers. By fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment, society can ensure that male domestic workers are valued and empowered in their roles.

1.5.2 EXPECTATIONS OF MALE DOMESTIC WORKERS REGARDING THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS

In the domain of domestic work, male workers face unique expectations and challenges regarding their living conditions. The expectations they hold about their living conditions are shaped by factors including cultural norms, legal regulations, and personal dignity. Understanding these expectations is crucial for ensuring fair treatment and improving their overall well-being.

1. Basic Needs and Safety

At the core of male domestic workers' expectations is the fulfilment of basic needs such as adequate housing, food, and safety. Domestic workers typically live in accommodation provided by their employers, which should meet certain minimum standards. These include:

- **Adequate Space:** Living quarters should be spacious enough to ensure comfort and privacy. Cramped or overcrowded spaces can lead to physical and mental stress.
- **Sanitary Conditions:** Cleanliness is paramount. Living conditions should include access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and pest control to prevent health issues.

- **Safety and Security:** Workers expect a secure environment where their personal safety is assured. This includes secure locks, well-lit areas, and protection from potential harassment or abuse.

2. Privacy and Dignity

Privacy and respect are essential components of a dignified living environment. Male domestic workers expect,

- **Privacy:** Even though they live on the employer's property, workers expect a degree of privacy. This includes having a private space to rest and personal belongings that are respected by others.
- **Respectful Treatment:** Their living conditions should reflect the respect due to any worker. This includes avoiding intrusive monitoring or disrespectful behaviour.

3. Adequate Facilities and Comfort

Comfortable living conditions contribute significantly to job satisfaction and overall well-being. Workers expect the following:

Proper Furnishings: Adequate bedding, furniture, and other amenities are expected to ensure a comfortable living environment. This includes a clean bed, functional lighting, and ventilation.

Access to Facilities: Access to facilities such as a kitchen, laundry, and recreational areas is important. These facilities should be well-maintained and accessible.

4. Legal and Ethical Considerations

Legal frameworks and ethical standards play a critical role in shaping expectations. Many countries have specific regulations concerning domestic workers' living conditions, including:

- **Compliance with Labour Laws:** Employers are often required to comply with labour laws that stipulate minimum living standards for domestic workers. This may include regulations on housing quality, living conditions, and worker rights.
- **Ethical Standards:** Beyond legal requirements, ethical considerations demand that employers provide conditions that respect the dignity and well-being of their workers. This includes ensuring that living conditions do not exploit or dehumanize workers.

5. Cultural and Regional Differences

Expectations regarding living conditions can vary based on cultural and regional norms. In some cultures, there may be different standards for what is considered acceptable, while in others, there may be more stringent expectations regarding worker housing and treatment. Understanding these cultural contexts is essential for addressing the needs and expectations of male domestic workers effectively.

6. Challenges and Recommendations

Despite these expectations, many male domestic workers face challenges such as inadequate housing, lack of privacy, and poor living conditions. Addressing these issues involves:

- **Improving Standards:** Employers should be encouraged to adhere to higher standards of living conditions and regularly review their practices to ensure they meet or exceed legal and ethical expectations.
- **Worker Advocacy:** Advocacy groups can play a crucial role in representing the interests of domestic workers and pushing for better living conditions and legal protections.
- **Education and Awareness:** Raising awareness among employers about the importance of providing humane living conditions can lead to improvements in practice and policy.

Male domestic workers have clear expectations regarding their living conditions, centred on basic needs, privacy, comfort, and legal rights. Meeting these expectations is not only a matter of legal compliance but also of ethical responsibility. By addressing the challenges and improving living conditions, employers can contribute to a more respectful and supportive work environment for domestic workers.

1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study titled *"Unveiling the Invisible: Understanding the Social Lives of Male Domestic Workers in Thiruvananthapuram"* delves into the often overlooked and underexamined social dynamics of male domestic workers within the city. Historically, domestic work has been a gendered occupation, heavily dominated by women, and ingrained within societal constructs that associate caregiving and household labour with femininity. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the participation of men within this sector. Despite this growing presence, the social realities and lived experiences of these men have remained largely

invisible, overshadowed by dominant gender ideologies and the informal nature of domestic work itself.

Male domestic workers occupy a unique and precarious space, navigating a sector where societal norms often dictate that their labour is "invisible," unrecognized, and undervalued. Their entry into a profession perceived as women's work subjects them to a double burden—facing stigmatization for engaging in feminized labour while also grappling with the broader precarity of informal employment. The public-private dichotomy in domestic work further complicates their social relationships, blurring the boundaries between home, family, and employment, and leaving male domestic workers vulnerable to various forms of exclusion, both socially and economically.

This study aims to bring the social lives of male domestic workers to the forefront of sociological inquiry, addressing the conspicuous gaps in research concerning their identities, social interactions, and the roles they play within households and communities. It seeks to uncover how these men negotiate their masculinity within the domestic sphere, how societal perceptions shape their labour experiences, and how they construct their social lives amidst the stigmatization and invisibility attached to their work.

In doing so, the research intends to contribute to a broader understanding of gender roles in labour, challenge existing stereotypes, and provide insight into the complex social dynamics that govern male domestic workers' lives. Moreover, the findings have the potential to inform policy discussions aimed at improving working conditions, promoting social inclusion, and ensuring legal protections for all domestic workers, regardless of gender. By shedding light on the invisible experiences of male domestic workers, this study advocates for the recognition of their essential contributions to both households and the broader economy, challenging entrenched norms and fostering greater social and economic equality.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study holds significant importance from sociological, economic, and policy-making. The research addressing a neglected Topic, Underrepresentation in Research. This study fills this gap by exploring their lived experiences. By examining male domestic workers, the study challenges prevailing gender norms and broadens our understanding of gender roles in domestic work.

The study likely examines the economic vulnerabilities faced by male domestic workers, including low wages, lack of job security, and poor working conditions. The research may explore the social stigma associated with men performing domestic work, affecting their social interactions, mental health, and overall wellbeing. The study's findings can inform labour policies addressing the specific needs of male domestic workers, including better wages, social security, and working conditions. The research may lead to the development of social welfare programs supporting male domestic workers, such as mental health services and skill development programs. The study adopts a human rights perspective, emphasizing dignity, respect, and fair treatment of male domestic workers.

By "unveiling the invisible" lives of male domestic workers, the study raises awareness among the public, policymakers, and academics. The study employs qualitative methods to gain in-depth insights into the lives of male domestic workers, enriching academic literature. The research contributes to the development or refinement of theories related to labour, gender, and social stratification. The significance of this study lies in its ability to bring visibility to an overlooked group of workers, providing a comprehensive understanding of their social lives, challenges, and contributions to society. This paves the way for informed policy-making, social change, and further academic exploration.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The domestic work sector has long been dominated by female workers, with significant scholarly attention paid to their experiences, challenges, and contributions. However, the experiences of male domestic workers remain largely underexplored, rendering them almost invisible within the broader discourse on domestic labour. This literature review aims to look upon this overlooked demographic, examining the social lives of male domestic workers and the unique challenges they face in a predominantly female occupation.

The review will explore the existing body of research on domestic work, focusing on the historical context and the evolution of gender roles within the sector. It will then inquire studies that have specifically addressed male domestic workers, identifying key themes such as gender stereotypes, labour rights, social stigmatization, and the intersectionality of gender, class, and ethnicity. By critically analysing these studies, the review seeks to highlight the gaps in current research and underscore the need for further exploration of the social dynamics that shape the lives of male domestic workers.

Through this comprehensive literature review, the study aims to provide a solid foundation for understanding the complexities of male domestic labour and to contribute to the broader discourse on gender and work in contemporary society.

2.2 STUDIES ON MALE DOMESTIC WORKERS

According to Sanso (2000), in the context of Household studies the investigation of men and masculinity through male informants is danger of merely redirecting the object of essentialism and catholicisation from men to that of women. Examining the way people employ discourses on gender identity in their attempts to define and contest household relations will enable us to develop a more empathetic approach to the difficulties facing poor men without losing sight of the consequences for women of domestic hierarchies.

Sarti and Scrinzi (2010) examines that there is a little scholarship, which investigates male domestic workers. They constitute a highly interesting vantage point from which to analyse the gendered and radicalized the division of labour as well as the social construction of masculinity in both contemporary societies and in the past. In several countries nowadays a large number

of domestic workers are migrants. By focusing on men employed as domestic workers in many different societies, in both the global North and the South (Italy, France, U.K, India, Ivory coast and Congo), the articles presented in this special issue investigate the gendered dimensions of globalization and international migration, while avoiding the essentialist association of "gender" with "women". They cover a wide range of disciplines (Sociology, Anthropology and History) and methodologies (Both qualitative and quantitative). Despite this variety of themes and approaches all identify domestic service as a site where "hegemonic" and "subaltern" masculinities are produced and negotiated at the interplay of multiple social relations. There for they contribute to filling a gap in the recent scholarship about migrant domestic and care labour. Investigating male domestic workers practices and the social construction of masculinity within domestic service from the late nineteenth century to the current day. This special issue illustrates not only geographical but also historical variations.

Perez (2015) based on his Ethnographic research conducted on Brussels, analyses gender-based construction in relation to paid domestic work. The study focuses on Latin American migrants, who unlike migrants from other regions, come from societies paid kind of work. By the analysis, particular attention is given to the participation of men in paid domestic work within the context of migratory experiences.

Neetha (2018) explained the specificities of domestic work in relation to the workplace alongside the intersections of gender, class and caste indicate a complex picture of India. It addresses interesting dimensions of the domestic work section, including exclusion of domestic workers, the reluctance and discomfort in accepting domestic workers as workers. A critical analysis of state policies and regulation of domestic work alongside specific issues of legal interventions also attempted in this collection. The study emphasizes the need to locate undervaluation and the poor status of domestic workers in devaluation of house work within capitalist development an issue the feminist scholarship raised again and again.

Chambers and Grover (2023) stated that from lack of access to basic facilities and unwarranted suspicions, male domestic workers are also undervalued and dehumanised. They also want to be included in unionisation and policy recommendations that will improve their lives. The authors conducted a field work in August 2022 on India's vastly heterogeneous Indian domestic care service sector, which has gained major attention since the Covid 19 pandemic. They underline the class divide and also reflect on the employer's attitude towards their workers as well as the apathy on the part of the state towards domestic workers. The find there is no central

policy to protect the domestic workers, Indian domestic workers left at mercy of varied state laws. From the anthropological field work the message is that many men also want to included unionisation and policy recommendations that will improve their lives. Hitherto, the main focus had rightly been on informal female domestic care workers, who comprise the majority of domestic service and care sector jobs. The study focuses on men's experiences of exploitation, dignity and health risks also need urgent attention so that one of the unregulated sectors can address the concerns of both men and women.

David du toit (2023) sheds light on the experiences of Malawian and Zimbabwean migrants: Missing in debates about male domestic worker led to the writing of the article. This article investigates job related experiences and relationship with their employers with the experiences of men performing domestic work, a job traditionally linked to domestic work. A small proportion of men working as domestic workers, some are migrants. Most migrant men workers as gardeners, painters or security guards. Some Malawian and Zimbabwean male migrant workers as waiters or domestic workers. The intersections of race, class and gender between employers and domestic workers often lead to unequal power relations and economic exploitation entrenched within the employment relationship. The study shows that domestic work offered a viable employment path for men. They face similar challenges to their female counterparts. These included long working hours, a paternalistic employer and employee dynamic and a marginalised job status. They earned lower prize, average between US\$ 260 (5000) and US\$ 416 (8000) a month. The study strongly demands to safeguard this group from exploitation and elevate their overall livelihood, regulators, enforcement agencies and trade unions must protect and recognize all domestic workers, including migrants in South Africa.

Chambers and Grover (2023) focuses on male domestic care workers in India. It explores how constructed notion of masculinity interplay with labour market structures, enable forms of labour discipline and shape labour subjectivities. The article details performative and embodied gendered practices engaged in male domestic workers, illuminates the inertly of spatial and temporal and paid domestic work with gendered skill sets and labour roles, and connects differentiated masculinities performed by the workers to the broader political economy of domestic care labour. The article argue that male domestic workers perform masculinity variegated ways in the face of stigma, marginalisation and relation of servitude.

Yu Furukawa (2024) stated that many research has extensively explored the intersections of migration and gender studies through the gendered experience of female migrant domestic

workers, but the male experience is underexplored. The study explores mainly two questions: What are the implications of men engaging in domestic work? How does this work affect self-perceptions of their masculinity? Commonly observed that male domestic workers can face challenges to their sense of masculinity and identity when engaging in domestic work traditionally labelled as "women's job".

2.3 RESEARCH GAPS

The existing literature provides valuable insights into the underexplored domain of male domestic workers, yet several research gaps persist. A critical analysis of the studies highlights the following gaps:

Limited Geographic and Cultural Scope: Much of the existing research, such as that of Sarti and Scrinzi (2010), and Perez (2015), predominantly focuses on Western and European contexts, with insufficient exploration of male domestic work in non-Western settings, particularly in South Asia. Although studies like Neetha (2018) and Chambers & Grover (2023) address the Indian context, they do so within broader examinations of domestic labour. A comprehensive understanding of the experiences of male domestic workers in South Asia, including the intersectionality of caste, religion, and local gender norms, is still underdeveloped.

Lack of In-Depth Qualitative Exploration: While several studies adopt qualitative approaches, they often remain at a descriptive level, documenting the stigmatization and challenges faced by male domestic workers without delving deeply into the subjective and experiential dimensions of masculinity in domestic work. For instance, Furukawa (2024) addresses the implications of domestic work on masculinity, but more granular studies are needed to understand how male workers themselves navigate, resist, or redefine these gendered perceptions in their day-to-day lives. The literature lacks longitudinal studies that track these processes over time, which would provide a more dynamic understanding of identity formation in this field.

Intersectionality with Migrant Status: A recurring theme in the literature is the intersectionality of migrant status with gender (David du Toit, 2023), but this focus often remains on the structural inequalities without adequately examining the personal and social coping strategies employed by male migrants. There is a need for research that delves into how male migrant domestic workers, particularly those in transnational settings, negotiate multiple forms of marginalization across borders—whether through remittances, familial obligations,

or translocal networks. Moreover, studies seldom consider how race, ethnicity, and class influence these experiences in nuanced ways.

Gender Performativity and Masculinity: Much of the literature identifies gender as a central theme but tends to essentialize masculinity by framing it as something challenged or threatened by the nature of domestic work (Furukawa, 2024). Research needs to move beyond binary understandings of masculinity to explore how male domestic workers embody multiple masculinities across various settings and contexts, including public-private dichotomies, intergenerational relationships, and interactions with employers.

2.4 CRITICAL REFLECTION

The reviewed literature highlights the complexity of male domestic labour, revealing how it is shaped by intersecting structures of gender, race, class, and migration. However, it also reveals the limitations of existing research in fully capturing the lived experiences of male domestic workers, particularly in contexts outside of the Global North. Much of the scholarship continues to focus on the structural conditions that shape male domestic work but lacks a deeper engagement with the workers' subjective experiences and their strategies for coping with stigma and marginalization.

By addressing these research gaps, future studies could significantly expand the discourse on male domestic workers. Such research would not only enrich academic debates on gender and labour but also offer more grounded policy recommendations that recognize the diverse and often overlooked contributions of men in domestic work. A more intersectional and dynamic understanding of masculinity in this context could challenge dominant gender norms and contribute to more equitable labour policies that reflect the realities of all domestic workers, irrespective of gender.

This critical reflection emphasizes the importance of going beyond surface-level examinations of male domestic workers to develop a more empathetic and nuanced understanding of their social lives, labour conditions, and identity negotiations. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies, intersectional approaches, and in-depth qualitative analyses that capture the full spectrum of experiences and identities within this overlooked demographic.

The present study addresses the critical gaps identified in existing literature by focusing on the underexplored social realities of male domestic workers in Thiruvananthapuram, particularly within the context of Kerala where caste, class, and local gender norms intersect with domestic

labour. This study offers an in-depth qualitative exploration of how male domestic workers navigate the stigmatization associated with performing "women's work" while constructing their masculinity within a predominantly female occupation. By emphasizing the intersectionality of gender, migration, and labour rights, the study investigates the personal and collective strategies employed by these workers to cope with marginalization, challenge gender stereotypes, and assert their dignity. Through this approach, the study aims to fill the existing knowledge gap and substitute greater recognition of the contributions of male domestic workers, advocating for their inclusion in labour rights discourses and policy frameworks.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 TITLE OF THE STUDY

UNVEILING THE INVISIBLE: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL LIVES OF MALE DOMESTIC WORKERS IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION

- How do male domestic workers in Trivandrum district experience their social lives within the context of a traditionally female-dominated sector?

SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the daily lives and responsibilities of a male domestic worker?
- What are the challenges faced by these workers and how these challenges impact their lives?
- What are the socio - economic factors influencing their involvement in domestic work?
- How do social interactions within household influence the lives of workers?
- In what ways do relationship with employers and fellow domestic workers shape their experiences?
- How do gender norms and societal expectations affect their work and personal identities?
- What are the existing support system and services available to male domestic workers?

3.3 APPROACH

A qualitative approach refers to a research methodology that focuses on gathering and analysing non-numerical data to gain insights into people's experiences, perspectives, and behaviours. It involves collecting and examining data in the form of:

1. Text (interviews, focus groups, observations, documents)
2. Images (photos, videos, artifacts)
3. Sounds (audio recordings)

Qualitative research aims to answer questions like "what," "how," and "why" by exploring the meanings, interpretations, and contexts of the data. It seeks to provide a rich, detailed, and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

In the context of studying the social lives of male domestic workers in Trivandrum district, a qualitative approach is particularly well-suited due to its focus on understanding the subjective experiences, social dynamics, and challenges faced by these workers. Unlike quantitative methods, which seek to quantify data and generalize findings across populations, qualitative research delves deeply into the lived experiences of individuals, providing rich and detailed insights that cannot be captured through numerical analysis. Hence the approach is qualitative.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study research design was employed to provide an in-depth understanding of the social and occupational dynamics experienced by male domestic workers. This design focused on capturing the personal experiences, challenges, and perspectives of male domestic workers through a comprehensive exploration of their lived realities.

The primary objective of this case study research was to explore and understand the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of male domestic workers in the Trivandrum district. Specifically, it aimed to examine how these men experienced their roles within domestic work, managed societal expectations related to gender and labor, and coped with the challenges of working in a feminized profession. The study sought to provide insights into the unique experiences of male domestic workers and highlight the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing their professional and personal lives.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Multiple qualitative data collection methods were employed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of male domestic workers:

In-Depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, lasting 1 to 2 hours. An interview guide was used to encourage open dialogue and allowed participants to express their thoughts freely.

Key Themes

Background and Work Experience: Participants discussed their upbringing, reasons for entering domestic work, their career trajectories, and overall job experience.

Job Responsibilities and Challenges: Participants described their daily tasks, working conditions, and specific challenges they faced in their roles, including workload, expectations from employers, and gender-based or social stigmas.

Relationships with Employers and Family: Interviews explored the dynamics between participants and their employers, including the level of respect, authority, and power imbalances. Participants also discussed how their work affected their personal lives and relationships with their families.

Perceptions of Social Status: Participants shared their perceptions of how society viewed male domestic workers and how they perceived their own social standing compared to female domestic workers.

Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems: Participants explained how they coped with the challenges of their job, such as stress and societal expectations, and how they sought support from family, friends, and community networks.

Document Analysis

Relevant documents, such as employment contracts and labor rights documentation, were reviewed to contextualize findings from interviews and observations.

3.6 CASE SELECTION

Both purposive sampling and snow ball sampling method was used to select six male domestic workers in the Trivandrum district for in-depth case studies. This sample size allowed for a detailed exploration of individual cases while also offering comparative insights across different contexts. The following criteria ensured a diverse sample:

1. **Demographic Diversity:** Participants were selected to represent diverse backgrounds in terms of age, caste, marital status, and socio-economic status.
2. **Work Experience:** The selected participants had varying lengths of experience in domestic work, from newcomers to veterans with several years in the profession.
3. **Types of Domestic Work:** Participants were chosen from different roles within domestic work, including cleaners, cooks, caretakers, and drivers, ensuring that the study captured a range of responsibilities and challenges.

4. Migration Status: A few participants were migrant workers (from other states or districts) to explore the intersection of migration and domestic labor.

Combining purposive and snowball sampling can be an effective strategy for recruiting participants who meet specific criteria and expanding the sample through their social networks.

In the study on male domestic workers in Trivandrum district, used purposive sampling to select initial participants who meet specific criteria (e.g., age, work experience, type of work). Then, used snowball sampling to expand the sample by asking these participants to refer their colleagues or friends who also work as male domestic workers.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Key themes and patterns across different cases were identified, focusing on:

Gendered Perceptions: The analysis explored how male domestic workers perceived their gender roles in a female-dominated sector and how this shaped their identity and relationships.

Stigmatization and Marginalization: The forms of stigma and marginalization experienced by male domestic workers, from both employers and society, were examined.

Coping Mechanisms and Resilience: Strategies that male domestic workers used to cope with their challenges, such as support networks and mental health strategies, were analyzed.

Employer-Employee Dynamics: The power dynamics and social relationships between male domestic workers and their employers, including authority, respect, and recognition of work, were analyzed.

Policy and Labor Rights: The effectiveness of policies protecting male domestic workers and their access to labor rights and legal protections were evaluated.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the sensitive nature of the study, particular attention was paid to ethical considerations:

Informed Consent: All participants were fully informed of the purpose of the research and provided their consent before data collection.

Confidentiality: Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, and all personal information was kept confidential.

Sensitivity to Power Dynamics: The researcher remained aware of potential power dynamics between the researcher and participants, particularly given the participants' vulnerable positions. Every effort was made to create a comfortable environment for participants to express themselves freely.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study's findings may not be generalizable to all male domestic workers in Trivandrum district due to the small sample size. The use of purposive and snowball sampling methods may lead to biases in the sample selection. Participants may provide responses that they think are socially acceptable, rather than their true experiences. The study may not exhaustively explore all themes related to male domestic workers' experiences due to time and resource constraints. The study's findings may not be applicable to other contexts or populations.

CHAPTER IV

CASE PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

4.1 CASE PRESENTATION

4.1.1 CASE 1

Name: Vijayaraj

Age: 60

Place: Vattappara

Working place: Medical college

Educational Qualification: SSLC

In this case study, the researcher examines Vijayaraj, a 60-year-old resident of Vattappara, focusing on the critical aspect of his working life. He has been working in this field for 25 years. Because of that, he has considerable experience and expertise in this job. Primarily, he is engaged in patient care. He shared the main reason for taking up this job. Initially, he was involved in farming and ventured into business. He came to this job after experiencing significant setbacks in that business. When he sees different people's situations, he feels like he is doing social service through this job. He has worked in up to four houses in a single day. He worked at various houses at different times because his financial situation was poor. Nowadays, due to his health not allowing him to work as much, he only works at one house daily. When he first started this job, the monthly income was 2400 rupees. His wife also does the same job, and that's how they make a living.

He has done jobs in patient care that many people would prefer to do. He has cut patients' hair, cleaned their private parts, and tend to bedsores and maggot-infested wounds. When he goes to work, the patient's conditions are deplorable in some places. Some patients have not been cleaned after defecating and urinating and are left lying in bed in that state. They don't even provide gloves in some areas, and he has had to clean with his bare hands. In some houses, he doesn't even get drinking water. He has had to eat food placed aside, often in unwashed, dirty newspapers. He has even had experiences of sitting under trees to eat. The glass of water given to drink usually needs to be more hygienic. Many households treat him with little importance,

facing discrimination and neglect. He has had to face a lot of disrespect and contempt. Many people look down on and despise this job.

In some homes, the condition of the patients is deplorable. Their families don't even give them their preferred food. Patients experience cruelty, and there are family members who are just waiting for their death. They are told to be taken to the hospital without being cleaned. Some of them can't even walk. No one helps them even to sit up. By the time all these tasks are done, they are exhausted. When people know this is the job they do, everyone mocks them. When they see him, no one realizes he is going to this job. When they find out, they ask, *"Don't you have any other job? Are you going to clean up excrement and urine?"* Most people look down on this job. Job security is deficient. Even then, there is work available. It is based on the work we have done before that we get this job again.

Moving from house to house, I have come to understand the nature of many people. Some are deceitful, while others are excellent, whether workers or homeowners. Many people who are now finding work in this field have committed crimes. They might be involved in assault cases or fraud cases. Some may have moved here due to issues with their families. Even people accused of harassment cases are now entering this job. This will affect honest workers like us.

Transgender individuals have recently started working in this field. Many people in this sector now are transgender. They are treated very poorly by others. Another issue is that if any mistakes are pointed out in their work, they become violent quickly.

He knows many people working in this field. He has excellent relationships with each other. They often share the joys and sorrows of their work.

"There is no support or organization for us. There are no government policies or benefits for us. Nobody even addresses our issues. We are thinking about starting an organization ourselves. Because 1000s of people working in this field. That is our main goal. We are happy that at least people like you are coming to study about us."

4.1.2 CASE: 2

Name: Udayan

Age: 42

Place: Vattappara

Working Place: Pongumoodu

Educational Qualification: 10

The researcher engaged with a respondent named Udayan, a 42-year-old resident of Vattappara who worked in Pongumoodu. Udayan described himself as a domestic worker.

He opts for domestic work for two primary reasons:

Firstly, it provides a steady income, often more substantial than other job opportunities; secondly, it can be a fulfilling way to engage in charitable work. He firmly believes that this profession is a truly virtuous and noble endeavour. He shared his daily routine. He commuted to work from home daily, working from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, with no days off during the week. His primary responsibility was patient care, specifically caring for an elderly individual.

The main tasks are the following:

- Providing food on time
- Changing diapers
- Assisting with walking
- Providing exercise
- Administering medication

There is no need to cook food, as his food is already prepared and available. As a Christian, he considers these tasks a blessing and a privilege to serve him. From 8 am to 5 pm, he had to do whatever was necessary for the older adult. However, he still had more than an hour of free time daily.

Compared to female domestic workers, his task is patient care, which includes monitoring sugar levels and blood pressure and administering insulin. Additionally, he assists with feeding through tubes and giving medication. These tasks require attention and care and can lead to infections if not done correctly. He travels to work on a scooter, making commuting easier. He believes that caring for patients is not a burden but a responsibility. If the patient can communicate, he converses and passes the time. He emphasizes that safety is in their hands and that doing their job well will lead to more opportunities. He has worked in this field for three years and has not faced any harassment or abuse. The salary varies depending on the location and employer.

He earns a monthly salary of ₹20,000, which is relatively decent compared to other jobs. He can earn in 5 days, which would take ten days to earn elsewhere. However, the main challenge

is the inconsistent availability of work. Some jobs are secured through agencies, while others are not. In Thiruvananthapuram, numerous agencies operate, with some charging fees and others not. Udayan has had a remarkable experience working with a family for 1.30 years, starting with caring for an older adult and managing household essentials. He has diabetes but has maintained good health due to his disciplined lifestyle. He appreciates the support he receives from his family, relatives, and community, with no one openly criticizing his profession. According to him, around 4-5 individuals, both men and women, are engaged in this work, including families who take up this occupation.

Caregiving at home requires adaptability, as each household has its unique dynamics. You must adjust your approach to fit each family's needs. Initially, it may be challenging, but you'll find your footing with time. This is true for any job - if one doesn't work out, another opportunity will arise. As you gain experience, you'll develop a deeper understanding of each individual's needs, enabling you to provide personalized care. However, be prepared for repetitive client instructions, which can be frustrating. In such situations, try to be patient and accommodating. If the challenges become overwhelming, don't hesitate to contact the agency for support. The ability to get along with everyone stems from a need for better habits, making it easier for him to work in various home environments. Those with problematic habits are the ones who often face difficulties in this line of work, either with the household members or with their struggles.

In Thiruvananthapuram, female domestic workers are in higher demand and receive higher salaries, even when caring for elderly males. On the other hand, male domestic workers are paid lower wages and are less likely to be hired for female care. The demand for female domestic workers is higher because they perform all household tasks and patient care for a single salary.

He usually creates a strong bond with the household, which takes time to establish. Once part of the household, they are included in all events and treated like family members. Conflicts are rare, but if issues arise, they report to the agency to avoid jeopardizing their job. The agency prioritizes assigning work to those with a good track record, so minor problems should be addressed to maintain a positive relationship.

Cooperation among coworkers is essential, as everyone relies on this job for their livelihood. We support each other in finding work during lean periods. Our mantra is 'cooperation is key to success,' especially in this field where replacements take time. Not all domestic workers share the same work ethic, and some even create problems that impact the job. Unfortunately,

He is unaware of any specific laws or policies protecting domestic workers' rights. The profession is not entitled to benefits tailored to their needs. While he has heard about training programs for domestic workers, he has limited information about them. He has seen advertisements on WhatsApp claiming to offer training and certification, deducting the costs from the salary. These programs are mainly geared towards female domestic workers. Despite the challenges, he considers “*domestic work excellent and believes no profession is inherently flawed*”.

4.1.3 CASE 3

Name: Satheesh

Age: 34

Place: Thirumala

Working place: Kilipalam Jagathi

Qualification: +2 incomplete (10th pass)

He was committed to full-time work or staying at work after returning home. When he has a full-time stay, everything is ready. He gets up on time, looks after everything, and attends to the patient's needs. This includes picking up pills, brushing their teeth, feeding them, bathing them, checking their sugar levels, etc. Another aspect is that he cannot arrive on time; he has to leave early but may return late due to patient care or traffic. He mentions that in terms of work, both are the same; there is no heavy work to speak of. However, attention must be paid to the amount of food given, as insufficient food can cause problems. Bedridden patients mainly suffer from depression because they go from being active to being confined to bed suddenly. The patient's frustration stems from their inability to move without relying on others. He believes they should be treated with happiness. What they need more than treatment is love, as most of their children are abroad and often leave them behind.

Work hours are from 8:30 am to 4 or 5 pm, regardless of duty time. The 2 hours of work in the morning are very demanding because tasks such as changing dress and cleaning the bed sheet are done during this time. After that, it is enough to handle tasks intermittently. He says patients who are well-spoken and intelligent should follow their instructions. For those who do patient care, most of the work is done during the 2 hours in the morning. Just keep an eye on the last medication.

He is currently working as a domestic caretaker and has been for four or five years. Someone in his office told him that if he took the AVM certificate exam, he would soon get the certificate. There were no problems before COVID-19, but there were some issues afterwards. Before getting married, he was a shop assistant store manager. He then decided to start his own business, which failed. He later joined Indian Bottom Brand, got promoted, and became a domestic airport manager. With the advent of COVID-19, terrible problems started. After COVID-19, no flights, passengers, sales, and salaries were cut. So, he chose a home care job. Before that, his mother was a heart patient, and his father was a cancer patient. Therefore, he thought this job would benefit him as he had experience looking after his parents.

He is currently working through an agency. Regarding salary, he previously received ten thousand rupees a month, but now it is eighteen to twenty thousand rupees in 15 days. It is going well because the agency takes a fee. If he earns 1000 rupees, he receives 900 as the agency takes 100 rupees. If the salary is 22,000 rupees, the agency takes 2,000 rupees. He mentions both the good and bad sides of working through an agency. He misses his family, including his children, wife, father, and mother.

He also receives tips from the patient's family, which helps with transportation. Since the arrival of COVID-19, there have been many debts, making finances difficult. Because after COVID-19, no one is going out, so there might be a month without a job and another five days with a job. He takes care of patients in severe situations, sometimes for a year or a month, depending on the vacancy. After COVID-19, he has faced some physical problems but continues serving people well. He is very familiar with cooking, and he has mentioned that he cooks at home. He goes to work and has no problem with it; he knows how to cook well. He talks about the two places where he received the highest salaries. But in some houses, it is different, and every rupee is counted. He mentions the difference in duties between men and women. Families give a little more to women, but they ask men for respect and give more respect to men. Senior women in the field for many years are given more consideration due to their seniority.

He sadly mentioned leaving a job for three months to look after someone. His job is to prepare food for the household and care for someone. He suddenly needed a loan of 1000 rupees for his daughter, but it was not given to him, which saddened him. The patient had cancer, and he stayed for six months for chemo. The patient would not be allowed to do anything, watch only sports news channels, not even eat at the dining table, and have other rules.

According to him, the most essential skill for this job is patience. Even if the sick person in that house loves us, some of their relatives and family members cannot know it. He once worked at two houses daily, from 9 am to 4 pm in Killipalam and then early morning at Nedungad, Karamana. He went early, around 6:00 am, to look after an older man who was paralyzed. He stayed for two weeks, and then it ended.

When asked if he had faced challenges, he mentioned that a person in his office told him about a patient care job in Chennai. When he went there, he was told to look after an older adult, bathe, feed, and give him medicine. But when he arrived, he realized that the older man was heavy and needed to be fed, which was difficult. Additionally, urine had to be taken care of. He stayed for ten days initially, but then it extended to a month. He emphasized that when assigning work, basic information should be provided.

He has not faced exploitation but has been hurt by the way some people talk and behave. Economically, he feels people prefer to go directly to hospitals, reducing agency work. He does not feel job security because there is no PF, no essential money, nothing like that. He suggests that government nursing associations should include private firms and believes that the number of male workers is increasing due to financial issues.

Society's attitude towards this job is contemptuous. Neighbours, friends, and relatives look down on it. He handles every task well, believing every job has dignity and should not be looked down upon. He knows how to cook well and helps people at home. He performs his responsibilities with great precision and understands the basics. When going to a house, manners should match theirs. Politeness and discipline should be followed. He avoids attending family functions of employers to avoid being a burden, although sometimes he goes.

He faces personal difficulties, including sudden calls to work, and misses his family, baby, and wife. He likes to listen to songs, especially KS Chitra's when he feels sad. He prefers working from Trivandrum to address urgent family matters quickly. He has concerns about safety due to reports of human sacrifice in the news and social media. He knows others in the field and maintains good relationships and support with them. They discuss and understand each other's work.

He mentions the need for more government support, laws, policies, and NGO counselling for their field. Online job advertisements have reduced agency work, so he suggests government policies could help. He is unsure about any registration process, noting that online job searches

make people unaware. A registration process could increase employment opportunities and stability, benefiting private firms.

He says “*Salary is the most significant factor in promoting this job and I am happy doing this work because it brings happiness and satisfaction. The happiness of the person I care for is my greatest reward and salary*”.

4.1.4 CASE 4

Name: Robert

Age: 42

Place: Kavadiar

Working place: Kottayam

Educational Qualification: 10th and ITI.

The researcher engaged with a respondent named a 42-year-old resident of Kavadiar. He commutes his work from 6 am till 5 pm but, sometimes, can't say the exact time. Also, there is no off during the week.

His main tasks are:

- Caring the patient
- Cleaning house, clothes etc.
- Giving medicines at the correct time.
- Gardening
- Fertilizing the plants
- Weeding the yard

He looks at a 74-year-old man with no serious illness, but his job is to take care of him, what this older adult's children say. He is the one who cooks, cleans and takes care of the medicine too, that is taking care of him. He also specifies that he gets free time, and at that time, he will be reading the newspapers and watching TV. He lives in an ordinary old house and has many financial problems.

He also points out the difference between male and female workers, stating that women can cook better than men. They have good experience and know how to look and do everything well, but only some men know how to cook. He also points out that women must do their work, such as household work, and men must do outdoor work, but now women are also going to work because of economic problems and the price of goods.

According to him, one does not need special skills to work and is a resource for those without one. He goes to work because he thinks he is interested in working to support the people who are alone and the parents whose children are abroad too. So, he does the work that gets with precision and dignity.

He has worked in more than two houses, and every time he goes to each home, they give him a timeline; according to that, he must work and then change. That is how each gets a job and, after finishing one place, goes to another. His challenges were not getting proper sleep on time and his high workload. Physically, he used to have back pain, and due to this increase in workload, it is getting a little problem, but he is still doing his job correctly. He also mentioned that he has been fine with the salary so far and receiving it very accurately. Now the salary is Rs 21,000 per month, which is Rs 700 per day.

Similarly, he has not faced any exploitation, not only in the house he is standing in but also in the house that he early stayed. But some of his friends have faced some problems like anxiety, etc., because of his work. None of the employment conditions have caused him any great difficulty, but when it comes to gardening, he has some difficulty, and patient care is being done very well by him with a good heart.

There is no extra benefit other than a bonus when celebrations like Onam come around. Here is one thing we want to point out: the support from the community. He is getting excellent support not only from the community but also from his family. He has not faced any problems till now from the house he is staying in, and the relationship is moving forward ideally, which is a good thing in his life. He is responsible for staying away from that house, and he is doing it very well.

But sometimes, when his owner sees his mistakes, he tries to understand the matter, but still, it doesn't go away without a fight because he does his part well and respectfully, so it doesn't go away without a big fight. The family has shown excellent manners and confidence to accept it happily.

And one thing he meant to say is that men have very little power in this area. He mentioned that this was because more women were handling this sector. Due to financial difficulties, he came into this sector because there was no other job available, and he was doing this work because there was no possibility of going anywhere else.

The family needs to give him direction on how to work. But he continues this job with great satisfaction. General norms don't affect him significantly because he says he does all kinds of work now, so gender norms are not an issue here. The working house is fine because they are all abroad so once a month relatives come here so it's only me and the person he looks after in the house so there have been no problems.

He mentions that he has a family consisting of a father, a mother, four siblings, two brothers and two sisters. After all the work, he gets time to talk to them and make them happy; that makes me so happy. From a few questions, it was understood that he has excellent stability and work security. The employee who was before him was drinking and causing some problems, but he said that he doesn't have any such problems, so he is doing well.

Similarly, he knows some other people in this field. He still knows them well and has good support. Because he has said something to me, a person he needs to know something for work in this field.

Another thing that he mentioned as the most important is that there is no government support or laws for them, health programs, NGOs or anything like that in our society. Even though he is a private employee, he does not get any support from the government, as other people usually do not get anything on behalf of the government.

He also said that he had been a gardener before, and gardening work was very scarce when all the rain came. To search for a job, he searched many places and searched through WhatsApp and got this job.

And what he mentions here is that he doesn't have much interest in working, and now he has started this job for a year and doesn't know anything about cooking, but he is still trying his best. He has not had any excellent experience doing this job or while doing this job.

Because he mentions here that he has no great interest in it, he takes up his job due to financial difficulty and lack of other employment, i.e. unemployment, but he is now delighted with this job.

4.1.5 CASE 5

Name: Vikraman Nair

Age: 60

Place: Nemam

Working place: Sreevaragam

The researcher was engrossed with a respondent named Vikraman Nair, a 60-year-old resident of Nemam. He worked from 8 AM to 6 PM. His current job, domestic work, mainly involved buying household supplies. There was only a man and a woman in the house. The man used a walker to move around, and he needed assistance. That's all he has to do.

"They don't even provide drinking water there; I have to bring my own. Although I worked in many places, I never had such an experience".

He said that felt like an isolation of sorts. Despite being of the same caste, the household treats him poorly. He had to care for the person in the house as if they were bedridden, even having to help with their bowel movements. He had no hesitation in doing any of this, but he couldn't tolerate the neglect he experienced from the household. He sadly mentioned, *"They are rich, and we are poor. That's why they treat us like this."* They didn't pay him for his work the day they dismissed him, saying they didn't need a worker anymore and refused to pay his wages.

The primary responsibility is patient care, which mainly involves:

- Changing diapers
- Cleaning
- Cleaning up after bowel movements
- Disposing of urine

All tasks must be done neatly. He mentioned that he had cared for many bedridden patients before, so he had no hesitation in doing this job. Due to his life circumstances, he works in two houses a day.

He takes the bus at 5:30 in the morning to go to work at Karamana. He used to earn 500 rupees there, but now it's reduced to 300 because they said the work hours are shorter. *"They don't look at our work; they look at the time. I do all the tasks before I leave."* Some households don't

allow us inside; domestic workers are confined to the kitchen. Some houses even have to hand over the bill for purchases. They ask for the bill because they think the workers might steal. He had many bad experiences in the current house he is working in. They even inspect his bag before he leaves to check if he has taken anything. He often told them, "*Don't come here to steal; come to take care of him*". He asked them that If he wanted to steal, he could have stolen as much as he wanted; why would he do this job to survive? However, He had also worked in homes where he was treated with love and respect and where he worked with complete freedom.

Sometimes, patients themselves behave violently. Mentally ill patients had hit him. He had things thrown at him and been verbally abused. He feels like quitting the job in such situations because if they don't need us, then we shouldn't stay there. The reason he took up this job was because of health issues. He couldn't do manual labour because he had undergone one or two surgeries.

He had been doing this job for 30 years. He had received good support from society. Everyone sees it as a service. Different people perceive it in various ways. When he receives good behaviour from his family, he feels motivated to continue working. He feels like he is doing his job well. But when he goes to a home with a dismissive attitude, no matter how well he does, they still look down on him. He feels that a little effort is enough and that he shouldn't struggle too much. But then, he thought he had yet to learn to work that way.

Nowadays, there's no difference between men and women in this job. His co-workers were all well-behaved and supportive. They often say that his work is good. However, domestic workers do not receive any government or other agencies support. There is a need for a union. A union is essential to voice their needs and listen to their suggestions. When there is neglect or intolerable situations, a union is necessary to make their voices heard. They don't receive even the slightest benefit, not even ten paise. If they were to get a pension or something similar, they could save a little. This would be an excellent support for them.

4.1.6 CASE 6

Name: Manu

Age: 47

Place: Attingal

Working place: Thrikkannappuram

In the study, the researcher considered the respondent, Manu, a 47-year-old resident of Attingal. He was working full-day shifts at his current job. He had been working at this place for three and a half years, caring for an older man. Unfortunately, the older man who passed away the day before was to conduct the case study.

His primary duties included cooking, looking after the older man, and cleaning the house. Due to life circumstances, he ended up in this job, and the salary he earned from it was his only income. He was facing significant financial difficulties. The house he lived in was obtained from the panchayat, but the construction had to be stopped halfway due to financial constraints. The money he earned from this job kept the house construction and other expenses going. After the older man's death, he was no longer needed there, and until he finds another job, he is in a challenging situation.

He had treated that place as if it were his own home, doing everything needed in a household. The people there treated him like a member of their own family. However, he faced many challenges in this job. Some households wouldn't pay him on time, and some patients behaved violently. He had to endure insults and harassment from some patients. Job security needed to be improved. The older man's sudden death meant he lost his job there, leaving him unemployed until he found another one.

In some households, he was treated just as a mere worker. Some families would take him in for patient care but make him do all the household chores. When things got too tricky, he had to leave those places. Now, he has learned to accept these challenges. Another significant issue is that some areas wouldn't pay him his due salary, forcing him to stay there until he got paid.

Some people treat him with love and make sure to pay him properly. If he works for a year, they give him three months' salary at a time. Otherwise, they pay him regularly. However, the salary at his current place is low—only ₹18,000. When he asked the agency to increase it, the homeowners disagreed. When he said he couldn't continue working for this salary, they offered to increase it by just ₹1,000.

When he took up this job, he received good support from his family. The people around him also have a positive attitude, seeing it as a good job. No one has spoken negatively about it. Everyone says that doing this job brings blessings.

Some people, however, think that doing this kind of work makes them like women. He feels this way because he used to participate in many events, like dancing and theatre. He encounters different attitudes in different households. Some treat him with love, like a family member, while others treat him poorly.

In just a few days, he can understand the people's behaviour in a household. Based on that, he decides whether to stay or leave. There have been instances where the situation became unbearable, and he had to leave the house that night. In some places, the patients make much noise. These are the kinds of problems that arise in this job. His sister also works the same kind of job. He gets these jobs through an agency, so even though he works five days, he has to give the agency a portion of his earnings. He doesn't feel any difference between men and women in this job—everyone does the same work.

At the house he currently works at, they take him wherever they go. He must always stay close to the patient; even a slight distance makes them angry. Some children hesitate to wash their own father's hands. They wait for me to come and clean them. When such situations arise, he feels like leaving the job but still stays for at least a month. He tries to endure as much as possible to pay off loans and other expenses.

He gets good support from his co-workers and has formed strong friendships. They often advise him on how to handle situations, telling him what to do and how to do it. When he shares his difficulties in some households, many suggest leaving that place. They will help him find another job in a different house. Everyone supports him in doing this job. Only one in a thousand people look down on this type of work. However, he does not receive any unique benefits and said that this is the problem they need a solution for.

4.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Thematic Analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is the first qualitative method that should be learned as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis.

According to Cress Well (2009) there are six steps in thematic analysis. Those steps were such as:

- Compiling and preparing data

- Reading the data as a whole
- Analysing in detail with the coding process
- Making a data description
- Explaining the information that has been analysed and
- Interpreting the data.

4.3 THEMES

The Researcher has identified Six main themes to guide the analysis of the collected data.

- 1) Responsibilities and challenges
- 2) Socio - Economic factors
- 3) Social interaction within household
- 4) Relationship with fellow workers
- 5) Gender norms and societal expectations
- 6) Existing support system and services

The study focuses on six participants. All participants were residing on Trivandrum district. The chosen of six participants had some similar experience and also diverse range of difficulties and issues they had faced.

4.3.1 RESPONSIBILITIES & CHALLENGES

The first category of the research focused on responsibilities and challenges.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Male domestic workers are responsible for providing personalized care and attention to patients, ensuring their comfort, safety, and well-being. They maintain patients' personal hygiene, cleanliness, and grooming, including bathing, dressing, and toileting. Male domestic workers must handle challenging behaviours, agitation, and emotional distress in patients with patience, empathy, and professionalism. According to one respondent *“Every day starts early for me. I help the elderly gentleman I take care of with his bath, change his clothes, and make sure he’s comfortable. It's not just about cleaning—it's about making sure he feels respected, you know? No matter how tough the job is, maintaining his dignity is my priority.”*

They assist patients in maintaining their daily routines, schedules, and discipline, ensuring timely medication, meals, and appointments. Male domestic workers also manage household essentials, cooking, and cleaning, maintaining a clean, organized, and safe living environment. To quote *"From cooking meals to making sure the house is clean, it's a lot to handle, especially when I have to also keep track of appointments and medications. It's like running a mini-household, but everything has to be perfect because it's not just my own family, it's someone else's home I'm responsible for."* They adapt to diverse household dynamics, patient needs, and preferences, demonstrating flexibility and understanding. Male domestic workers maintain professional boundaries, dignity, and respect in their interactions with patients, families, and co-workers. They offer emotional support, companionship, and social interaction to patients, alleviating loneliness and isolation. Male domestic workers collaborate with colleagues, share knowledge, and support each other in finding job opportunities and navigating challenges in the field.

CHALLENGES

Male domestic workers often face numerous challenges that make their work physically and emotionally demanding. One of the most significant issues is the physical and emotional toll of the job, which includes long hours, heavy lifting, and performing tasks that can be physically draining. The high workload often leads to insufficient sleep, further exacerbating their fatigue and stress levels. To quote *"My back hurts a lot after a long day. Lifting people is tough, but I don't have a choice. If I complain, they might find someone else. Most of the time, I just push through the pain because I need the money."*

Many male domestic workers take on these roles out of financial necessity rather than personal interest, which can lead to a lack of motivation and a sense of personal struggle. The emotional burden is further intensified when dealing with difficult patient situations or challenging household dynamics, leading to significant emotional strain.

In the workplace, these workers often experience limited freedom and autonomy, which can make them feel undervalued and powerless. Poor treatment and neglect are common, with many male domestic workers facing discrimination based on their caste or socioeconomic status. This discrimination is not only from employers but also from society at large, contributing to a sense of isolation and marginalization. To quote *"I sometimes feel like I don't have a voice. They don't ask me what I think or how I feel. Being from a lower caste, some*

families treat me like I'm less important than the female workers, or worse, they act like I'm invisible."

Job security is often low, and many male domestic workers do not have access to benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, or retirement plans. The working conditions are frequently poor, with a lack of necessary protective equipment like gloves, and they may have to work in unsanitary environments. In some cases, they must also contend with criminal elements or untrustworthy coworkers, further compromising their safety and well-being. *To quote "We don't get things like health insurance or paid leave. If I fall sick, I still have to show up for work. Sometimes, I don't even know if I will have a job next month. It's like walking on a tightrope all the time."*

The lack of support networks and organizations dedicated to domestic workers exacerbates these challenges. There is a significant stigma and social disapproval associated with this line of work, which can further diminish their sense of self-worth. Variability in salary and benefits often leaves them in financial difficulties, struggling to make ends meet, and unable to secure loans or other forms of financial assistance.

Training programs and certification opportunities are limited, making it difficult for male domestic workers to advance in their careers or improve their working conditions. Access to health programs, NGOs, and other support systems is also restricted, leaving them without crucial resources when needed. Conflicts with employers or household members can arise, creating a tense and unpredictable work environment, and their work schedules are often erratic, leading to further stress.

Economic struggles, such as mounting debt and financial instability, are common among male domestic workers, and personal difficulties, such as missing family and being called to work unexpectedly, add to the strain. *"The salary is never stable. Some months are good, and others are bad. I have debts, and no matter how hard I work, it feels like I'm always struggling to catch up. I wish there was a way to make it better."* Exploitation and mistreatment are prevalent, with many workers lacking the benefits, union representation, and protections that could help improve their situation.

4.3.2 SOCIO - ECONOMIC FACTORS

Second category of the research focused on Socio - Economic factors.

Many male domestic workers enter the field due to severe financial constraints. They often come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, where securing a stable and sufficient income is challenging. The lack of resources and consistent income forces them into domestic work, which, although underpaid, provides some financial relief.

High unemployment rates and low-income levels in other sectors drive men into domestic work. In regions with scarce employment opportunities, particularly for those with limited education or skills, domestic work becomes one of the few available options, despite its low pay.

The lack of job opportunities in other fields, especially in rural or economically depressed areas, pushes men toward domestic work. The scarcity of employment in industries like manufacturing, agriculture, or construction leaves them with little choice but to take up domestic tasks, which are generally seen as more stable, even if poorly remunerated.

Male domestic workers often face discrimination and neglect due to their occupation. Domestic work is traditionally seen as a woman's job, leading to a lack of respect and recognition for men in the field. This discrimination can manifest in various ways, from social stigma to lower wages and fewer benefits.

Society often looks down upon men working as domestic workers, associating it with a lower social status. This stigma can lead to social isolation, ridicule, and even familial disapproval, further marginalizing these workers and making their lives more challenging.

Male domestic workers often have limited access to essential resources such as healthcare, education, and social services. The lack of institutional support leaves them vulnerable to exploitation, and without access to proper resources, they struggle to improve their living conditions.

Transgender male domestic workers face additional layers of discrimination and violence. They are often treated poorly by both employers and society, facing physical and emotional abuse, harassment, and extreme social exclusion due to their gender identity.

Domestic work is often characterized by its inconsistency, with work opportunities fluctuating based on various factors such as economic conditions, employer needs, or seasonal changes. This lack of job security makes it difficult for male domestic workers to plan for the future or maintain a stable income.

The pay for domestic work varies widely depending on geographic location and the employer's socioeconomic status. Workers in urban areas or wealthy households might earn more, but this is not guaranteed. Many still receive low wages despite the higher cost of living in cities.

There is a gender bias in the demand for domestic workers, with women often preferred for tasks such as cooking and cleaning. This preference leads to lower demand and wages for male domestic workers, further exacerbating their financial struggles.

Male domestic workers often rely on networks and cooperation among peers to find job opportunities. These informal support systems are crucial for survival, as they help workers share information about job openings, negotiate better wages, and provide mutual assistance in times of need. Many domestic workers find employment through agencies that charge high fees for placement. These fees can be burdensome, especially for workers already struggling financially, leading to indebtedness and further economic hardship. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the economic instability faced by male domestic workers. Many lost their jobs or saw their incomes drastically reduced, leading to increased debt and financial insecurity. The pandemic also disrupted the informal networks they relied on for finding work. Due to their precarious financial situation, many male domestic workers are forced to take out loans to cover basic needs or emergencies. However, these loans often come with high interest rates, trapping workers in a cycle of debt that is difficult to escape. The formalization of the domestic work sector, including the registration process and the rise of online job platforms, has impacted the role of traditional agencies. While these changes can provide more opportunities, they also add complexity and may exclude workers who lack digital literacy or access to technology.

The support of family and community is crucial for male domestic workers. Family members often help by taking care of children or household responsibilities, allowing the workers to focus on earning an income. Community support can also provide emotional and financial assistance during difficult times. In some regions, male domestic workers face caste-based discrimination, where individuals from lower castes are relegated to the most menial and poorly paid tasks. This discrimination limits their job opportunities and perpetuates poverty and social exclusion.

Domestic workers often face the risk of sudden job loss, either due to the whims of employers or economic downturns. Without any formal contract or severance pay, losing a job can have devastating effects on their financial stability and overall well-being.

Male domestic workers are often seen as less competent or inappropriate for certain tasks, leading to further marginalization and lower pay. Exploitation is a significant issue in the domestic work sector. Male domestic workers may experience non-payment or delayed payment of wages, excessive workloads, and even physical or emotional abuse by employers. The lack of legal protections makes it difficult for them to seek justice or fair treatment.

Domestic work is often undervalued and not recognized as a legitimate profession, leading to a low social status for those who engage in it. This lack of recognition perpetuates the cycle of poverty and marginalization for male domestic workers.

Male domestic workers typically have limited collective bargaining power and are often unrepresented by labour unions or worker associations. This lack of representation makes it difficult for them to advocate for better wages, working conditions, or legal protections, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

4.3.3 SOCIAL INTERACTION WITHIN HOUSEHOLD

Social interaction within household is the third category focused on the research.

Social interaction within household is a significant challenge for male domestic workers. Some household treat them poorly and displaying discriminatory behaviour. The lack of respect and importance given to the workers reflects societal stigma and devaluation of domestic work. To quote *"People don't look at us with respect. Even in my own community, there's a stigma attached to what I do. Some think it's women's work, but I have no choice. I do it because I need to support my family."* The cruel treatment of patients by their families highlights the need for support and resources for both patients and caregivers. The mocking and ridicule faced from others enhance the need for increased awareness and recognition of the importance of domestic work. Workers facing challenges in social interactions, including contemptuous attitude form society, neighbours, friends and relatives. Workers faced neglect poor treatment and exploitation from the household, despite dedication and hard work. They experience challenges in social interaction within household including violence, verbal abuse and discrimination. The need for better working conditions including fair salaries and benefits emphasizes the economic struggles of domestic care workers.

However, Several Domestic workers have positive experience in domestic care highlights the importance of social interaction within household, where building strong relationship and adapting to unique dynamics are crucial. Building strong relationship with patients and their

families is essential and he emphasizes the importance of love and happiness in patient care. The workers highlight the importance of adaptability, politeness and discipline in navigating household dynamics. The support from the community and family enables them to perform job with satisfaction. Significant support from the family and household navigating the challenges faced by male domestic workers and drive demand of domestic work.

4.3.4 RELATIONSHIP WITH FELLOW WORKERS

Relationship with fellow workers is the fourth category the research focused on.

Male domestic workers values relationship with fellow workers sharing joys and sorrow from their work. They highlight the importance of support and camaraderie among workers in navigating the challenges of domestic care work. Cooperation and support among fellow workers, considering it essential for success in domestic care work. Emphasizes the significance of a good work ethic and reliability among co-workers. Discussions and sharing experiences among them helpful to understand difficulties and issues they face. Fellow worker serve as a vital support network useful to navigate the stresses and challenges of domestic care work. The workers are compliment and advice each other which motivates them to continue the job well. The had formed strong relationship with co-workers encourage them to leave difficult workplaces and offer help in finding new jobs. Worker's share similar experiences and difficulties creating a sense of solidarity and understanding.

In the work there is also presence of dishonest worker's, including those with criminal backgrounds which affects reputation of honest workers. Not all domestic workers share same work ethic, and some create problems that impact job. However, teamwork and mutual understanding are essential in Domestic care work, attention on the importance of cooperation and support among fellow workers.

4.3.5 GENDER NORMS & SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

Fifth category of the research is gender norms and societal expectations.

Male domestic workers facing discrimination and contempt due to societal expectations and gender norms surrounding job as a ' Domestic Work. ' They also experience disrespect and neglect from many households, with some treating them less important. Many people look down on the job, asking them why they don't have a "better" job. The challenges faced by transgender individuals entering this field including poor treatment and quick resort to violence when mistakes are pointed out. Also present in demand and salary between male and female

domestic workers, with females being preferred for their ability to perform all household tasks. Male workers are paid lower salaries and are less likely to be hired for female care reinforcing generated stereotypes. Domestic workers emphasize the importance of patience and understanding in this job, which is often seen as a feminine trait.

Male domestic workers' experiences reflect the shifting of gender norms and societal expectations in domestic work, with males increasingly taking on caregiving roles. Economic necessity and unemployment drive career choices leading individuals to challenge traditional gender norms. Male workers face neglect and poor treatment from the household, despite being of the caste, highlighting societal expectations of domestic workers. Now a days there is a changing dynamic in the domestic work, with no difference between men and women in this job. Recognition of domestic work as a valuable profession and advocacy for policy changes can help promote greater equality and support for workers. They emphasize the importance of support and respect from the society, which motivates them to continue working.

4.3.6 EXISTING SUPPORT SYSTEM & SERVICES

Last category of the research is the Existing support system and services.

Male domestic worker's experiences highlight the lack of support and recognition in patient care. Existing support system and services for domestic workers are inadequate or non-existent. They face discrimination, neglect and contempt from household underscoring the need for a support system. They emphasize on the system and organization. *"I've worked in many homes, but no matter how hard I try, I always feel like they look down on me. There's no respect for what I do. Sometimes they treat me worse than the female workers, like I'm not even supposed to be in this job."* *"There's no one to represent us. If we had a union or some organization backing us, things would be different. Right now, we are all on our own, and that's why so many of us are exploited."* Collective action and advocacy are necessary to address the lack of recognition and respect for domestic workers. The absence of government policies and benefits underline the need for policy changes and recognition of domestic work as a valuable profession.

The lack of laws protecting domestic workers' rights and benefits tailored to their needs. The workers' experiences stress the need for a comprehensive support system for domestic workers including job security, benefits and protection from exploitation. NGOs are essential to protect domestic workers' rights. Unfortunately, there is a lack of NGOs working for male domestic workers. They demand a union is essential to voice their needs and address the challenges faced

by domestic workers. To quote *"I wish we had some kind of guarantee—something like job security or benefits. Right now, we work with no safety net. If we lose our job, that's it. There's nothing to fall back on."*

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 FINDINGS

This study explored the experiences and challenges faced by domestic workers in Trivandrum district, with a focus on the existing support systems and services available to them. Through in-depth interviews with six domestic workers, the study revealed a complex web of issues, including job insecurity, exploitation, and societal contempt. Despite their essential role in caring for vulnerable populations, domestic workers face significant challenges in their daily lives, including low wages, long working hours, and lack of access to benefits and protections. The study's findings highlight the need for comprehensive support systems and services, including government support, laws, policies, and NGO counselling, to protect the rights and dignity of domestic workers. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of recognizing domestic work as a valuable profession, deserving of respect and fair treatment. The following sections will present the findings of the study in detail, highlighting the themes and patterns that emerged from the data.

5.1.1 CHALLENGES

The major findings based on challenges faced by male domestic worker's lack of job security. Job security is very low and workers can be easily replaced. The workers hard to work in unsanitary conditions without gloves, and has been exposed to maggot infested wounds. The job is physically and emotionally demanding requiring workers to perform tasks that many people are reluctant to do. The worker's face physical demands leading to health issues like back pain, and high work load affecting their health. The violent behaviour, insults and harassment from some patients making the job emotionally demanding. Physical demand and emotional stress leading to feelings of burnout and quitting. Men have little power in this sector, dominated by women and faces challenges due to societal norms and gender roles.

The workers need to adapt to new household and their unique dynamics which can be challenging. The job is stigmatized and many people look down on domestic workers. The workers faced disrespect, contempt and discrimination from households and has been treated them as insignificant. They experienced exploitation including being paid low wages and being treated poorly. The workers face unfair treatment, neglect and isolation from the household, despite being of the same caste. Workers has concerned about safety due to reports of human sacrifice in the news and social media.

Some people who have committed crimes, such as assault or fraud are now entering the domestic work field. This can affect honest workers. There is no registration for domestic workers, making it difficult for them to access employment opportunities and challenges. Some workers have to pay of their earnings to the agency, which can lead to exploitation and reducing income. There is absence of government policies, benefits or organization to support domestic workers. And there is lack of specific laws and policies protecting their rights.

Despite these challenges workers has learned to accept and cope with difficulties seeking support from family, friends and co-workers.

5.1.2 SOCIO- ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Unemployment is the main reason for men to entering domestic work. The number of male domestic workers increasing day by day. They had facing issues related with low social status and stigma, due to the nature of their work. They experience poor working conditions including inadequate protective gear and lack of basic necessities. Male domestic workers face low job security, low income and limited benefits making their financial situation precarious. They going through inconsistent work availability, with some jobs secured through agencies and others not. The handling with financial difficulties and debts, mainly due to Covid-19. They dealing with economic exploitation including non-payment of wages and neglect. They facing sudden job loss due to the patient's death point out the instability of work.

The workers experienced isolation and confinement in the work. Workers receive support from the family and society which is the crucial element for the workers to continue this job. They outline the importance of cooperation and support among co-workers relying on each other for finding work during lean periods. Male domestic workers have formed strong relationship and support networks sharing their experiences and advocating for change. The workers seek recognition and respect for their contributions to society, stressing the importance of their work in patient care. They emphasize need for an organization to empower the male domestic workers address their issues and improve socio- economic conditions.

5.1.3 INTER HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIP

Male domestic workers experience varying levels of respect and treatment from different household ranging from kindness to contempt and neglect. They face discrimination in some household, being treated as unimportant and facing disrespect. Worker's encounters poor patient care in some households with patients being left unclean and uncared for. They undergo

diverse household dynamics, including deceitful and kind home owners and varying levels of patient care. Workers faced violence and abuse from patients including being hit, having things thrown and verbally being abused. The workers underline the need to adapt to each households' unique dynamics and adjust their approach to fit their needs. Workers can create a strong bond with households, which takes time to establish and treated like a family member. Conflicts arises but rarely, if issues emerge household members report to the agency to avoid jeopardizing their job. The agency prioritizes assigning work to those with a good track record, so minor issues are often overlooked to maintain a positive relationship. Male domestic workers had both mixed experiences in different household, with some treating them with love and respect while others treat them badly.

5.1.4 WORK RELATIONSHIP

Male domestic workers have very good relationship with their fellow workers, and they share their pleasure and pain. The mentions that they open up their experiences and support one another, indicating a sense of community among workers. They working with individuals from diverse backgrounds can be challenging, particularly when it comes to issues like violence and deceit. They outline the importance of solidarity among workers they face challenges and lack of support from outside. They emphasize the significance of cooperation among co-workers as they rely on each other for finding work during lean periods. The people in this field maintains good relationship providing support and guidance. The attitude receives from employers affects their motivation to work, with good behaviour motivating them to continue working well. They express the desire to start an organization for domestic workers, recognizing the need for collective action to address their challenges. However, not all workers have the same level of commitment and some may even hinder the job's progress.

5.1.5 GENDER STEREOTYPES

The job is traditionally associated with women. Male domestic workers face discrimination neglect and disrespect from some household perpetuating negative gender stereotypes. The job security is very low and lack benefits reflecting the undervaluation of care work, often associated with feminized labour. The workers going through societal stigma and mocking for doing a job considered "lowly" and "feminine", shows the persistence of gender stereotypes. The entry of transgender individuals into the field has brought new challenges, including violence and poor treatment emphasizing the need to address intersectional gender issues. Male domestic workers tasks and responsibilities differ from those of female domestic workers, point

out gender-based division of labour. Males earns lower salary than female domestic workers indicating gender-based wage discrimination. Female domestic workers are in higher demand and more likely to be hired, especially for female patient care perpetuating gender stereotypes. Men have limited authority in this field, dominated by women, shows the challenges of men in traditionally feminine occupations.

Despite, the worker's find happiness and satisfaction in this work, challenging negative gender stereotypes and emphasizing the importance of personal fulfilment in career choices. Support receives from the family and community, indicating a positive social environment for men in non-traditional roles. Male workers emphasize the importance of good manners and confidence in their work, challenging traditional gender stereotypes. The workers get good support from the society, sees domestic work as a service.

5.1.6 EXISTING FRAMEWORK

There is no support or organization for male domestic workers, underscores the need for collective voice and representation. The workers do not receive even the smallest benefit not even a pension or savings scheme. There is lack of government policies or benefits for the workers, leaving them without protection or support. A few addresses the issues of male domestic worker's, indicating lack of attention and concern from authorities. The male workers are unaware of any laws or policies that protect domestic worker's rights, shows the need for greater awareness and education. Ther is absence of specific laws for addressing issues of male domestic workers. There are no NGOs or organisations working specifically to support and protect the rights of male domestic workers. This outlines the lack of support and resources available to male domestic worker's, who often face unique challenges and vulnerabilities in their work. They emphasize the need for a union to voice the needs and concerns for domestic workers. The workers thinking of starting their interest and address their concerns.

5.2 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATION

STRENGTHS

1. In-depth insights: The study provided rich, in-depth insights into the lives and experiences of male domestic workers.
2. Exploration of a neglected topic: The study uncovers a neglected topic, highlighting the challenges and struggles faced by male domestic workers.

3. Contextual understanding: The study provided a contextual understanding of the experiences of male domestic workers in the Trivandrum district.

4. Identification of support needs: The study identified the need for support systems and services for male domestic workers, highlighting areas for intervention.

5. Empirical evidence: The study provided empirical evidence on the experiences of male domestic workers, which can inform policy and practice.

LIMITATION

1. Small sample size: The study only considered six male domestic workers, which may not be representative of the entire population.

2. Geographical limitation: The study was limited to the Trivandrum district, and findings may not be generalizable to other areas.

3. Lack of diversity: The study only considered male domestic workers, and findings may not be applicable to female domestic workers.

4. Methodological limitations: The study relied on qualitative interviews, which may be subjective and prone to biases.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The study highlights numerous challenges and socio-economic difficulties faced by male domestic workers, a group often marginalized in discussions about labour rights and protections. Male domestic workers face significant job insecurity, often working under harsh conditions without basic protective gear, leading to physical and emotional stress. The nature of their work, combined with societal stigma and gender stereotypes, contributes to feelings of burnout and a high turnover rate. Despite their contributions, they are frequently disrespected, discriminated against, and exploited, both in terms of wages and treatment. Furthermore, the absence of proper registration, government policies, or legal protections exacerbates their vulnerabilities.

Unemployment drives many men into domestic work, where they experience low job security, inconsistent work availability, and economic exploitation. The precarious nature of their employment, coupled with low wages and lack of benefits, puts them in a vulnerable financial position. Despite these challenges, male domestic workers have formed strong support

networks among themselves, seeking recognition and respect for their crucial role in domestic care.

The treatment of male domestic workers varies widely across different households. While some workers are treated with kindness and respect, others face neglect, violence, and abuse. Establishing a strong bond with households can be challenging, and conflicts, though rare, can jeopardize their job security. Workers must continuously adapt to the unique dynamics of each household, underscoring the complexity of their role.

Male domestic workers often form close-knit communities, relying on each other for emotional support and job opportunities. Solidarity among workers is crucial, especially given the lack of external support. However, challenges persist, such as dealing with colleagues who may not share the same level of commitment.

The job of domestic work is traditionally viewed as "women's work," leading to discrimination, neglect, and wage disparities for male workers. Despite this, many male domestic workers find fulfilment in their roles, challenging gender stereotypes and emphasizing the importance of personal satisfaction in their career choices. Support from family and community plays a crucial role in enabling men to pursue these non-traditional roles.

There is a stark absence of support systems, legal protections, and organizations for male domestic workers. Without government policies or benefits, these workers remain unprotected and unsupported. The study underscores the urgent need for unions or organizations to advocate for their rights and address their unique challenges.

In conclusion, male domestic workers face a multitude of challenges stemming from societal stigma, lack of job security, and inadequate legal protections. Their experiences underscore the need for greater recognition, legal frameworks, and support systems to ensure their well-being and dignity in the workplace. Despite the hardships, the resilience and solidarity among these workers highlight their strength and the importance of community in navigating their difficult work environment.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS

1. Establish a union or organization to represent male domestic workers and address their concerns
2. Provide training on safety protocols, conflict resolution, and stress management.

3. Implement measures to improve job security, such as contracts and benefits
4. Promote awareness and education on the importance of domestic work and the challenges faced by male domestic workers.
5. Conduct research to better understand the socio-economic conditions of male domestic workers.
6. Establish a rating system for households to ensure fair treatment and respect.
7. Provide training on conflict resolution and communication skills.
8. Foster a sense of community among workers through regular meetings and support groups.
9. Encourage solidarity and cooperation among workers.
10. Conduct awareness campaigns to challenge negative gender stereotypes.
11. Promote education and training on gender sensitivity and inclusivity.
12. Encourage men to take up domestic work and challenge traditional gender roles.
13. Advocate for government policies and benefits for male domestic workers.
14. Establish a registration system for domestic workers.
15. Develop specific laws and policies to protect the rights of male domestic workers.
16. Encourage NGOs and organizations to support and protect the rights of male domestic workers.

Overall, the suggestions aim to address the challenges faced by male domestic workers, improve their socio-economic conditions, and promote a more supportive and inclusive work environment.

5.5 FUTURE RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

1. Investigate the impact of job insecurity and low wages on the mental and physical health of male domestic workers.
2. Explore the experiences of male domestic workers in different cultural and societal contexts to understand the nuances of gender stereotypes and discrimination.
3. Investigate the role of agencies and intermediaries in exploiting male domestic workers and identify strategies to regulate their practices.

4. Examine the intersectionality of gender, caste, and class in shaping the experiences of male domestic workers.
5. Investigate the impact of collective action and unionization on improving the working conditions and rights of male domestic workers.
6. Explore the experiences of transgender individuals in domestic work and identify strategies to address their unique challenges.
7. Investigate the role of government policies and laws in protecting the rights of male domestic workers and identify areas for reform.
8. Develop and evaluate programs aimed at challenging negative gender stereotypes and promoting positive attitudes towards male domestic workers.

These research implications can help deepen our understanding of the complex issues faced by male domestic workers and inform strategies to improve their lives and work.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

UNVEILING THE INVISIBLE: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL LIVES OF MALE DOMESTIC WORKERS IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT

PERSONAL PROFILE

Name:

Age:

Place:

Working place:

Educational qualification:

Income:

Class:

Family:

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

1. What motivated male workers to enter domestic work?
2. How do male domestic workers feel about their jobs?
3. What are the personal stories and experiences of male domestic workers?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RESPONSIBILITIES & CHALLENGES

Daily Lives:

1. What is a typical daily routine for male domestic workers, and how do they balance their work and personal life?
2. How many hours do male domestic workers usually work in a day, and are they subject to overtime or flexible scheduling?
3. What types of tasks are commonly performed by male domestic workers, and do these tasks vary depending on the household or employer?
4. How do male domestic workers commute to work, and are they responsible for their own transportation costs?

Responsibilities

1. What specific duties are male domestic workers responsible for in their employment, and do these duties differ from those of female domestic workers?
2. What skills are essential for male domestic workers to perform their duties effectively, and are there any specific training or certifications required?
3. How do male domestic workers manage their responsibilities if they work for multiple households or employers?
4. Are male domestic workers responsible for managing household budgets or finances, and if so, what challenges do they face in this regard?

Challenges:

1. What are the most significant challenges faced by male domestic workers in their jobs, and how do they cope with these challenges?
2. How do male domestic workers deal with long working hours and physical demands, and what impact does this have on their health and well-being?
3. What issues related to job security and wages do male domestic workers face, and how do they negotiate for better pay or benefits?
4. Have male domestic workers experienced harassment or abuse in their workplaces, and if so, how do they deal with it?
5. What health issues do male domestic workers commonly face, and how do they access healthcare services or support?

SOCIO & ECONOMIC FACTORS

Economic Factors:

1. What are the typical wages and benefits received by male domestic workers, and how do these compare to those of female domestic workers?
2. How does the economic condition of a country or region affect the availability and demand for male domestic workers?
3. What are the employment conditions for male domestic workers, including working hours, leave policies, and notice periods?

4. What job security do male domestic workers have, and are they entitled to severance pay or other benefits if their employment is terminated?

5. How do economic factors such as inflation, recession, or poverty rates impact the lives and work of male domestic workers?

Social Factors:

1. How do societal attitudes and cultural norms influence the perception and employment of male domestic workers, and are there any differences across cultures or regions?

2. What stigma and stereotypes are associated with male domestic workers, and how do these impact their self-esteem and job prospects?

3. What are the household dynamics and family responsibilities of male domestic workers, and how do these affect their ability to work and their job choices?

4. How do male domestic workers balance their work and family responsibilities, and are there any support systems in place to help them?

5. How do societal expectations around masculinity and gender roles impact the experiences and opportunities of male domestic workers?

SOCIAL INTERACTION WITHIN HOUSEHOLD

1. Assigned roles and responsibilities within household impact the daily lives of male domestic workers?

2. Are there significant differences in the duties assigned to male workers compared to female?

3. How do the dynamics between household members and the workers affect their job satisfaction and mental health?

4. What are the challenges workers face in their work environment due to household social interactions?

5. How are the workers perceived by the household members and how does this perception influence their self-esteem and work performance?

6. Do male workers experience different levels of respect or authority compare to their female counterparts?

7. Communication patterns within the household affect the effectiveness and efficiency of male domestic workers?
8. How well male workers are integrated into the household social structure?
9. Do male workers feel included or excluded from household activity and decisions?
10. Cultural and gender norms within the household influence the behaviour and expectation of male workers?
11. Conflict arise between workers and members and how these are solved?
12. How do household dynamics influence the job security and stability of workers?
13. How do social interactions within the house hold affect the physical and mental health of male workers?

RELATIONSHIP WITH FELLOW WORKERS

1. How do male domestic workers perceive their relationship with their employers, and what factors influence this perception?
2. Do male workers feel valued, respected, and trusted by their employers, and if not, why not?
3. How do power dynamics play out in the relationship between male workers and their employers, and what impact does this have on job satisfaction and mental wellbeing?
4. Are male workers able to negotiate their working conditions, wages, or benefits with their employers, and if not, why not?
5. How do employers' attitudes and behaviours impact the job satisfaction and mental wellbeing of male workers, and what specific behaviours are most influential?
6. Do employers provide emotional support, resources, or referrals to support the mental health and wellbeing of male workers?
7. What type of support (e.g., emotional, financial, practical) do male workers receive from their employers, and are there any instances of mistreatment (e.g., verbal abuse, exploitation)?
8. How do male workers cope with mistreatment or lack of support from their employers, and what resources do they turn to for help?

9. How do positive relationships with employers and coworkers contribute to resilience and job satisfaction among male workers, and what specific factors are most influential?

10. Can positive relationships with employers and coworkers mitigate the negative impacts of stressful or traumatic work experiences, and if so, how?

GENDER NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

1. How do societal gender norms influence your decision to work as a domestic worker, and do you face any stigma or discrimination because of this?

2. Do you feel that your masculinity is challenged or reinforced by your work as a domestic worker, and how do you navigate these dynamics?

3. How do you perceive the gendered division of labour in domestic work, and do you think men and women should share household responsibilities equally?

4. Have you faced any gender-based stereotypes or biases in your work, such as being expected to perform only certain tasks or being seen as less capable than female workers?

5. How do you manage the emotional demands of domestic work, which is often seen as "feminine" work, and do you feel comfortable expressing emotions or seeking support?

6. Do you feel pressure to conform to traditional masculine norms, such as being the primary breadwinner or provider, and how does this impact your work as a domestic worker?

7. How do you think gender norms and expectations impact your relationships with coworkers, employers, and clients, and are there any differences in how you interact with men versus women?

8. Do you believe that men and women should have equal opportunities and recognition in domestic work, and how can we work to challenge gender-based barriers and biases in this field?

EXISTING SUPPORT SYSTEM

1. What are the existing support systems and services available for male domestic workers, including government programs, non-profit organizations, and community resources?

2. What policies and laws are in place to protect the rights of male domestic workers, and are you aware of them?

3. How effective are these policies and laws in addressing the challenges faced by male domestic workers?
4. What health programs are specifically targeting male domestic workers, and what healthcare services are available to them?
5. Are these programs and services accessible, affordable, and culturally sensitive?
6. What social support networks are available for male domestic workers, including peer support groups and mentorship programs?
7. What community organizations and NGOs are providing support services for male domestic workers, and what types of services do they offer?
8. What mental health services are available for male domestic workers, including counselling, therapy, and stress management programs?
9. What challenges do male domestic workers face in accessing support systems and services, including lack of awareness, and transportation issues?
10. How does cultural and social stigma impact the availability and effectiveness of support services for male domestic workers?
11. Are there any differences in the support and services provided based on gender, and how do these differences impact male domestic workers?
12. What impact do existing support systems have on the wellbeing and job satisfaction of male domestic workers, and how can these systems be improved to better meet their needs?
