

Perceived Social Status of Domestic Workers Among Urban Working Women

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Abstract- This study investigates the perceived social status and role of domestic workers among urban working women, focusing on how their support affects work-life balance, mental and physical well-being, and productivity. With the rapid pace of urbanization, globalization, and increased participation of women in the formal workforce, domestic workers have become integral to the functioning of middle-class urban households. Despite their critical contributions, domestic workers often remain undervalued and subject to social hierarchies and stigma. Adopting a quantitative, descriptive, and analytical approach, the study collected data from working women in the Mumbai region who employ domestic workers. A structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was used, and responses were analyzed using correlation and regression techniques. Reliability testing confirmed the robustness and consistency of the instrument. The analysis highlights that domestic workers play a pivotal role in reducing the mental and physical workload of working women, supporting time management, and enhancing productivity. Beyond their functional support, domestic workers also contribute significantly to sustaining the professional and personal lives of women, yet their work is often socially undervalued. The study underscores the need for increased legal protections, standardized wage policies, and broader societal recognition to ensure that domestic workers receive the respect and support commensurate with their contributions. By examining both the practical and social dimensions of domestic work, this research sheds light on the indispensable role domestic workers play in urban economies and the lives of working women. The findings call for policy interventions and social reforms that acknowledge and enhance the status of domestic workers, while promoting equitable and supportive working environments for women in urban India.

Index Terms- Domestic Workers, Work-Life Balance, Social Status, Working Women, Urban Employment, Gender, Productivity

I. INTRODUCTION

The difficulties and paradoxes faced by domestic workers trying to earn respect in their life are

highlighted by stories of paid domestic employment from all over time and place. The need for prestige and upward social mobility, which are crucial components of the concept of respect, is rarely taken into consideration in contemporary descriptions of paid domestic work that attempt to comprehend shifts in the global economy and demography. Instead, they are fuelled by the global expansion of young women who migrate to work as domestic servants in underdeveloped, impoverished nations. The globalization and feminization of paid domestic work have been linked to changes in the labour market's structure in the developed world, including an increase in dual-career households and public service cuts that limit the care services available to the elderly and young in an environment of ageing populations and declining fertility (Standing, 1999; Kabeer, 2007).

Respectability is a class marker that is inherently linked to gender identities. A complex collection of behaviours apart from societal norms and moral codes—that allow for the framing of individuals and, thus, the justification of the unequal distribution of resources are involved (Skeggs, 1997). These practices are defined by proper behavior, language, and appearance. Although female domestic workers are well aware of their social standing and class, in their quest for upward social mobility, they often make investments in respectability symbols as defined by the dominant class. This is not an easy process, though, and it brings to light the reluctance with which they part with their ethnic identities and emblems of honour in order to conform to middle-class, elite standards of respectability.

As individuals come to understand that obtaining the external markers of material respectability does not inevitably result in a concept of respect as

mirrored in the treatment bestowed by others, their ambivalence endures (*Sennett and Cobb, 1973*). Mutuality, which is a component of respect, arises from both the process of self-actualization and from interactions with and acknowledgment from others (*Sennett, 2003*). However, these women continue to harbour a covert fear regarding the nature of their experiences and how they will be accepted by society. It's important to remember that this is negotiated through a combination of individual characteristics and features, such as age and education, as well as the larger institutional contexts and social structures at both home and the destination (such as the placement agency's policies and the placement agent's personality). In terms of their "ability to define their goals and act upon them," or agency (*Kabeer, 1999*), they can then employ a variety of strategies, including as negotiation and bargaining, manipulation, resistance, or the more ethereal processes of introspection and analysis. The methods by which the structures of constraint are to be broken can require both group and individual efforts.

My focus in this article is on the interaction between the identities of the migrant domestic workers in the workplace and in their village, home as shaping the shifts in their social position and search for respect throughout their life course, even though the identities and status of the workers and their employers are often constructed in opposition to each other (*Qayum and Ray, 2003*). The physical and cultural barriers that separate the house from the workplace affect how domestic workers negotiate power dynamics on both sides, trying to strike a balance between demanding work environments and the possibility of receiving respect at home. Multiple transitions social, emotional, and spatial occur in their life at the same time as they fight for respect, and they are not always one-way. As a matter of fact, the shift to maturity has been linked to a sense of agency, which includes traits like decision-making ability, freedom of movement, and access to resources (*Jejeebhoy et al, 2010*).

II. DOMESTIC WORKER IN URBAN AREA

In addition to its explosive growth as an industry, domestic work has also become more feminine in India (*NIUA, 1991*). According to *Ray (2000)*, just 37% of the 0.7 million domestic workers in the nation were women in the 1971 Census. In under twenty years, the ratio had flipped, with *Shramshakti (GOI, 1988)* projecting that 1.6 million out of 2.3 million domestic workers were women (or 70%). According to *NSSO estimates from 2004–2005*, women make up 87% of housemaids, a subcategory of domestic workers, although making up 72% of the total domestic labour sector (*Neetha, 2009*). This feminization is due to a few factors. Men work as drivers, cooks, and housekeepers in public places like restaurants, shops, and offices. However, because they lack submissive qualities, they are perceived as dangers in private homes. Women are preferred because they exhibit the "supposed attributes of femininity - docility, deference and empathy," according to *McDowell (2007)*, but young males are less desirable as potential employees in the interactive service economy because of their street bravado and machismo.

III. PERCEPTION ABOUT DOMESTIC WORKER

Domestic workers in India's middle-class metropolitan areas are both ubiquitous and inconspicuous. Rich households are reliant on their workers, but they frequently suffer from abuse and devaluation (*Neetha 2004*). In actuality, it is commonly seen that domestic workers carry out the "most undesirable tasks in society." The Indian domestic worker faces "the worst aspects of both feudalism and capitalism," trapped between unfavourable working circumstances and demands of submissive allegiance.

According to *Dickey (2000)*, domestic workers are both a need and a danger. Vulnerability results from sharing your house with a stranger since it "involves the mixing of categories that might otherwise be kept separate." According to the logic of differentiation, a working-class woman and a middle-class or upper-class woman shouldn't meet (*Weininger 2005*). According to *Mattila (2011)*, "they are actually highly integrated." Physical distance is no longer sufficient to maintain

distinctions; other methods must be developed. One such method is fear. It operates in two ways: "[Maids] may remove valuable belongings and information through theft and gossip; they may bring in dirt, disorder, and disease and contaminate children with lower-class habits and language" (Dickey 2000). Most employers view their maids as potential liars and thieves at the very least.

Even if one has never witnessed domestic worker theft firsthand, it is a widely accepted "truth" (Mattila 2011). The maid is supposed to make every effort to avoid working, if she isn't a straight criminal. As stated by Ray and Qayum, among others, there is a rumoured increase in the impertinence and greed of maids (2009). According to Mattila (2011), the workers' struggle for labour rights is successfully delegitimized when it is explained away as the result of their personal malice. There may be various ways in which the maid poses a threat. Dickey talks with Qayum and Ray about their worries related to sexuality. These mostly fall into two categories: the dread of a male domestic posing a direct sexual threat and the idea that the female domestic's alleged loose sexuality will negatively reflect on her respectability.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lazarescu, D., & Kouzas, Y. (2017). The results show that their job duties and the tasks they are expected to do have changed negatively as a result of the recession. The qualitative components of their professions are examined in this study, which also shows a shift in the values of live-in and live-out domestic workers and a decline in their levels of discretion, intra-occupational mobility, and life expectations. Even with these negative shifts, though, domestic workers are still firmly entrenched in a way of thinking and doing that serves to reinforce the unfavourable tendencies of inter-occupational mobility, particularly for those who find it difficult to separate their self-concept from the environment of domestic employment.

Piquero, A. et al. (2021). This study sought to determine the effect of COVID-19-related prohibitions (such as orders to stay at home and lock down) on allegations of domestic abuse. For

the analysis, a maximum likelihood model with constraints on random effects was employed. The overall inclusion criteria were met by eighteen empirical studies (and thirty-seven estimates). The results showed that most study estimates suggested that domestic violence increased after lockdowns. All things considered; the average impact size was 0.66 (CI: 0.08–1.24). The effects were more noticeable when US-only research was included. Numerous studies conducted in different cities, states, and countries across the globe have demonstrated that lockdown/stay-at-home orders led to an increase in domestic violence incidences.

Salami, B., & Nelson, S. (2014). This article uses the idea of the "global care chain" to critically examine the movement of nurses who are employed as domestic helpers. There is a dearth of research on the migration of nurses to destination nations as domestic workers, despite the fact that numerous academics have utilized the idea of global care chains to highlight the movement of nurses and domestic workers from the south to the north. When nurses go to other nations as domestic servants, they are taking advantage of reproductive and skilled labour without providing sufficient compensation. The paper shows how the global migration of internationally educated nurses as migrant domestic workers reinforces injustices that are constructed along the power gradient of gender, class, race, and nationality using the example of the Canadian Live-in Caregiver Program and ethnicity, especially within an era of global nursing shortage.

S. Srinivasan, and Ponnuswami Ilango (2013) investigated the female domestic workers in India's Tiruchirappalli District. Researchers discovered that the majority of domestic workers had less education, which contributed to their low socioeconomic standing. It is discovered that issues with low pay, an excessive workload, the lack of vacation time and leaves, and other issues were shared by all domestic workers. Due to their excessive workload, some domestic workers experienced health problems, while others experienced mistreatment from their employers. Researchers also emphasized the workers' socioeconomic backwardness because most domestic helpers came from scheduled tribes,

scheduled castes, and backward classes. A comprehensive labour regulation that fixes minimum salaries for domestic workers depending on their work hours and type of job is proposed by researchers as a means of protecting them. The laws must make it illegal to fail to pay domestic workers the minimum salaries that are prescribed. perks like earned leaves, sick days, casual leaves, bonuses, gratuities, and other perks that are given to other employees in the formal sector should also be extended to domestic workers.

Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (2015) focused on the rights of migrant families living in the country from an international standpoint. The author investigated the lived experiences of migrant domestic workers. The effects of long-term family separation on live-in migrant domestic workers were also examined by the author. The author discovered that the number of women who travel as domestic workers in quest of employment from developing to developed nations is increasing. The living and working environments at the employer's private homes are precarious. Domestic workers who are employed abroad are kept apart from their relatives abroad. They cannot fly to their family in an emergency or other catastrophe, nor can they continue in their current jobs because of the possibility of losing them. Author found that these workers are not able to reunite with their families due to their structural conditions and immigration laws.

UN Women (2013) The focus of this paper is on migratory women domestic workers. According to statistical data included in the report, domestic workers make up between 4 and 10% of all jobs. Eighty-three percent of domestic workers globally are women, or 7.5 percent of all working-age women. The need for domestic help is growing on a global scale. Asian nations like Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka are important suppliers of migrant domestic workers. According to the report's data, there are 6.45 million migrant women worldwide; the majority come from South Asia, with the majority hailing from India (2.6 million), Pakistan (1.9 million), and other South Asian countries. Numerous nations across the globe implement effective measures to empower female

domestic workers, such as providing decent living circumstances, setting minimum salaries, capping the number of hours worked, and providing soft skills and language training to domestic staff, among other measures.

Yohannes Mersha Belete (2014) The examination of domestic workers and their educational status in Ethiopia's Amhara Region's Bahir Dar City Administration is presented in this research report. The study discovered that low pay, high school costs, an excessive workload, time limits, and unplanned pregnancy are the main obstacles faced by domestic workers who want to pursue an education. The researcher suggested that government and non-government organizations collaborate to discover a way to generate money for domestic workers based on the study's findings. It is necessary to launch an awareness campaign about the rights and working conditions of domestic workers. There should be strict labour rules created and put into effect.

Neetha N (2017) This article focuses on how the domestic work industry is evolving and how domestic workers' pay rates are changing. Women engaged in the service sector made up 11.8 percent of all workers in 1999–2000; by 2004–05, that number had risen to 27.1 percent. employment in the domestic industry, yet there is variation in pay, working conditions, working days, and working hours. Domestic workers negotiate their own compensation and conditions of employment on an individual basis in a privatized setting within homes. Employers set the wage for domestic workers depending on a variety of factors, including the tasks completed, social standing, the area in which they operate, and other aspects of the labour market. According to research, cleaning services in metropolitan areas are paid between Rs 100 and Rs 400 per month. These services include sweeping, floor cleaning, clothing washing, and utensil cleaning. However, the childcare industry pays between Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 per month, while cooking is the highest paid job, paying between Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,500 per month. In addition, the area of the employer's home and the number of family members living there also affect the wage rate.

Joanna Manganara (2017) The International Alliance of Women (IAW) is a non-governmental organization that operates on a global scale and has 41 member nations. The International Alliance of Women, or IAW, placed a strong emphasis on using NGOs, unions, and civil society to improve domestic workers. This organization's primary goal is to advance women's and girls' human rights globally. The social and economic contributions that domestic workers make to society should be acknowledged. Promoting and defending domestic workers' human rights is the first and most important step in this direction.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and analytical research approach to examine the perception of working women towards domestic workers in the Mumbai region. A cross-sectional survey design was used, allowing data to be collected at one point in time to analyze current attitudes, dependence levels, and perceptions regarding domestic workers' roles. The study population consists of working women residing in Mumbai who employ at least one domestic worker. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to ensure that only relevant respondents were included, and a total sample of 200 working women was selected for the study.

Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire comprising demographic information, perception-based statements, and items related to the working and living conditions of domestic workers. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale. The collected data was analyzed using reliability testing, correlation and regression analysis to examine relationships and test hypotheses.

VI. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the relationship between domestic workers' support and the work-life balance of working women. Test Correlation
2. To analyze how domestic workers reduce the mental and physical burden of working women

Test Regression

3. To identify the role of domestic workers in enhancing productivity and time-efficiency of working women. Test Regression

VII. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₀₁: Domestic workers' support has no significant effect on the work-life balance of working women.

H₀₂: Domestic workers do not significantly reduce the mental and physical burden of working women.

H₀₃: Domestic workers' support does not significantly enhance productivity and time efficiency of working women.

VIII. RELIABILITY TEST

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.920	28

The reliability analysis of the 28-item scale yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.920, indicating excellent internal consistency. This high alpha value shows that the items in the questionnaire are strongly correlated and consistently measure the underlying construct of working women's perceptions toward domestic workers. In social science research, a Cronbach's Alpha above 0.70 is considered acceptable, while values above 0.90 reflect outstanding reliability. Therefore, the scale demonstrates strong reliability, and the responses can be confidently used for hypothesis testing and interpretation.

Objective 1 To examine the relationship between domestic workers' support and the work-life balance of working women.

H₀₁: Domestic workers' support has no significant effect on the work-life balance of working women

Correlations			
		Domestic Workers' Support	Work–Life Balance of Working Women
Domestic Workers' Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.695**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Work–Life Balance of Working Women	Pearson Correlation	.695**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis examined the relationship between domestic workers' support and the work–life balance of working women. The results show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.695$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of support from domestic workers are significantly associated with better work–life balance among working women. The significance value ($p = 0.000$) is well below the 0.01 threshold, confirming that the relationship is statistically significant.

Therefore, the null hypothesis H_{01} , which states that domestic workers' support has no significant effect on work–life balance, is rejected. This finding suggests that domestic workers play an important role in helping working women manage personal and professional responsibilities more effectively, contributing to improved time balance, reduced stress, and greater overall well-being.

Objective 2 To analyze how domestic workers reduce the mental and physical burden of working

Women

H_{02} : Domestic workers do not significantly reduce the mental and physical burden of working women.

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Error of the Estimate
1	.989 ^a	.844	.894	.38503
a. Predictors: (Constant), Domestic Workers' Support Level				
b. Dependent Variable: Mental & Physical Burden of Working Women				

The regression model shows a very high correlation ($R = 0.989$) between domestic workers' support level and the mental and physical burden of working women. The R Square value of 0.844 indicates that 84.4% of the variation in mental and physical burden is explained by the support provided by domestic workers. This demonstrates a very strong predictive relationship. The adjusted R Square (0.894) further confirms the robustness of the model. The low standard error (0.38503) indicates high accuracy of prediction. These results clearly show that domestic worker support significantly reduces stress, fatigue, and workload for working women. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected, confirming a significant impact.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	23.271	1	23.271	156.973	.000 ^b
1 Residual	29.354	198	.148		
1 Total	52.625	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Mental & Physical Burden of Working Women

b. Predictors: (Constant), Domestic Workers' Support Level

The results indicated that the model was statistically significant, $F(1, 198) = 156.973, p < 0.001$, suggesting that domestic workers' support level significantly predicts the mental and physical burden of working women. This implies that higher levels of support from domestic workers are associated with a lower mental and physical burden among working women.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.729	.272		2.675	.008
1 Domestic Workers' Support Level	.820	.065	.989	12.529	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Mental & Physical Burden of Working Women

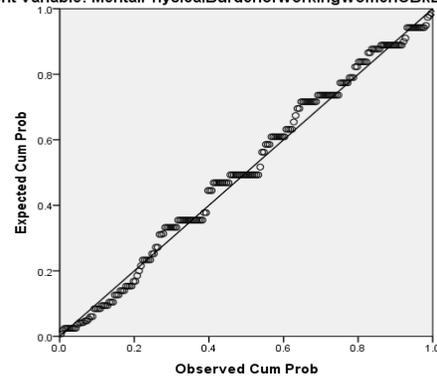
A simple linear regression was conducted to examine the effect of domestic workers' support on the mental and physical burden of working women. The analysis revealed that domestic workers' support significantly predicted mental and physical burden, $B = 0.820, t(198) = 12.529, p < 0.001$. The regression equation was:

$$\text{Mental \& Physical Burden} = 0.729 + 0.820 \text{ Domestic Workers' Support Level}$$

This indicates that for every one-unit increase in domestic workers' support, the mental and physical burden increases by 0.820 units. The predictor accounted for a substantial portion of variance in burden ($R^2 = 0.844$), suggesting a strong relationship between domestic workers' support and the mental and physical well-being of working women.

The Normal P-P Plot shows that the observed cumulative probabilities of the standardized residuals

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
 Dependent Variable: MentalPhysicalBurdenofWorkingWomenOBKDEPENDT2



closely follow the expected cumulative probabilities, as the majority of the data points lie very near to the diagonal reference line. There are only minor deviations at the extreme ends, which are acceptable in social science research.

This pattern indicates that the residuals are approximately normally distributed. Therefore, the assumption of normality for the regression model is satisfied. This confirms that the regression results used to analyze the effect of domestic workers' support on the mental and physical burden of working women are statistically valid and reliable.

Objective 3 To identify the role of domestic workers in enhancing productivity and time-efficiency of working women.

H₀₃: Domestic workers' support does not significantly enhance productivity and time efficiency of working women.

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Error of the Estimate
1	.692 ^a	.789	.762	.32900
a. Predictors: (Constant), Domestic Workers' Functional Support				
b. Dependent Variable: Productivity & Time Efficiency				

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the role of domestic workers' functional support in enhancing the productivity and time efficiency of working women. The model was statistically significant and explained a substantial proportion of the variance in productivity and time efficiency, $R^2 = 0.789$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.762$, indicating that approximately 79% of the variance was accounted for by domestic workers' support. These findings suggest that greater functional support from domestic workers significantly enhances the productivity and time efficiency of working women, leading to more effective management of work and household responsibilities.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

Regression	19.693	1	19.693	181.930	.000 ^b
Residual	21.432	198	.108		
Total	41.125	199			
a. Dependent Variable: Productivity & Time Efficiency					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Domestic Workers' Functional Support					

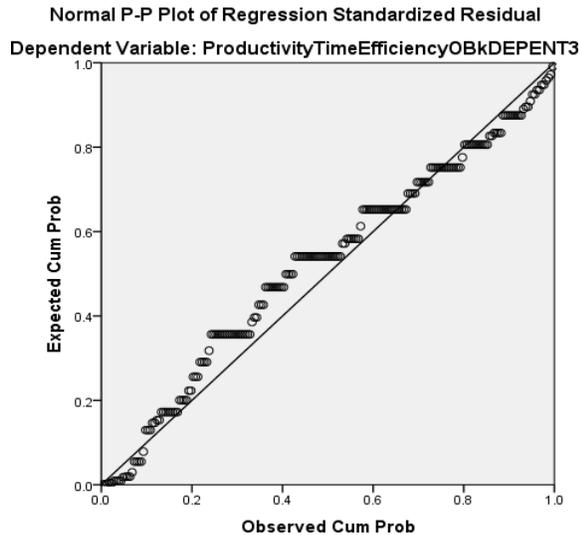
An ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of domestic workers' functional support on the productivity and time efficiency of working women. The results showed that the model was statistically significant, $F(1, 198) = 181.930$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that domestic workers' functional support significantly predicts productivity and time efficiency. This suggests that greater functional support from domestic workers is associated with enhanced productivity and more efficient time management among working women.

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.484	.193		7.706	.000
Domestic Workers' Functional Support	.620	.046	.692	13.488	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Productivity & Time Efficiency					

A simple linear regression was conducted to examine the effect of domestic workers' functional support on the productivity and time efficiency of working women. The analysis revealed that domestic workers' functional support significantly predicted productivity and time efficiency, $B = 0.620$, $t(198) = 13.488$, $p < 0.001$. The regression equation was:

$$\text{Productivity \& Time Efficiency} = 1.484 + 0.620 \text{ Domestic Workers' Functional Support}$$

The model explained 78.9% of the variance in productivity and time efficiency ($R^2 = 0.789$), indicating that higher levels of functional support from domestic workers are associated with enhanced productivity and more efficient time management among working women.



The Normal P–P Plot of regression standardized residuals shows that the plotted points closely follow the diagonal reference line, with only slight deviations at the beginning and end of the line. This indicates that the residuals are approximately normally distributed.

Since the points are not widely scattered away from the line and most of them lie very close to the diagonal, the assumption of normality is satisfied. This confirms that the regression analysis conducted to assess the role of domestic workers' functional support in improving productivity and time efficiency is statistically valid and reliable.

Therefore, the data is suitable for regression analysis, and the results derived from the model can confidently be used for interpretation and hypothesis testing.

IX. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrates the significant role of domestic workers in supporting working women's well-being and performance. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.695$, $p < 0.01$) showed that higher

domestic support is associated with better work–life balance. Regression analyses revealed that domestic workers' support substantially reduces mental and physical burden ($B = 0.820$, $R^2 = 0.844$, $p < 0.001$) and enhances productivity and time efficiency ($B = 0.620$, $R^2 = 0.789$, $p < 0.001$). These results highlight that women with greater domestic assistance experience lower stress, improved time management, and higher efficiency in managing household and professional tasks. Practically, engaging domestic workers can help women achieve better work–life integration, while organizations and policymakers may consider facilitating access to domestic support to promote employee productivity, reduce burnout, and support women's effective participation in the workforce.

X. LIMITATIONS

The study relied on self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce bias, and its cross-sectional design limits causal conclusions. The sample was restricted to working women from a specific context, reducing generalizability. It focused on the presence and functional support of domestic workers, without examining variations in type, quality, or duration. Future research could use longitudinal designs and more diverse samples to strengthen the findings.

XI. CONCLUSION

The study highlights the critical role of domestic workers in supporting working women across multiple dimensions, including work–life balance, mental and physical well-being, and productivity and time efficiency. The findings demonstrate that domestic workers' support is strongly associated with improved work–life balance, significantly reduces mental and physical burden, and enhances productivity and time management. These results underscore the importance of domestic assistance in enabling women to manage both household and professional responsibilities effectively. Practically, engaging domestic workers can help working women achieve better well-being and performance, while organizations and policymakers may consider facilitating access to domestic support to promote

efficiency, reduce stress, and support women's participation in the workforce.

XII. FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Future research could examine the long-term effects of domestic workers' support on working women's well-being, productivity, and career progression. Studies could also explore the impact of different types, quality, and duration of domestic support to identify the most effective forms. Expanding research to diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts would improve generalizability. Additionally, investigating the combined influence of domestic support and organizational policies, such as flexible work arrangements, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors enhancing working women's efficiency and work-life balance.

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