

Social Security for Women Domestic Workers: Implementation and Management of Welfare Laws in the Unorganized Sector

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ABSTRACT

Women domestic workers constitute one of the most vulnerable and economically marginalized segments of the unorganized labour force in India and across developing economies. Despite their substantial contribution to household maintenance, caregiving, and urban service economies, they remain outside the effective coverage of social security, labour welfare benefits, and employment protection mechanisms. This research paper critically analyses the implementation and management of social security laws applicable to women domestic workers within the unorganized sector. Through a doctrinal-exploratory research design supported by secondary data, legislative review, and theoretical modelling, the study evaluates the operational gaps in existing welfare legislations including the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act (UWSSA), 2008, the Code on Social Security, 2020, Contract Labour provisions, and state-level domestic workers' welfare boards. The study applies feminist labour theory, informalization theory, capability theory, and rights-based frameworks to understand the systemic challenges restricting women domestic workers from accessing legally mandated protections. The paper further employs a proposed regression-based data analysis structure for future empirical validation, explaining how variables such as awareness, employer compliance, state intervention, unionization, and socio-

economic vulnerability influence social security access.

Keywords: Women domestic workers, unorganized sector, social security, welfare laws, labour rights, implementation gaps, gendered labour, India.

1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic work represents one of the oldest forms of labour, deeply rooted in socioeconomic, cultural, and gendered structures across societies. In India, the domestic work sector has expanded significantly due to urbanization, the rise of nuclear families, increased labour market participation of women, and the growing demand for household support services. According to national-level estimates, more than 4.75 million domestic workers are employed in India, although the actual number is believed to be substantially higher due to the invisible and informal nature of the sector. A significant proportion—over 70 percent—of domestic workers are women, many of whom belong to marginalized castes, minority communities, migrant backgrounds, or economically deprived families.

2. Research Problem:

1. Why do welfare laws fail to effectively protect women domestic workers?
2. What implementation gaps exist at administrative, policy, and employer levels?

3. How do gender dynamics and informal labour structures hinder social security access?
4. What theoretical frameworks can explain the persistence of vulnerability?

3. Significance of the Study

This research is important for several reasons:

- It examines a highly neglected sector with high female labour participation.
- It evaluates the implementation of social security laws using legal, economic, and sociological lenses.
- It integrates feminist labour theory, informalization theory, and rights-based approaches to build a robust theoretical framework.
- It proposes a regression-based analytical framework that can guide empirical policy studies.
- It contributes to policy reforms in line with India's commitment to ILO conventions and Sustainable Development Goals.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Legal Exclusion and Partial Recognition

India has taken limited steps to legally recognize domestic workers. Studies by Sankaran (2017), Sinha (2020), and Menon (2019) demonstrate that most labour laws either exclude domestic workers or provide ambiguous coverage.

2. Women Domestic Workers and Gender-Based Exploitation

Mazumdar (2019) highlights the intersection of gender, caste, and class as core barriers. Women domestic workers often face emotional abuse, restricted mobility, sexual harassment, and discrimination..

3. Working Conditions and Wage Issues

Studies by Kaur (2021) and Banerjee (2018) reveal that wages for domestic workers remain far below living wage standards

4. Social Security Code (2020) Limitations

Commentaries by Varkkey (2022), Thomas (2021), and ILO (2021) report that the Social Security Code still lacks clear employer liability mechanisms, which are essential for domestic work regulation.

5. Unionization and Collective Action

Agarwala (2016) and N. Menon (2020) show that unionization among domestic workers improves bargaining power and increases access to welfare schemes.

6. Digital Registration and e-Governance Gaps

Studies on labour governance (Babu, 2022; Mehta, 2020) highlight that digital platforms for worker registration still exclude low-literacy female workers.

14. International Comparisons

Brazil, South Africa, and the Philippines offer strong models where domestic work is formally regulated. ILO reports (2019) show that mandatory contracts and employer contributions significantly improve social security coverage.

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. To evaluate the coverage, accessibility, and effectiveness of welfare and social security legislation applicable to women domestic workers in India.
2. To analyze administrative, institutional, and governance challenges affecting the implementation of welfare laws in the unorganized sector.
3. To assess awareness levels, enrolment patterns, and benefit utilization among women domestic workers.

4. To identify socio-economic, gender-based, and occupational factors influencing access to social security.
5. To propose a comprehensive and actionable policy framework for strengthening social security delivery for women domestic workers.

6. HYPOTHESES

6.1 Hypothesis 1: Awareness and Social Security Access

6.2 H 2: Employer Attitude and Social Protection

6.3 H 3: Government Implementation Capacity

6.4 H 4: Socio-economic Vulnerability and Exclusion

6.5 H 5: Unionization and Collective Action

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Design

A **descriptive–analytical** and **empirical** research design is adopted..

7.2 Sampling

Sampling Technique

Sample Size

Minimum **400 women domestic workers**

Additional:

- 20 union representatives
- 10 labour department officials
- 10 NGO workers
- 50 employers (for triangulation)

7.3 Data Collection Methods

Primary Data

- Structured questionnaires
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Field observations

Secondary Data

- Labour department reports
- Welfare board documents
- ILO, WIEGO, UN Women reports
- Government scheme databases

- Academic literature

7.4 Data Collection Instruments

- Awareness scale
- Employer attitude scale
- Governance efficiency index
- Social security outcome index
- Vulnerability index

These scales are constructed using Likert-type responses.

7.5 Data Analysis Techniques

- Descriptive statistics
- Chi-square tests
- Correlation analysis
- Logistic regression
- Multiple regression
- ANOVA
- Thematic coding (qualitative data)

Statistical analysis will be conducted using SPSS/STATA/R.

8. DATA ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The data analysis framework operationalizes the theoretical and conceptual components of the study into measurable constructs.

8.1 Variable Categories

Dependent Variable (DV)

Access to Social Security

Measured through:

- registration status
- receipt of benefits
- frequency of benefit utilization
- coverage across schemes (health, maternity, pensions)

Independent Variables (IVs)

1. Awareness level
2. Employer support
3. Governance efficiency
4. Socio-economic vulnerability
5. Union membership
6. Employment characteristics
7. Migration status

Control Variables

- Age
- Education

- Work experience
- Number of employers
- Residential status

8.2 Statistical Testing Framework

Phase 1: Descriptive Analysis

To establish socio-economic profile and awareness levels.

Phase 2: Bivariate Analysis

Chi-square and correlation tests between IVs and DV.

Phase 3: Multivariate Analysis

Regression models to identify determinants of social security access.

Phase 4: Qualitative Coding

Themes extracted from interviews:

- employer–worker power dynamics
- administrative barriers
- discrimination patterns

8. REGRESSION MODELS

Model 1: Awareness–Access Model

DV: Social Security Access

IV: Awareness Level

Equation:

$$SSA = \beta_0 + \beta_1(AWR) + \varepsilon$$

Expectation: $\beta_1 > 0$

Model 2: Employer Compliance Model

DV: Social Security Access

IV: Employer Support

Equation:

$$SSA = \beta_0 + \beta_1(EMP) + \varepsilon$$

Expectation: $\beta_1 > 0$

Model 3: Governance Efficiency Model

DV: Social Security Access

IV: Governance Efficiency Index

Equation:

$$SSA = \beta_0 + \beta_1(GOV) + \varepsilon$$

Expectation: $\beta_1 > 0$

Model 4: Socio-economic Exclusion Model

DV: Social Security Access

IV: Vulnerability Index

Equation:

$$SSA = \beta_0 + \beta_1(VUL) + \varepsilon$$

Expectation: $\beta_1 < 0$

8.1 Variable Operationalization

Variable	Type	Measurement
SSA (Dependent)	Continuous / Binary	Registration status, receipt of benefits, frequency of use, coverage across schemes
AWR (Independent)	Continuous	Awareness score (0–10 scale) based on knowledge of laws, schemes, and entitlements
EMP (Independent)	Continuous	Employer support score (0–5 Likert scale) for document provision, payment compliance, cooperation
GOV (Independent)	Continuous	Governance efficiency index based on registration ease, staff responsiveness, grievance handling
VUL (Independent)	Continuous	Composite vulnerability index including caste, migration status, education, income level
UNION (Independent)	Binary	1 = member of union/collective, 0 = non-member
CVs	Continuous / Categorical	Age (years), Education (years), Experience (years), Migration status (binary), Number of employers

8.2 Statistical Techniques

1. Descriptive Statistics:

- Mean, median, standard deviation, frequency distribution for all variables.

2. Bivariate Analysis:

- Correlation analysis between SSA and IVs.
- Chi-square tests for categorical variables.

3. Multivariate Analysis:

- Multiple Linear Regression** (continuous SSA outcome).
- Logistic Regression** (binary SSA outcome: access vs. no access).
- Hierarchical Regression** to assess incremental contribution of governance, employer support, and unionization.

4. Qualitative Analysis:

- Thematic coding of interviews with domestic workers, employers, and welfare officers.
- Triangulation with quantitative findings for validation.

8.3 Regression Models

The study proposes **four primary regression models** to test the hypotheses:

Model 1: Awareness–Access Regression

Objective: Examine whether awareness increases social security access.

Equation:

$$SSA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AWR_i + \sum \gamma_j CV_{ij} + \epsilon_i$$

- SSA_i:** Social security access score for worker *i*
- AWR_i:** Awareness level
- CV_{ij}:** Control variables for worker *i*

- ε_i:** Error term

Expectation: $\beta_1 > 0$ (higher awareness → higher access)

Model 2: Employer Compliance Regression

Objective: Determine effect of employer support on access.

Equation:

$$SSA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EMP_i + \sum \gamma_j CV_{ij} + \epsilon_i$$

Expectation: $\beta_1 > 0$ (cooperative employers → higher access)

Model 3: Governance Efficiency Regression

Objective: Assess how governance quality influences access.

Equation:

$$SSA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GOV_i + \sum \gamma_j CV_{ij} + \epsilon_i$$

Expectation: $\beta_1 > 0$ (efficient administration → higher access)

Model 4: Socio-Economic Vulnerability Regression

Objective: Test whether marginalized women face exclusion.

Equation:

$$SSA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VUL_i + \sum \gamma_j CV_{ij} + \epsilon_i$$

Expectation: $\beta_1 < 0$ (higher vulnerability → lower access)

Model 5 (Optional): Union Membership Regression

Objective: Evaluate effect of collective action on welfare access.

Equation:

$$SSA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UNION_i + \sum \gamma_j CV_{ij} + \epsilon_i$$

Expectation: $\beta_1 > 0$ (union membership → higher access)

8.4 Regression Assumptions

- Linearity between IVs and DV
- Independence of residuals
- Homoscedasticity (constant variance of errors)
- Normality of residuals (for linear regression)
- Multicollinearity checks (VIF < 5)

6. No autocorrelation (Durbin–Watson test)

These assumptions ensure validity, reliability, and interpretability of results.

8.5 Integration with Theoretical Framework

The regression models operationalize the theoretical concepts:

Theory	Operationalization
Feminist Labour Theory	Awareness, employer support, and unionization capture gendered barriers
Informalization Theory	Vulnerability and employment characteristics reflect informal work constraints
Capability Approach	SSA as outcome reflects enhancement of real freedoms and entitlements
Rights-Based Approach	Governance efficiency reflects state enforcement of legal rights
Social Exclusion & Intersectionality	Socio-economic vulnerability index captures multiple axes of marginalization

This ensures that empirical analysis is theory-driven and policy-relevant.

FINDINGS

Quantitative regression results are expected to show **a positive and statistically significant relationship** between awareness scores and access to social security, confirming H 1 .Regression models (Model 2) are expected to show a **positive and significant coefficient** for employer support, validating H2.Model 3 is

anticipated to demonstrate a **positive effect** of governance efficiency on social security access, supporting H3.Regression results from Model 4 are expected to show **negative coefficients**, validating H4.Model 5 is expected to show **positive, statistically significant effects** of union membership on SSA outcomes, confirming H5.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, women domestic workers remain one of the most socially and economically marginalized groups in the workforce. While social security legislation exists on paper, its implementation faces multiple structural, institutional, and socio-economic challenges. The study anticipates that **awareness, employer support, governance efficiency, socio-economic vulnerability, and collective action** are the primary determinants of social security access.

A **multi-dimensional policy framework**, combining targeted awareness, employer incentivization, administrative reform, and union empowerment, offers the most viable pathway to ensuring meaningful welfare access. By aligning legislation with grassroots realities and enhancing enforcement mechanisms, policymakers can move toward equitable, gender-sensitive, and inclusive social protection for women domestic workers in India's unorganized sector.

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