

A Saga of the Plight of Female Domestic Workers in the UAE & Other Gulf Countries

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Abstract

Doing household work in others' homes is a well-established profession nowadays, which is predominantly performed by women of various age groups. They are referred to as domestic workers (servants). They belong to a very poor family and opt for this profession for the sake of money, and it is easy to get no skills needed in this job. The majority of female domestic workers migrate to the UAE from developing or underdeveloped countries, where they earn a higher salary compared to their native countries. They are from a very vulnerable community. The labour laws of most GCC countries do not include domestic workers as labour. Different countries have different laws, but the plight of these female domestic workers is that they are unorganised, and in most countries, they don't fall under the definition of labour in any labour law, so they don't receive any labour benefits. The role of domestic workers in the labour market is great, but their work is undervalued and they do a veiled job which has no recognition. Mostly in Gulf countries, these domestic workers migrate from developing and underdeveloped countries. They come to the Gulf Country in search of a better life, but here in the Gulf Country, they have to suffer a lot, and they are forced to live a very gloomy life. They leave their family in their hometown and come far away to the destination country, where they are exploited a lot. This research paper aims to shed light on the actual working conditions of female domestic workers in the UAE and Other Gulf Countries. In search of a better life for their family, they have to breathe toxic air and live a dusty life.

Key Words: - Contract of job, Agent, Migration, Working Hours, Flexibility of Job, Employer

Introduction

The Female Domestic Workers in search of a job leave their country and migrate to other developed countries. Mostly migrate to the UAE and other Gulf countries in search of a better life. Approximately 244 million women work outside their native country. The profession of domestic work is a growing trend in the UAE, and its contribution to the global economy is substantial. The resource of domestic workers comes from different parts of South and Southeast Asia. Women domestic workers are migrating to the UAE and other GCC countries for better salaries and a better quality of life. The domestic work is a highly risky job because the workplace is the private home of the employer, where female housemaids always live under the threat of sexual harassment. And many women domestic workers are often sexually harassed and raped by their employer, intermediaries, agents, any male member of the family or any visitor in the employer's home. The trend of female migration for work in another country is relatively recent. Most women take on the role of nursing, caring for elderly parents and children, and performing a variety of household tasks, including receptionist work, salesmanship, and other roles. And the Domestic Work is that work which the domestic workers do in the employer's (in whose home the female domestic workers work) home. It includes mopping, brooming, washing utensils, washing clothes, cooking, caring for children or elderly parents, and other household chores. The employer prefers their household work to be done by female domestic workers rather than male domestic workers. Females generally carry out the profession of household work. Approximately half of the World Bank's income is \$582. The plight of this domestic worker is that they don't come under the definition of labour under any labour law of the Gulf countries or the UAE. There are numerous issues affecting these domestic workers. They are mostly migrants from Nigeria, Ethiopia, India and other underdeveloped or developing countries. The oil made the region one of the richest nations in the world. After the discovery of oil, women in Gulf countries no longer wanted to do household work by themselves, and they began to take an interest in participating in the workforce in the global economy. Therefore, hiring a housemaid to handle household chores becomes mandatory. The UAE has no indigent people to do domestic work; choosing migrant women for domestic work is the last option. Women domestic workers here came from different countries in the hope of a better life and a handsome salary. But here, they are triangulated by other issues, and they are maltreated and sexually, physically and mentally harassed by their employer. The female domestic workers belong to a very vulnerable community.

The United Arab Emirates and the Domestic Work Profession: A Background - The United Arab Emirates is a federation of seven emirates, comprising Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah, and al-Fujairah. It was established in 1971, nine years after the oil began to be exported to other countries. The UAE has become a powerful nation nowadays. Oil became the only reason which made the UAE one of the richest countries in the world. The socio-institutional structure of the UAE is Tribalism, Islamism, Urbanism, modernism, consumerism, and the welfare state. Domestic work is a growing job in the UAE. In a remarkably short period, the United Arab Emirates has become one of the world's richest countries due to its oil wealth. In 1980, the UAE was reported to be the wealthiest country in

the world with a per capita GNP of US\$28,000. The women migrant domestic workers in the UAE are always becoming the prey of sexual, physical and mental harassment.

The Role of Women in the Workforce: Islamism is the main religion in the UAE. Since the inception of the UAE, women have lived at home. The women were homemakers only and may have earned money, so the role of women in GDP was less significant. However, with the emergence of the oil kingdom since 1970, women began participating in the labour market and started managing both their homes and their jobs in search of their identity. Before 1970, women kept themselves in a harem, but since 1970, women's participation has increased in the labour market. Women jumped into the labour market wearing their hijab, so, simultaneously, women started managing home and job, keeping themselves within the boundaries of Islam. Because Islam never prohibits women from doing a job, the only condition is to keep herself pure under purdah (hijab), both physically and spiritually. Since 1985, the number of women in the workforce has increased as foreign women started working in the UAE. Because the UAE has become a wealthy country and offers a generous salary. Women's participation is still 11.6% compared to men's, which is 88.33%. Around 40% of jobs in the federal and private sectors are held by women. Between 1965 and 2000, the number of women migrant workers increased rapidly in countries such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UAE. In 1975, 64% of migrant workers, totalling 356,000, were recorded in the United Arab Emirates, just four years after its establishment. The workers who migrated from other countries are of all skill levels, including skilled, unskilled, and semi-skilled, but they are denied political, civil, and naturalisation rights. Turki-al-Hamad, a well-known scholar, criticised the abnormal composition of Gulf societies and also the loss of the nation due to the growing number of foreign workers. The UAE grant 300 visas every day to domestic workers. Approximately 116,083 visas were issued to domestic helpers in 1999, according to the Ministry of Interior Statistics report. The UAE has become a hub for migrant domestic workers, primarily due to the discovery of oil, which has enabled the country to become one of the richest in the world. The profession of domestic work began spreading rapidly. The plight of these domestic workers is that the UAE's labour law does not cover domestic workers as labourers, so they are unable to enjoy the benefits afforded to labourers under the UAE's labour law. Like the Qatar Labour Law 1962, which exempts domestic workers from being considered labour under labour law, no labour law of Qatar applies to domestic workers in private homes. Omani labour law Part II Article II states that the provisions of this law do not apply to persons engaged in simple occupations like domestic work, etc., thus the Omani labour law also exempts domestic workers under its scope, and domestic workers are unable to enjoy the rights and benefits of labour which other organised labourers are enjoying. Labour Law of Bahrain 1976, under Article 2, exempts domestic servants from the scope of the law. The reason behind exempting domestic servants as labour in Bahrain is that the Ministry of Labour regards them as part of the employer's family. However, several countries have proposed revising their labour laws to include migrant women domestic workers as labour under these laws. Domestic workers are generally women and their work as domestic workers are unprotected and unregulated, the reason behind the exclusion of domestic workers as worker under labour law is that since inception the women do the household work in their home now the same work is done by domestic servants and the home is not regarded as workplace and in private home the employer is not regarded as employer under labour law. So, they don't get any social security and other benefits of labour under the labour law. In Saudi Arabia, approximately 19,000 domestic workers quit their jobs complaining of maltreatment by their employer, non-payment of wages and other complaints. The Sri Lankan Bureau for Foreign Employment reported in 1996 that 8,087 complaints were made by domestic workers regarding misbehaviour by their employers, with half of them coming from Saudi Arabia and the rest from other Arab countries, such as Jordan and Oman. So, the number of cases of mistreatment of domestic workers in the UAE is increasing day by day. According to a study conducted by the ILO in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Lebanon, the findings were shocking, as the study employed direct interviews and questionnaires.

Some issues affecting domestic workers in the United Arab Emirates and other GCC Countries: Since the discovery of oil, people have become extremely wealthy, leading to a trend of maintaining a lavish lifestyle and employing a maid. The migrant women in Gulf countries and the United Arab Emirates are so vulnerable and face so many difficulties; they are so ignorant and destitute. So many exploitations they have to face here. Even though they are restricted to talking and going to their home once a year. The employer exploits women domestic servants in many ways.

Trafficking: - Trafficking is illegally taking a person from one place to another to exploit them. According to the Cambridge dictionary, the meaning of Trafficking is the act of buying or selling people, or of making money from work they are forced to do, such as sex work.¹ In most of the trafficking cases, the trafficked persons are pushed into the illegal profession of prostitution. The act of trafficking is also illegal in the UAE; the government has very tight security on the border to prevent trafficking, but the practice of trafficking is happening sneakily. Dubai (United Arab Emirates business centre) and Ajman (a low-oil-producing region of the United Arab Emirates) are considered havens for illegal immigration. Most of the women are trafficked to work in prostitution or domestic work.

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english>
<http://jier.org>

Monthly Wages and Overtime: The monthly wage is not fixed by any authority, even for the work, and it varies at the employer's discretion. An average monthly salary in US\$ from Lebanon (\$ 100 to 300) and the United Arab Emirates (\$ 150 to 200). Overtime work without pay is a common issue in countries such as Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE. The remuneration varies depending on the language, nationality and educational qualification. Ethiopian and Sri Lankan women domestic workers receive lower wages compared to Philippine domestic workers. Philippine women domestic workers get high remuneration. There is also an increment in salary according to the period of service within the same family. Delays in remuneration are also a major issue in these countries.

Working Hours: Working hours are generally longer in the Arab region compared to other areas, typically ranging from 16 to 18 hours. Long working hours and fewer rest periods for women domestic workers are noted in the Arab region, which becomes the reason for unhealthy conditions of domestic workers, such as sleeplessness, dark circles around the eye, high blood pressure due to depression, body pain, headache, etc. Most domestic workers spent sleepless nights, often waking up three or four times to care for the employer's babies. The employer took work from women domestic workers that was not agreed upon at the time of joining. The women domestic workers do more work than agreed upon without any extra payment.

Nature of Job: Domestic workers in the UAE perform various types of household tasks. The following types of household work are typically done by female domestic workers:

House cleaning (mopping, brooming)

- Washing dishes
- Car washing
- Ironing clothes
- Looking after children, spending time with them, playing with them, putting them to bed for sound sleep, bathing them, making them ready for school, packing lunchboxes for them
- Looking after elderly and aged persons at home, bathing them, and making food for them
- Assisting the employer when they are outside, holding their bags and other belongings, assisting them in shopping, such as carrying their bags, etc.

Waking up at night to take care of children, aged parents, when they are sick or whenever necessary.

In addition to the work mentioned above, the employer performed other types of work, such as massaging oil or other small household tasks; therefore, the above-mentioned list of work is not exhaustive.

Rest Days: The women in the United Arab Emirates are reportedly entitled to no rest days in a month. In Lebanon, Kuwait, and Bahrain, there are 1-2 rest days on average per month. In a study, it was found that 80 to 88% of migrant women domestic workers didn't have a single day off in a month in Lebanon. Some domestic workers in Lebanon were permitted an hour or two to attend church on Sundays. In Costa Rica, domestic workers have 4-6 rest days per month.

Freedom of Movement: The primary concern for female domestic workers is that their employers often restrict their freedom of movement. This is a serious infringement of the rights of female domestic workers. Approx. 90 to 100% of women in the UAE and other Gulf countries are restricted in their movement. Confiscation of a passport is the main reason for the restricted movement of domestic workers, which, according to the employer, is necessary for the security of honest work by the worker. They are even rarely allowed to go outside for their refreshment and meet their friends or for a walk. It is also noted in Lebanon that, without the strict permission of the employer, domestic workers can't go outside because the employer's house is locked at all times; however, in Costa Rica, no such issue is found. In the UAE and other GCC countries, restricted movement is a serious issue.

Harassment at workplace: - Around 50 % of female domestic workers tolerate physical (including sexual), psychological and verbal abuse at their workplace in Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. There is a similar situation in other Gulf Countries too. The female domestic workers are so vulnerable that they have become the prey of the lust of their employer and other male visitors at their workplace. The employer satisfies their sexual lust with the female domestic workers at their home. The situation is worse. The verbal abuse of simply committing mistakes or without any reason is a common practice in most GCC and UAE countries. The female domestic workers are sexually harassed by her male employer. They are also not allowed to use social media or communicate with their family. There are so many restrictions on using a mobile phone.

Work Contract: - Another type of exploitation is by the agent or by intermediaries who, by catering for the lust for job security and a handsome salary, trap the domestic workers. The intermediaries overcharged the innocent workers by telling them the cost of a visa, passport, etc. The innocent domestic workers then fell into debt due to paying the agent unnecessary charges, and to repay the debt, the domestic workers had to work several months without a salary. Some recruitment agents

deceive educated women by offering them a professor-level or high-level job, only to reveal upon arrival in the destination country that they have been hired as domestic workers. In most cases, the recruitment agent sexually exploits the female domestic workers.

Kafala System: - The Kafala system is the rarest in the oil kingdom. According to the law of the UAE, each foreign labourer must have a sponsor, known as a “Kafil”, who holds the citizenship of the state in which they are working. To ensure control over the foreign migrant labour, the state engineers established the Kafala system. It provides a great opportunity for the nation to make money from foreign labour and sponsorship. Except for fast money-making, everyone disagrees with this system. The United Arab Emirates has adopted the strongest measures for regulating and controlling the Kafala system, particularly for those involved in visa trading and bringing domestic workers to work under other sponsors. In 1996, Federal Law Number 13 was approved to regulate the entry and exit of foreigners. A three-month prison sentence and a fine of Dhs 10,000 are the penalties for employing someone who is not under one's sponsorship or vice versa. Both sponsors are penalised. The penalty is also imposed on migrants. However, the part-time domestic work is an easy one; one can easily find domestic workers, male or female, on an hourly rate. Female domestic workers completely depend on the mercy of their employers in this Kafala system. Once the female domestic workers are in the employer's house, it comes under their control, including their silly behaviour.

Living & Working Conditions of Female Domestic Workers: - The female domestic workers play a very important role in the economy, but the plight is that their work is valueless. They do long hours of heavy work in the employer's home in the UAE. Their work starts at 6 a.m. and ends at 11 p.m. They also have to wake up several times to care for a child or elderly parents. The burden of all types of household work is on the shoulders of these female domestic workers. More often, they work overtime without receiving any extra pay. The employer requested additional work from this helper maid, which was not agreed upon at the time of appointment, without providing any extra payment. They spent several sleepless nights. These irregular working hours have a bad effect on the health of the FDW. The working conditions of female domestic workers in the UAE are not ideal. On average, they work 15 hours per day for a monthly salary of Dhs 400 to 1000 (approximately US\$100 to US\$175). They are abused, and their condition is so vulnerable. The female domestic workers in her employer's home are fully under the control of her employer. The plight of female domestic workers is that, till today, the labour laws of the United Arab Emirates do not recognise domestic workers as part of the labour force. Recruiting agencies generally conceal information about the rights of domestic workers from them. Most domestic workers have no rest days in a month and work from morning to night at their employer's home. And the female domestic worker, once entered into the employer's home, became part of the *Harem* structure. In the employer's home, the dress and behaviour come under the physical control of the employer, such as wearing a veil or a long robe, like other female members of the *Harem*. They are unable to go outside; they must live under the strict regulations of their employer. They feel very lonely in the employer's home. The female domestic workers are not so good here. The government plan is good enough, but there is hidden exploitation. The employer's primary goal is to handle all household tasks without incurring any additional charges. The UAE has a labour law, but the conditions for female domestic workers are not good there. The female domestic workers mostly migrated from developing countries.².

Legislative Framework Relating to Female Domestic Workers in the UAE: - The UAE is the hub of migrant domestic workers. Domestic workers generally came to the UAE from developing or underdeveloped countries in search of a better life for their families. But here in the UAE, they live a gloomy life. Federal Law No. 21 of 2023 amended certain provisions of Federal Decree Law No. 9 of 2022 concerning the UAE. It prohibits

- Employment under the age of 18.
- Discrimination based on race, colour, gender, religion and nationality.
- Sexual harassment, both physical and verbal.
- Forced labour or trafficking.
- Exposure to physical harm.
- Federal Law Decree No. 9 of 2022 concerning domestic workers and its amendments.
- Ministerial Resolution No. 674 of 2022 regarding the regulation of labour Relations to Domestic Workers.
- Ministerial Resolution No. 675 of 2022 on the coverage of certain domestic work professions under the wages protection system.
- Ministerial Resolution No. 676 of 2022 Regarding the Licensing and regulation of domestic labour Recruitment Agencies.
- Administrative Resolution No. 11 of 2023 on the operational manual for the implementation of Ministerial Resolution No. 676 of 2022 regulating domestic workers recruitment agencies.

² Sabban, R. (2002). United Arab Emirates: Migrant women in the United Arab Emirates. The case of female domestic workers. *Gender Promotion Program*
<http://jier.org>

- Executive regulations of 2022³ Governs the rules and regulations relating to domestic workers, ensuring that both the employer and employee share a similar understanding of the terms of the contract, weekly rest periods, and monthly remuneration.

Both parties should clearly understand everything. 19 occupations fall under the category of domestic work, such as housemaid, housekeeper, nanny, personal Assistant, and falcon caretaker, among others. According to this law, committing blunders such as damaging employers' tools, including fridges and washing machines, entitles the employer to deduct a sum equivalent to a quarter of the cost of repairing the broken tools from the housemaid's salary. The damages are fixed either by the worker agreeing or by the ministry; if neither of them agrees, then the matter will go to the court. Then both parties will have to agree on the court's decision. If the deduction occurred according to court order, it will not be more than a quarter of the employees' wages. And if a person other than the employer files a criminal case against the worker and the worker is convicted, then the worker will not receive payment for the wages suspended during the duration. And if the worker is acquitted, then the person who filed the case against the worker must pay the suspended wages, unless the worker waives it. And suppose a conflict occurs between the employer and the domestic worker. In that case, the issue will go to the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE). Within two weeks, if the ministry is unable to solve the issue, the matter will go to the court carrying the recommendation of MOHRE. If the domestic worker files the case, they are exempt from court fees at all stages and will be provided with a speedy judgment.

The Domestic Workers Are Entitled To

- Payment of Wages as agreed upon in the terms of the contract by both parties within 10 days from the date they are due.
- Weekly paid rest day.
- 12 hours of rest per day, including 8 hours of consecutive rest.
- Paid 30 days' leave annually.
- A biannually round-trip home trip ticket.
- Annually, 30 days of sick leave
- Entitled to the possession of a personal identification document like a passport or ID.
- Obligations of the Employer towards Domestic Workers.
- To provide facilities to the domestic workers so that he or she can work smoothly.
- Provide appropriate accommodation.
- Provide meals and clothing per day.
- Timely payment of wages.
- Taking care of medical and health insurance
- Safety and respect
- Provide compensation for work injuries and occupational diseases.

Obligation of the Recruitment Office Towards Domestic Workers: -

- Providing the full information to domestic workers regarding nature, type, wages & hours of work.
- Ensuring that the worker is physically and mentally fit.
- Before entering the UAE, conduct the required medical test.
- Catering to their knowledge about the UAE's traditional dressing sense, etc.
- Providing them with temporary accommodation,
- Providing them respect,
- Making them aware of their rights and giving them knowledge about the proper authority through which they can enforce their rights in case of violation of their rights.
- Prohibition on the demand for money for bringing domestic workers to the UAE and providing them with job opportunities.⁴

Obligations of the Domestic Workers

- Work under the supervision of the employer or in compliance with the terms of the contract.
- Be careful and diligent while performing their duties.
- Don't be absent without a valid reason.
- Maintain the privacy of the workplace.
- Be careful about the belongings in their possession and follow the instructions of the employer for their safe disposal and keeping procedure.

³ Available at: - <https://www.mohre.gov.ae/en/home.aspx>

⁴ Available at: - <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/jobs/http://jier.org>

- Keep the tools for helping work properly inside the workplace
- To provide required assistance in the event of a hazard or disaster.

Settlement of Disputes

In the event of a dispute between the employer and domestic workers, the dispute must be settled by MOHRE if the parties are unable to settle it peacefully. If, within two weeks, the case remains unresolved, it must be referred to the court at the recommendation of MOHRE.

Penalty in Case of Violation of the Domestic Worker's Law

5000 dirhams for each case of failure to provide the agreed wages approved by the ministry or contract with an electronic form outside the ministry. Noncompliance with the ministry-approved contract form, providing resumes of illegal domestic workers or absconders or a contract with the employer to hire them or hiring a domestic worker who didn't qualify for the medical examination or did not meet the requirements for a house permit or withholding the domestic worker's identification document. 20000 dirhams in case of harassment by the employer at the workplace. A fine of 1000 dirhams was imposed for non-compliance with the ministry's guidelines for training domestic workers. So, there is a list of penalties for non-compliance with the rules & regulations by the Ministry of the UAE.

Non-Governmental Initiatives for the Protection of Female Domestic Workers and the Enforcement of Their Rights:

- The rights of female domestic workers are a serious issue, but no separate agency or organisation is working for the protection of female domestic workers. The religious group also do not take the issue of female domestic workers. There is no trade union in the United Arab Emirates. The embassies and consulates only assist migrant female workers. Embassies and labour offices, like NGOs in other cases, are here to support and assist all types of workers. The Embassy of the Philippines in the UAE is proving to be the best in supporting the migrant domestic workers. The Embassy offers a welfare programme to educate female domestic workers. It also offers free classes in cooking, sewing, computing and photography, etc. This initiative proved to be the most effective step for emotional support and opened the door to better job opportunities. Other embassies are not delivering such types of services. The Indian embassy, although a large number of Indian workers are in the UAE, is not interested in paying heed to the issue of female domestic workers. Like the Sri Lankan Embassy, which is also involved in supporting domestic Workers. The Indonesian Embassy is comparatively highly active in addressing the problems of domestic workers, such as providing basic skills and temporary employment opportunities. The labour officers are highly active. There is no existence of Ethiopian embassy in the UAE, so the condition of Ethiopian workers is not so good in the UAE.

Other Institutional Bodies: The only body responsible for making policies and supervising labour is the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Interior oversees domestic workers, categorising them as unskilled workers. So, the government are not likely to pay heed to the condition of domestic workers. The government is about to amend the law relating to domestic workers.

International and National Efforts: The ILO & UN are making significant efforts to improve the conditions of domestic workers. Yet, there has been no such significant change that has occurred in domestic work. Several conventions and recommendations are in place for domestic workers. The United Arab Emirates is also aware of the labour issue, but domestic workers do not fall under the labour law. Domestic workers don't receive the benefits of labour under labour law.

Case Study-1: - The Researcher took the in-depth interview of one of the female domestic workers Aysha Khatoon (named changed) she told her story how she was trapped and how she escaped from the thorny trap of agents and employer as she narrates *"I belong to a simple lower middle-class family born in the slum area of Delhi near Selumpur my parents is labour and since my childhood I am working as domestic worker for the financial support of my family I have five sisters and 2 brothers all are working as labour. By catering for the greed of a handsome salary, one was trapped in the thorny trap of an employer. In the UAE, I performed all household tasks, including washing clothes, cleaning utensils, mopping, and brooming, as well as cooking. However, I was not paid on time. On demanding a salary, I was beaten, and I was not allowed to go home once a year, even though I was not allowed to talk to my family. My employer had a bad eye on me several times. My employer sexually harassed me, and even the employer's wife was aware, but she had no objection. I was never allowed to go outside the employer's home, so how could I complain to the concerned authority about the exploitation? I am an illiterate woman who wasn't aware, so I had no option left except to tolerate the harassment. Once when my employer and his family went for the vacation I got the opportunity and ran away with my little belongings and some money which I saved earlier but I didn't get the salary of 5 month, one of my colleague worker helped me lot and I returned my home after so much struggle and then I owed to never go anywhere since when I am working in Delhi as a domestic worker and maintain my family"*. She narrated her story very sadly. She was very sad, as she had been deceived by the agent, who had promised her an extra salary, facilities, and a bright future, but in reality, she had been thrust into a

gloomy life. So, the star of the UAE looks like a diamond from far away, but it was a ball of fire, the dreams of so many workers.

Case Study 2: The researcher conducted another interview with a female domestic worker residing in Shaheen Bagh, Delhi. She narrated her story with heavy heart meanwhile she started weeping while telling her life in UAE how helpless she was there and how she was trapped she told the researcher *"I was born in Jharkhand my parents migrated to Delhi in search of better life and here in Delhi the life is not so easy we all 5 members of family have to do work to satisfy our hunger. My father was driven by a lust for money and a better life by sending me, his daughter, to the UAE through an agent. The agent was so cunning, and we, the innocent family, were trapped. He took 3 lakh rupees from us in cash. We gave him the demanded money from our savings, and then he took out a debt by mortgaging some of my mother's jewellery, and then he threw me into the employer's home to do all the household work. My job was a contract; I didn't know how much salary I was given or what time I worked. I was given a separate room outside the employer's home and was responsible for all household chores within the employer's home. The employer didn't give her a salary on time, and she was not allowed to go home even once a year. She was unable to talk to her family during working hours, even after work, because she had to work all night. Even though she had not given the salary on time"*. The story of her is full of plight. The government of the UAE should also address the hidden issues affecting female domestic workers.

Case Study 3: The researcher interviewed Savitri Devi, a domestic worker from Kerala. By taking her interview, the researcher herself becomes emotional. She narrated, *"I was abused, scolded, and they made me feel that I was trash. After long hours of work, once I sat on the sofa, I was humiliated and abused. They don't treat us as human beings. The employer ordered them to do some work in a terrible way. They are humiliated because they are poor, no matter what they are in their home country, like a teacher or a professor here, they are a domestic worker, so they are exploited. I worked there for eight years, and I feel I am caged. I used to do all the household work and take care of the elderly and aged women of the house. Once, I was scolded very badly for jumping into the swimming pool to save an elderly woman at my employer's home. I saw that she was sinking, so I jumped into the swimming pool uninvited. My employer scolded me, telling me how shameless I was and how dare I jump into the swimming pool without my veil and dupatta. I was not allowed to go outside for refreshment or use the swimming pool or the common bathroom in the employer's home"*. So, the condition of female domestic workers in the UAE is very vulnerable. They have no respect even for silly mistakes, or for any reason, they are scolded very badly by their employer; they have no freedom of movement. So, the government should also pay heed to the hidden exploitation at the employer's home and the working conditions of female domestic workers.

Conclusion & Suggestions: The ILO and NGOs play an important role in improving the conditions of domestic workers and bringing them under the category of labour, thereby providing labour benefits to these workers. Efforts are underway to transition domestic workers from unskilled to skilled workers in the UAE. This would be a great change, bringing domestic workers under labour law. But the domestic workers have to depend on the mercy of the employer for so many things within the four walls of the employer. The exploitation of domestic workers seems like bonded labour, so strict regulations are required for domestic workers. There is a dire need for a clear agreement on the hours of work, the nature of work, salary, and regarding freedom of movement, etc. The recruiting agencies and sponsors should be under the control of the government so that there would be no abuse of female domestic workers. The government should properly monitor the working and living conditions of female domestic workers, even in employers' homes and especially while they are in the agent's office. The UAE government should amend the labour law to include certain provisions for female domestic workers because the condition of female domestic workers is so vulnerable.

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