



## DROP OUT TO DOMESTIC WORK CASE STUDY OF YOUNG DOMESTIC WORKERS IN CENTRAL CHENNAI

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### ABSTRACT

*Education is the most important instrument for human resource development. Education of Women, therefore occupies top priority among various measures taken to improve the status of women in India. In recent years the focus of planning has shifted from equipping women for their traditional roles as housewives and mothers to recognizing their worth as producers, making a major contribution to family and national income.*

*Girls with more education are more likely to refrain from child marriage and experience better maternal and child health outcomes. Additionally, they are more willing and able to make investments in the well-being and education of their sons and daughters, hence raising the likelihood that their daughters will pursue higher education. In the area of education, developments are occurring quickly. According to recent data, enrolment has significantly increased, yet dropout rates are a cause for concern. The enrolment rates for girls are still falling daily despite the creation of numerous committees, commissions, and government-sponsored initiatives and programmes. The issues with a girl's education start at home. Poor family circumstances, taking care of younger siblings, and housekeeping duties at home are also seen to be factors affecting girls' access to education. When she followed her mother after starting her job as a housekeeper, her life drastically changed. In this paper, the researcher uses the case study method to highlight the lives of ten young girls who dropped out of school for various societal reasons and now work as domestic workers in Central Chennai.*

**Keywords:** Education, Girl Child, School Dropout, Domestic Work.



## **INTRODUCTION**

The cornerstone of every progress and a key engine of expansion is education. It has been demonstrated to be essential to achieving social advancement, better health, and sustained and equitable economic progress in every nation. An important tool for bringing about social revolution is education. At all levels and with children of all ages, it is the only treatment that can bring about the required societal transformation in Indian society. Education has been seen as a significant socialization force, along with educators and educational institutions. It is the essential tool that can be used to successfully combat the ingrained vices that rule society.

The general social perception of girls' education is negative. Education for girls is seen as a crucial step in eradicating social ills such the pardah system, early marriage, parental illiteracy, and a lack of educational resources at home. Other barriers for girls to accessing school include male tutors and teachers and the obligations of girls at home. Poor family circumstances, taking care of younger siblings, and housekeeping duties at home are also seen to be factors affecting girls' access to education. The female pupils are really driven to avoid going to college.

Parents' views on how expensive higher education is, family guidance and the inaccessibility of higher education counselling for girls in the Urban Habitat and their parents are further barriers. Girls in metropolitan environments may succeed in their higher education by reducing the aforementioned issues. The success of females' higher education and careers may also depend on proper assistance and counseling provided to illiterate parents, fee reductions, and other facilities provided for girls in metropolitan environments.

## **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

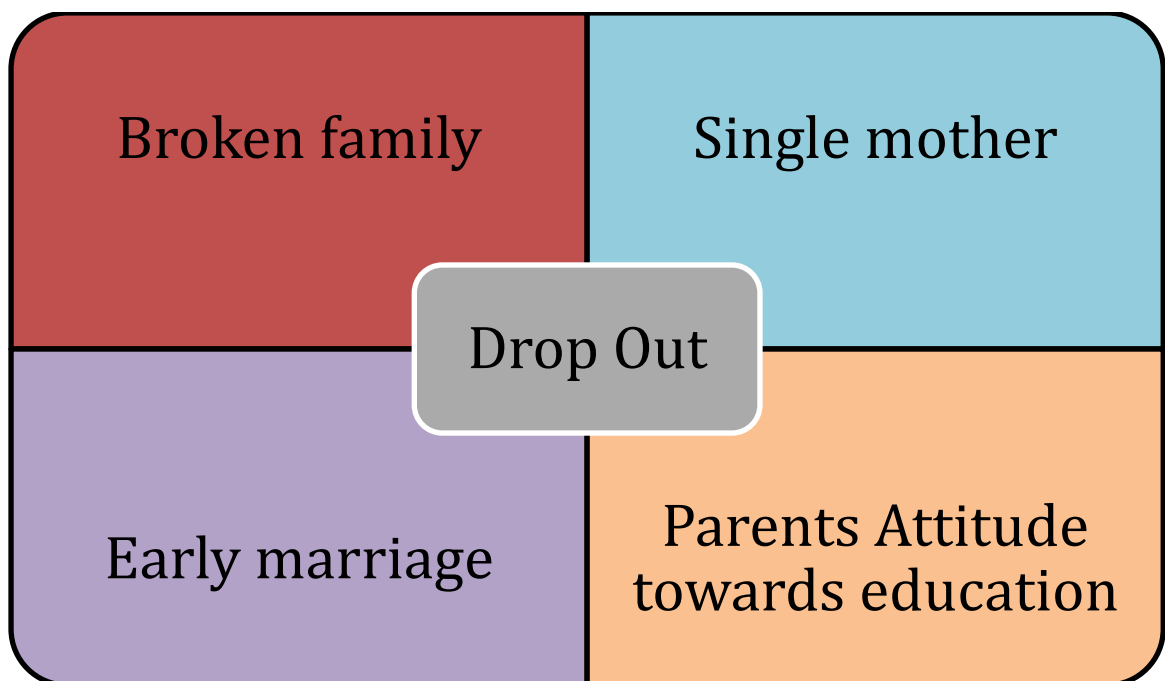
Despite concerted efforts to improve the enrolment of girls and provide adult education for women, their educational status is still far from satisfactory. Female enrolment in educational institutions is low as when compared with males and dropout rates are high. This research paper attempts to assess how being a school dropout has led many adolescent girls to enter into Domestic work. It is to analyze the reasons for dropping out of school and the reason for choosing Domestic work as an option.



## Dropout - a Universal Phenomena

Dropout is a universal phenomenon of the education system in India, the need for educating girls is not considered worthwhile in urban and rural areas. Certain factors leads to drop out rate high among girls.

**Figure 01: Factors Leading to Drop Out**



**Source:** Author as created it in 2024.

- The requirement for older girls to stay at home to take care of siblings when mothers are away for Domestic work.
- Girls are sent to work to help in augmenting the family income due to broken families or single-parent families.
- Early marriage of girls.
- Social customs that hinder female mobility after puberty.

## Drop out to Domestic Work

Cultural and social beliefs, attitudes, and practices prevent girls from going to school:

There is always a powerful economic and social rationale for investing in the education of sons rather than daughters. Hence, the majority of the world's out-of-school



youth are female. In most cities, girls are underrepresented at every level of formal education. Keeping girls in school, even at the primary level, and their performance depends largely upon socioeconomic factors and upon the attitudes of teachers. When daily survival is a huge challenge, spending on girls child education is a big question.

#### ***Parents attitude towards Girls Education:***

Parents objections to their daughters going to school are more likely to be on the grounds of safety. They sometimes feel that school is unsafe and the journey to school is perilous or sometimes long. Alternatively, they believe that sacrificing the daughter's education and sending her to domestic work would enhance the family's income and survival.

#### ***Rythm of income at Young Age:***

Girls at a young age are introduced to simple household chores and minor income generation tasks by accompanying their mothers who are domestic workers. These tasks gradually become routine, establishing an everyday rhythm in the child's life. Soon tasks take up more of the child's day, at which point it becomes difficult to introduce schooling into the routine.

### **CHALLENGES FACED BY DOMESTIC WORKERS**

The challenges and the problems faced by young people working as domestic workers are multidimensional. Domestic works performed in many different homes make their life hectic and burdensome. Some of the challenges and issues that they face are:

- ❖ Doing monotonous works and repetitive works in manifold households.
- ❖ Cleaning and doing the works with washing agents and corrosive chemical materials.
- ❖ Constant increase of workload due to the visit of visitors and guests at employer's house.
- ❖ Continuous shifts of works at different locations.
- ❖ Multiple abuses faced by them in the form of partiality, snubbing and exclusion.

Abuses include sexual, verbal, physical and emotional too.

When a girl enters into Domestic work at an early age it deprives her of their rights to education, health, protection, and participation, limiting their future opportunities and social mobility.



## CASE STUDIES OF YOUNG DOMESTIC WORKERS

To get a deeper qualitative understanding of the daily lives and activities of domestic workers, this paper uses the case study methodology.

The human side of domestic workers' impoverishment is depicted through the use of case study methodology. This innovative approach focuses on regular encounters and occurrences in domestic workers' lives. Additionally, it looks into each person's particular experience and offers a thorough understanding of their actual living and working circumstances. The foundation of case studies is the direct observation of informal interactions amongst 10 young unmarried domestic workers in Central Chennai between the age group of 17 to 20 years.

### 1. Vasanthi

A 19-year-old girl was unable to continue her higher education due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Her dreams were shattered and she was forced to enter into Domestic work like her mother. She was passionate about becoming a nurse but due to her family's financial crisis, she was unable to pursue her higher education. Her 12<sup>th</sup> grade score also was very low. She was unable to cope up with online classes during the pandemic.

She entered Domestic work after completing 12<sup>th</sup> grade in 2021. For two years she has been working as a Domestic worker in 5 houses. Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping and Mopping houses. Her day starts from 10 am to 3 pm. She is a young vibrant girl and the employer extracts a lot of extra work from the girl. She is going to get married within a week. Her poverty has compelled her to enter into domestic work and also early marriage.

### 2. Selvi

Being drop out at the age of 18 after 10<sup>th</sup> Std, she did not have much interest in her studies. She entered Domestic work with the help of her mother who is also a domestic worker. For the past 2 years, she has been working as a domestic worker in 5 houses. Her work involves, washing utensils, Sweeping and moping the house and washing clothes. Every day her work starts at 9 am and ends at 3 pm. She complains about long working hours and no weekly off. She is compelled to carry water up the stairs to the employer's place. She is having body pain due to carrying heavy weight. She is getting married in a month to her relative at the early age of 18 years.



### **3. Gowri**

The girl lost her father in the COVID-19 pandemic which has drastically changed her life into a domestic worker. At the age of 19, she dropped out of school in her 11<sup>th</sup> std. She and her mom entered domestic work at the same time. For two years she has been working as a domestic worker in 4 houses from 9 am to 2 pm.

Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping and mopping of floor. Being a young domestic worker, she is paid very little but has done a lot of work. She carries water in steps to two floors which is very painful, especially during her menstruation period. She works for her younger sister who is studying in 9<sup>th</sup> std. She wants to educate her and send her to college for higher studies. The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled her to enter into Domestic work.

### **4. Lakshmi**

Being a drop after 11<sup>th</sup> std, she did not have interest in her studies and hence entered domestic work like her mom. She wanted to earn more money and save money for her marriage. She is in love with a boy in her neighbourhood and wants to marry him. The boy is also a dropout and wanders in the area jobless. She works in 5 houses from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping and mopping the floor and watering the plants. She complains of long hours of work which is very tiresome.

### **5. Thangapushpam**

A 19-year-old girl dropped out from school in her 11<sup>th</sup> std. She was unable to continue her studies due to the death of her father in a road accident. She started to work as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. She works in 4 houses. Her day starts at 9 am every day and she work in 5 houses. Her work involves cleaning of utensils, sweeping, moping and washing clothes. She is a young domestic worker; hence she is paid very little and she works like an adult. She complains of long-standing hours and has severe body pain. She also uses Paan to manage her body pain.

### **6. Devi**

A 20-year-old girl was dropped out of school after her 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She started to work as a domestic worker with the help of her mom. She lost interest in her studies because of her family situation. Her father is a drunkard and she also beats her mother and also lives with



another woman. He hardly comes home. Hence the girl decided to work and help her mother. Her day starts at 10 am and she works till 3 pm, She works in 5 houses. Her work involves cleaning of utensils, sweeping, mopping and washing the clothes. She complains of long-standing hours and less pay. Broken family is another main factor which affects the education of the girl child.

### **7. Sasi**

A 17-year-old girl was dropped out of school after her 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Since then, she has been working as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. Her day starts at 9 am in the morning and she works till 2 pm. She works in 4 houses. Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping, mopping and washing clothes. She dropped out of school after her father left them and started to live with another woman. Her mom couldn't cope with the expenses of the family. Hence Sasi discontinued her studies and started to work with her mother. Initially, she went with her mother and helped her in domestic work. later she started to work individually. Extra martial relationships lead to broken family in turn affects the family structures and peace.

### **8. Priya**

A 19-year-old girl was dropped out of school after her 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Since then, she has been working as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. Her father was a drunkard and died when she was studying 8<sup>th</sup> std. After the death of her father, she discontinued her studies and started to work as a domestic worker.

Her day starts at 9 am in the morning and she works till 2 pm. her work involves cleaning of utensils, sweeping and mopping. She complains of long working hours, no pay off and severe body pain. She uses the pan and has high-risk behaviour of having a friendship with boys and girls who are using drugs in the locality. Single parents have issues in parenting their children. Mother being a domestic worker is unable to strike a work-life balance.

### **9. Anitha**

A 19-year-old girl dropped out from school after she completed her 9<sup>th</sup> std. She started to work as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. She dropped out of school as she did not have interest in continuing her studies due to peer pressure. He and his friends also



are school dropouts. She works as a domestic worker in 4 houses. Her day starts at 9 am in the morning and she works till 3 pm. Her work involves washing utensils, sweeping and mopping. She also waters the plants in certain houses. She is not interested in going back to school as she earns well in this work. She complains of being less paid and having no weekly offs. Peer pressure is also an alarming factor that influences drop out among girl children.

### 10. Swetha

A 18 year old girl dropped out of school after her 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She started to work as a domestic worker with the help of her mother. Her day starts at 9 am in the morning and she works till 3 pm. Her work involves cleaning utensils, sweeping and moping. She also washes clothes in her hands.

She complains of severe body pain and is less paid. She discontinued her studies to help her mother who is a single parent. Her father lives with another woman which has forced the family to enter domestic work.

### DISCUSSION

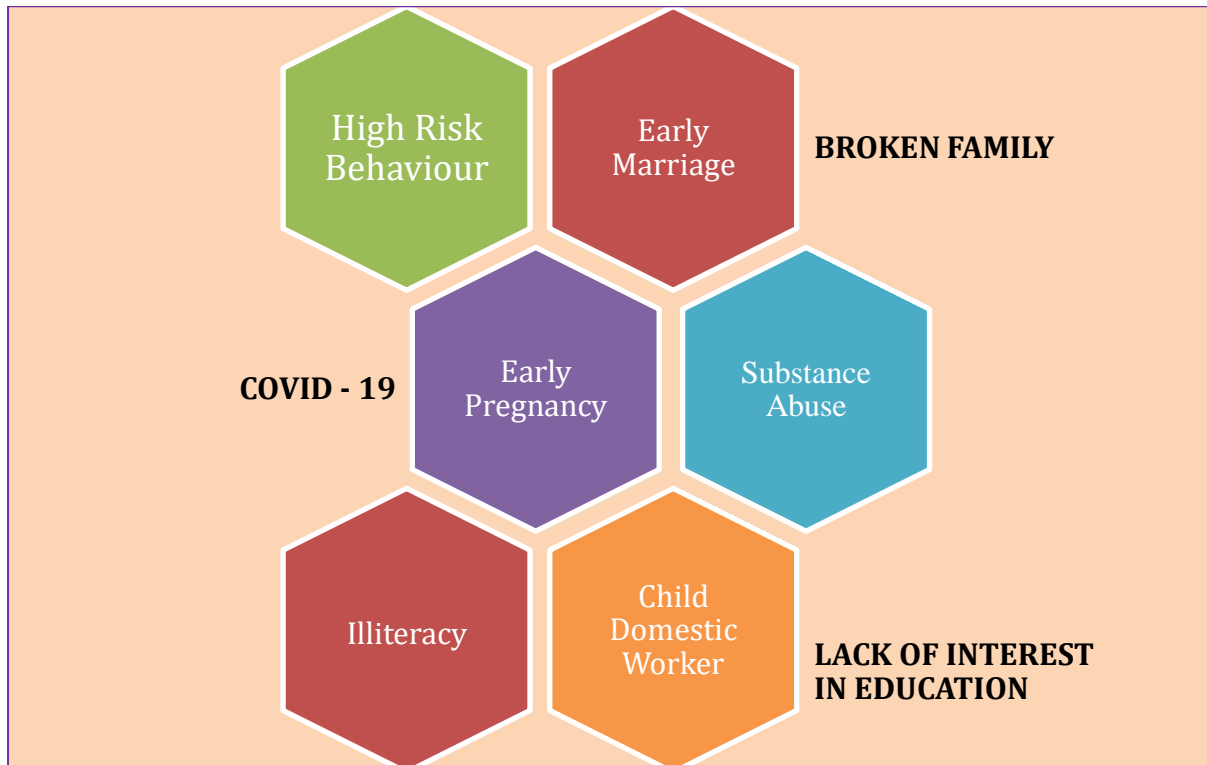
- ❖ The ten case studies mentioned above conclusively demonstrate that they have entered Domestic work with the help of their mother who is also a domestic worker.
- ❖ Most of the girls have dropped out of school due to the issues in the family and to help the family to face the financial crisis.
- ❖ Some girls were forced to drop out due to the sudden demise of their father.
- ❖ Some of them being a child of the single mother were unable to continue their studies.
- ❖ Being young the girls were paid very less but made to work for long hours.
- ❖ Two girls have dropped out of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ Some girls were going to get married in a couple of months.
- ❖ Some girls are influenced by their friends and take Pan to get relief from body pain.
- ❖ Some girls are also involved in high-risk behaviour being a dropout.





## MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

**Figure 02: Distribution of the Study Findings of Drop Out**



**Source:** The author has created from the data gathered during the study.

## IMPACT OF THE STUDY

1. The mother being a domestic worker has influenced the children also enter into domestic work after being a dropout from school.
2. Due to drop out the girls are highly prone for early marriage and early pregnancy.
3. Being a dropout has also influenced some girls into high-risk behaviour due to their peer pressure.
4. Some girls due to long working hours of domestic work have developed body pain. These girls take Pan to get rid of the body pain.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the education of the girls which has forced them to enter into domestic work.
6. Broken family is another main factor that has forced the girls to enter into domestic work.

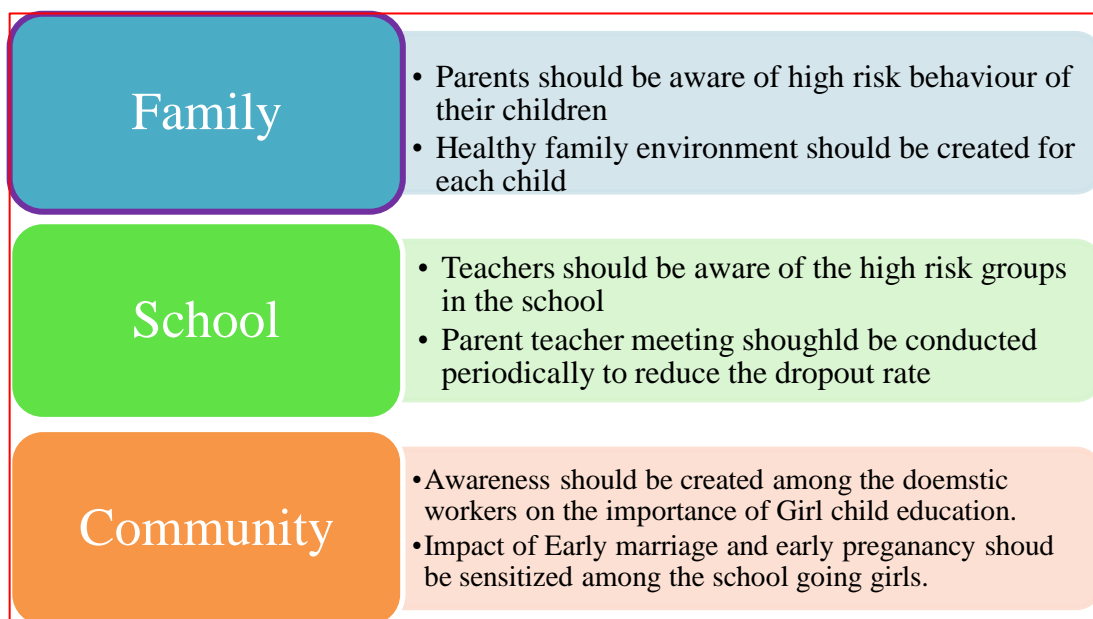


## SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

School dropout is a universal phenomenon that affects especially girl children. Girls who drop out enter into domestic work which is part of the vicious cycle. Mother next the daughter enters domestic work which is a serious social problem in society. Social work intervention is very essential to address this social issue. Social work interventions range from from various stakeholders in the community.

Social Work Interventions are given in terms of family, school and community.

**Figure 03: Social Work Interventions**



**Source:** The researcher has created the diagram in 2024.

## CONCLUSION

This paper brings to light the untold stories of the school dropouts to Domestic work in Central Chennai. It was also observed that if parents are domestic workers, the possibility of dropout among their children was relatively high. The major reasons understood from the case study were young girls have dropped out of school due to broken families, Alcoholic fathers, Single mothers and also due to COVID 19 pandemic. After families, education is the next perimeter of a protective environment for children. Education remains a key safeguard preventing girls from entering into domestic work at a young age. If educated girls become mothers they are much more likely to send their children to school than to domestic work,



there by passing on and multiplying benefits both for themselves and society in a positive intergenerational effect. Unless and until there is considerable improvement in the economic status of individuals and change in the social attitudes of parents, achieving the goal of universalization of school education will remain a major challenge in society.

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