CHAPTER: 6
OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Study was undertaken with the objective of exploring the working and living conditions of part time women domestic workers in Pune city. It also aimed at analyzing the autonomy in decision making among the part time women domestic workers in Pune city. The role of domestic workers organizations and unions in improving the working conditions of domestic workers as well as enhancing their autonomy in decision making was also examined. The observations and conclusions drawn from the study are presented in this chapter. Section 6.1 presents observations on the general profile of the part time women domestic workers in Pune city. Section 6.2 covers observations on living conditions of the part time women domestic workers in Pune city. Section 6.3 presents observations on work conditions of the part time women domestic workers in Pune city. Section 6.4 presents observations on autonomy in decision making among the part time women domestic workers in Pune city. Section 6.5 presents observations about unionized domestic workers. Section 6.6 presents hypothesis testing. Section 6.7 states how the objectives of the research study have been fulfilled. Section 6.8 presents recommendations. Section 6.9 contains limitations of the study. Section 6.10 suggests possibilities of further research.
6.1 Observations on General Profile

General Observations

- Age profile of the domestic workers indicates that a 60.8% of them are in the working age group of 25-40, followed by 23.2% in the age group of 41-55.
- As far as marital status is concerned, 78.8% of the domestic workers interviewed were currently married while 14.3% were widows.
- The average number of children born to 568 respondents in the sample (who had children) was 2.6567.
- The average years of schooling are low at 3.36 years reflecting low educational attainments coupled with a large incidence of illiteracy. 48.8% of the domestic workers interviewed were illiterate. In case of 29.8% of the currently married domestic workers interviewed, husbands are illiterate.
- 69.3% of the domestic workers interviewed lived in a nuclear family.
- The average size of the family of the domestic workers interviewed was 4.59 which included family members currently living with the domestic worker.
- The average monthly income of the women domestic workers interviewed is Rs.3826.
- Among the currently married domestic workers, 28.6% of cases indicated absence of income or uncertain income of the spouse.
- 60.2% of the women domestic workers interviewed belong to a native place other than Pune.
- 82.8% among the migrants were intra state migrants while only 17.2% of cases were observed as cases of migration from outside of Maharashtra.
• The intra state migration has been from Solapur, Latur, Usmanabad as well as Konkan region while the interstate migration has taken from Rajasthan and Karnataka.

Observations on Education of children of Domestic Workers
A remarkable commitment to children's education was seen among the domestic workers. A strong commitment to children's education is largely a result of their own plight on account of low education. Barring a few cases, where the school age children of domestic workers were not attending school because of domestic circumstances like paucity of funds, an alcoholic father, or due to physical incapacity, the respondents were keen that their children attend school. A few of the domestic workers represented notable success stories in this regard including a domestic worker from Kothrud educating her two sons to be diploma engineers, another domestic worker from the same locality having a daughter pursuing a Company Secretary course. A majority of domestic workers were sending their children to government schools run by the municipal corporation thus saving on the costs of schooling and related expenses. However, some of the young domestic workers from the city area wanted their children to attend a well known private school and were saving to pay for the same although the amount required was substantial. Thus the consciousness about education has spread to the quality of education as well.

Observations on Family responsibilities of Domestic Workers
Nuclear family does not necessarily imply less of a responsibility. In fact the migrant domestic workers shoulder the responsibility of family back at the native place. In case of joint families, with
elderly in laws living together, the responsibilities of the domestic worker are multiplied especially the medical expenses. There were instances where the husband or children in the family suffered from critical illnesses but the medical care was just not affordable and hence withdrawn. Expensive medical treatment was withdrawn in case of a critically handicapped son of a domestic worker in Kothrud and a paralytic young child of a domestic worker in Sinhgad Road.

In almost all cases, the husbands of the domestic workers are engaged in informal work either as waged worker such as casual daily worker, construction worker, shop assistant, and watchman or own account worker like street vendor, electrician or driving rented auto rickshaw. Such jobs are seasonal and susceptible to economic disturbances making their earnings uncertain. Uncertain incomes, low incomes or unemployment of the spouse add to the economic vulnerability and uncertainty facing the households of domestic workers.

The childcare system was not extensively probed in the study, but a domestic worker at Tadiwala Road Vasti mentioned that she had to limit her working hours (thereby limiting income) as there was no affordable childcare available in the vasti. The general atmosphere in the vastis is also a concern for growing children especially girls. Early marriage of daughters is often a result of such environment. Another outcome of such unsafe environment is that the teenage daughters accompany their mothers to work and thus gradually take up the work at least until they are married off. There were some instances of such intergenerational transfer of paid domestic work in Pashan area, Shivaji Nagar, Hadapsar and Peth area.
6.2 Observations on Living Conditions of the Domestic Workers

- 75.8% of the domestic workers interviewed lived in non permanent structures.
- 51.5% of domestic workers interviewed did not own the houses they lived in.
- For 91.8% of the domestic workers interviewed, drinking water was available in or near house.
- 36.5% of domestic workers had access to a sanitation facility at or near house.
- 17.8% of the domestic workers had no access to any sanitation facility even away from house and had to use open spaces.
- 81.5% of the domestic workers interviewed used LPG as the fuel for cooking.
- 77.8% of the domestic workers interviewed possessed ration cards. 60.5% of the domestic workers interviewed had a saving account in their name with 51% of them holding a saving account at a bank, 40.8% with a self help group and 8.3% at a post office. 21.5% of the domestic workers interviewed had loan to be repaid out of their income. The source of borrowing is from the self help group or informal channels.

6.3 Observations on Work Conditions of the Domestic Workers

- 74.3% of the domestic workers interviewed were engaged in house-keeping related jobs involving cleaning work, 5.7% did only cooking, 0.7% were engaged in care related work while 19.3% reported a combination of work.
- Barring the job of cooking, none of the domestic workers interviewed reported use of machines, thus reflecting the manual nature of the job.
- 20.5% of the domestic workers interviewed reported working for more than 15 years. 34% of the domestic workers interviewed had been working for the period of five years or less.
- An analysis of the age at the entry of domestic workers into this occupation indicated that a larger proportion 45.3% have started working between the age of 16-25 years. Another 35.8% had entered this occupation at the age of 26-35 years. Together this underlies the fact that economic compulsions at various stages of life arising out of unemployment of spouse, responsibilities of children or death of spouse are the factors that push the domestic workers into this occupation. An implicit understanding is that it is a woman’s work and comes naturally to women and does not require any additional skills or training to facilitate this late entry into the occupation.
- 58% of the domestic workers interviewed worked at 3 to 5 houses.
- 53.3% reported work hours ranging from 3 to 5, followed by 38% working for 6 to 8 hours. The number of hours of work per day varied according to the age of the domestic workers, their family responsibilities and health related issues limiting their ability to work.
- Among the work conditions examined in the study, timely receipt of the wages was the most commonly reported positive condition with 95.3% of the domestic workers interviewed stating that they are paid on time.
- 56.7% of the domestic workers interviewed reported that they are paid annual bonus at the time of Diwali equivalent to one month’s wages. Another 24.5% receive Bonus from some
employers but not from others. 18.8% of the domestic workers interviewed do not get Bonus at all. The cases of not getting Bonus include non completion of one year of work at a household, getting a saree or other gift in lieu of Bonus or unwillingness on the part of the employer to pay Bonus.

- 45.8% of the domestic workers interviewed received remuneration for the extra work performed. 11.2% reported such payments from some employers while 43% stated that they do not receive extra remuneration for extra work at all.

- The work contracts being verbal and lacking clarity as to what constitutes regular work load and what should be considered as extra work continues to remain a problem. This has resulted in extra work put in by the domestic worker that goes without remuneration. This indeed constitutes a deficit in decent work as it amounts to work without pay. There is a need to define regular workload so that extra work can be identified and rewarded. However, current work relationships being informal and verbal work contracts being non specific, this problem of work without pay persists.

- 76% of the respondents stated that they get paid leaves with two leaves per month being a commonly found case.

- 12.2% of domestic workers reported wage deduction even for a single day’s absence. However a uniform practice in this regard is not found and the wage deduction arrangements are worked out at the micro level with a lot depending on the goodwill of the employer.

- The paid leaves, usually two per month are negotiated as a part of the informal verbal work arrangement in case of 43.8% while for 56.2% of domestic workers interviewed, leaves are arranged as an ad hoc proposition accentuating the informality.
• 50.7% of the domestic workers interviewed reported that they have to perform the work that has piled up during their absence and thus adds to their work load upon arrival after leave. In essence this means that there is no real holiday for these workers. Further, the manual nature of the work means that this practice extracts even more physical labour from their frail and undernourished bodies. Extra work upon arrival from leave also upsets their schedule as they have to move from one household to another and delay at one place causes delay at other households where they might face a verbal confrontation for delay in reporting.

• The analysis of income levels suggested that the domestic work remains a low paid occupation with 65.8% of domestic workers in the low income group of Rs. 4000 or less.

• The average monthly income for the domestic workers in Pune city worked out to be Rs.3826. The average hourly wage, calculated on the basis of monthly income and working hours recorded in the data, is Rs 25.36 for the city of Pune as a whole.

• It is observed that the rate for each job varied on the locality and further by specific work demands of the employer. Wage rates differed across localities and were found to be decided by the interaction between the employer and the domestic worker in the form of individual bargain. The bench mark wage rate was the locality specific wage rate which remained the central point in such bargains. This locality wage rate was largely governed by socio economic profile of the employers and their specific work requirements.

• 61.2% of the domestic workers interviewed informed that the increments take place as per the wishes of the employer and it might take several petitions and protests before an increment is granted. In case of several of these domestic
workers, the last increment had taken place two to three years ago. Since then the prices of essential commodities had increased but the wages have not. There are cases where the disgruntled domestic worker has quit the work on account of non receipt of increment.

Observations on Work Relationship

• 68.7% of the domestic workers interviewed receive monetary help from their employer against wages. Usually the repayments take place in small installments as convenient to the domestic workers. Given that the majority of domestic workers have limited financial means, the monetary help from the employer, though on a returnable basis, constitutes a significant part of the ties between the employer and the domestic workers. It is significant that such advances are not always for unexpected large expenses or emergencies but also for regular household expenses. A domestic worker from Tadiwala Road vasti in the Northern part of city said that she had to take advance against wages for buying groceries and other regular items of household consumption several times a month. This leaves her with little income next month when her wages are adjusted for the advance taken.

• Non monetary help in the form of clothes, used household goods, educational resources also exists as reported by 44.7% of the domestic workers interviewed. However, food does not form a significant part of this relationship. In a few cases, financial advice and assistance in opening a saving account was noted.

• As regards the complaints of ill treatment by the employers, the major part of complaint was related to remuneration. Specifically nonpayment for extra work, nonpayment of bonus and lack of increment were the major contentious
issues sometimes causing the work relation to fall through. As mentioned earlier, lack of specification as to what constitutes extra work also results in strife. In one such instance, the domestic worker was dismissed on the spot for refusing to put in work that was thrice her usual work. Such instances bring to light the precarious nature of the work relationship and also underline the need for regulation of work conditions.

- A more serious charge of theft made by the employer against her was reported by one domestic worker.
- A verbal exchange was reported in some cases on account of late reporting for work. A frequent point of altercation between the employers and the domestic workers is the number of leaves taken by the latter. Leave arrangements, in essence, are informal in nature.
- The interactions between the employer and the domestic workers underscore the fact that paid domestic work remains a personalized work relationship governed by the attitude of employer.

Observations on Occupational Safety and Health

- A large proportion of domestic workers interviewed suffered from body ache, joint pain and weakness which are associated with hard manual labour. Constantly moving from one household to another does not leave them with time to consume food and they continue to subsist on tea or infrequently provided food at the employer’s household. This lifestyle invariably takes toll on their health in the form of severe acidity, persistent weakness and early aging.
- The home might be perceived as a safe work place being or thought of as less accident prone, however, domestic workers
are prone to number of mishaps at employers’ home.\(^1\) A
domestic worker at Aundh fell from the balcony while drying
clothes and broke her ankle. In the absence of any monetary
contribution from the employer, she herself had to meet the
medical expenses.

6.4 Observations on Autonomy in Decision-making among
the Domestic Workers

6.4.1 Work related Decisions
- The decision to work was made independently by 51% of
domestic workers while joint decision making (with parents/
spouse/others) was reported by 46.3% of domestic workers
interviewed.
- The decision to add or change work was made independently
by 61.3% and jointly (with parents/ spouse/others) by
36.7% of domestic workers interviewed.
- Comparing the responses to two decisions relate to work, it
can be seen that the decisions to change or add work involve
less of joint consultations than the decision to work implying
that the entry into the occupation is decided upon jointly in
greater number of cases while the decisions about change or
addition of work are taken more independently.

6.4.2 Decisions about using own income for own use-
- There were four decisions regarding use of the self earned
income for self use viz. saving in own name, helping own
relatives, buying a saree or a personal item, spending for
own health and medication. The responses indicated the
following-

\(^1\) Gothoskar Sujata (2005) “New initiatives in organizing strategy in the informal economy - Case
study of domestic workers’ organizing” Committee for Asian Women, Bangkok. appendix IV
• The maximum extent of self decision was reported in case of spending for one’s health and medication (67.7%) followed by decision to buy a personal item like saree (66%). The decision to save in own name and decision to help own relatives involved self decision to the tune of 56.5% and 52% respectively but it also involved joint decision making (with parents/ spouse/others) to the extent of 33.5% and 35.7% respectively indicating that a consultation process takes place in greater number of cases while making these decisions than the previous two decisions.

6.4.3 Decisions about utilizing family resources for family use-
• In case of expenditures for family needs, it is likely that incomes of other family members are also used. In order to examine the control of the domestic worker over using such pooled resources for family needs, three questions were asked viz decision regarding minor and routine household purchases, decision about major household purchases, and decision to contribute to other family responsibilities. The responses of the domestic workers indicate the following-
• The greatest extent of self decision (43.2%) is reported in case of minor and routine expenditures for the household, followed by decision about major household purchases (24.7%) and decision to contribute to other family responsibilities (24%). As is clear from the information in this respect, there is more of joint decision making (with parents/ spouse/others) in cases of major purchases (44.2%) and other family responsibilities (43.5%). Significantly more than 30% of respondents have noted non participation in these two decisions reflecting the lack of their control over utilization of family resources for family needs.
6.4.4 Decisions about Marriage and Family arrangements after marriage

- Two decisions pertaining to marriage of the domestic worker and the decision to stay in the joint family or nuclear family after marriage were considered for the study. The responses of the domestic workers indicate that a large majority of domestic workers 73.5% had not participated in the decision about their marriage at all while 77.5% had no say in the decision about staying in the joint family or nuclear family after marriage.
- The responses indicate absolutely limited participation in decision making pertaining to own marriage and choice of family type after marriage.

6.4.5 Decisions about Children

- Children related decision making was examined with respect to two questions viz the decision to determine the size of family (number of children to have) and the decisions about the future of children like their education and marriage.
- As indicated by data, the decision relating to family size was a joint decision (with parents/ spouse/others) for a majority (72.2%) of the domestic workers interviewed. Decisions about children’s future also indicated joint decision
making (with parents/ spouse/others) in case of 62.8% of the domestic workers interviewed.

- Significantly the self decision making was reported in greater degree (26%) for decisions regarding children’s future than for the decision regarding size of family (7.7%) reflecting that the domestic workers interviewed shoulder greater responsibility about children than the autonomy to decide about the birth of children.

6.5 Observations on the Unionised Domestic Workers

- Among the 200 unionised domestic workers interviewed, 45% had been members for two years or less. As per the opinion of a senior union activist, these have joined the union after the Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act 2008 was passed and their main aim was to register at the welfare board. The union is seen as the facilitating mechanism for the registration.

- 27% of the domestic workers had been with the unions for 6 years or more, some of whom had been the founding members of the unions.

- Depending on their participation in the union activities, 68% were active members including the union workers while 32% were only registered members without any active participation in union activities like meetings and demonstrations.

- It was evident that the perceptions of the union members about the impact of unions on their work life and on personal life depended on the duration of their membership and their activity status.

- Unionised domestic workers also showed greater awareness about government schemes and benefits under various schemes. This was reflected in greater proportion of
unionized workers being registered at the Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board. Nimushakavi (2012) has also noted that unionized domestic workers have better access to government schemes.

- The vasti level leaders are particularly aware about work conditions (wage rate, number of leaves etc) in other localities and showed keen interest in pursuing the same for their area. One such local leader at Katraj-Kondhwa Road area indicated that in some areas like Aundh and some parts of Kothrud, domestic workers have started getting 4 leaves per month and she is going to pursue the same in her area. She is confident of getting the demands of the domestic workers in her area heard and granted, though she admits that there would be a long struggle before that. She has managed to get a raise in wages (from Rs.200 per job to Rs.350 per job) and 2 paid leaves per month where none existed earlier. It did not happen overnight, she admits. It has taken days of struggle, first to mobilize the domestic workers to form a collective identity and then to confront the employers with the legitimate demands for fair remuneration. Her employers are aware of her role as union leader and that has not affected her work relationship with them.

- One of the union members from Sinhgad Road area shared her view about how the working with the union has inspired her to take up studies again. She decided to take up studies two years ago at the age of 38 and she plans to take S.S.C. examination. She also narrated her experience of getting severance benefits with the intervention of the union after losing her work due to absence from work following sickness.
• A member of the Pune Zilla Gharkamgar Sanghatana has passed the pre course test of the YCMOU.²
• The courage to walk away from and confront unfair work relationship that the domestic workers derive from sharing their experiences on collective platforms was also exhibited in the group meetings of the unionized domestic workers. In one such meeting of BMS- GKS at Dhankawadi (Near Sahakar Nagar), a domestic worker narrated her experience of being dismissed on the spot for refusing to put in work thrice her usual work. She also appealed to other domestic workers that they should not work for the employer in question, or demand higher wage than what was being paid to her. In another case, a domestic worker from Katraj Kondhawa Road, a member of PSMS union, narrated how she left a cooking job with a family when her extra work to the tune of four times her daily load went unrewarded and the employer showed no inclination to pay even after explicit demand for it. The realization that these practices are unfair and it is possible and indeed necessary to raise voice against such practices is the outcome of regular interactions at the union platforms.

6.6 Observations on Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: The extent of autonomy in decision making of women domestic workers in Pune city depends on education, age and family structure.

Education and Autonomy in Decision making

- There was no statistically significant association between education and self income expenditure autonomy as well as between education and family income expenditure autonomy.
- There was statistically significant association between education and participation in the marriage related decision making as well as between education and decision making about family type. More participation is recorded in groups with longer formal education periods.
- With regards to autonomy in children related decision making, education was significantly associated with participation in making a decision about family size. A larger number of respondents with longer years of formal education participated in the decision about family size than the respondents with fewer years of formal education. Thus education can be regarded as a critical factor in enhancing autonomy in decision making related to non income decisions.
- The participation of domestic workers in decisions about children’s education and marriage remained high across all educational categories indicating no significant association between education and participation in decisions of children’s future.
- Education is seen as an enabler of autonomy in decisions relating to marriage and number of children. However, it is not a significant factor in income expenditure related
autonomy. Several factors can be noted in this connection. Firstly, a major part of the sample is comprised of illiterate domestic workers. Secondly, the limited education that has been imparted to them has taken place some years back and the impact of it may well have been lost in the tough battles of life that the domestic workers routinely face. Lastly, the limited educational entitlements that some have received have no bearing upon the kind of work they perform. A more work related training or life skills for them like simple mathematics, communication skills, training in use of electronic gadgets and cooking various cuisines could have a confidence boosting and autonomy enhancing effect.

Research has shown mixed results about the impact of education on autonomy. Mason (1997) has found that the role of education in deciding a woman’s say in family economic decisions is context specific i.e. it is an important factor in the liberal settings of Southeast Asian countries but not in the restrictive settings of South Asian countries. Mather and Malhotra (1997) have found education to be a significant contributor to autonomy in financial decisions but not in household decisions. Meitei (2001) has found no significant effect of education on the autonomy of women in Manipur. Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) have found education to be an influential determinant of autonomy in an egalitarian cultural setting than in a gender stratified setting. Handy and Kassam (2004) have found the empowering effect of education conditional upon the tenure of work.

Age and autonomy in decision making

- Age showed statistically significant association with both the income related autonomy scores i.e. self income expenditure autonomy and family income expenditure autonomy as well
as with work autonomy. Greater proportion of respondents from higher age corresponded to higher autonomy scores in these categories. Thus, women in the later part of their life cycle tend to enjoy greater income expenditure autonomy than those in the earlier stage of life cycle.

- Age also showed significant association with marriage and children related decisions. Greater proportion of younger age groups showed participation in marriage and children related decisions than the older age groups. The difference was more marked between the age groups below 40 and above 40.
- Mason (1997) has found age to be associated with women's autonomy in the Southeast Asian countries but not in South Asia. Casique (2000) has reported wife's age to be significantly and positively related to her decision making power. Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) have found age as a significant variable influencing autonomy in all the regional settings.

**Family Type and Autonomy**

- Family type i.e. whether the domestic worker lived in a joint family or nuclear family showed significant association with family income expenditure autonomy with greater proportion of respondents from nuclear family reflecting high family income expenditure autonomy. This can be attributed to absence of in laws or other adult members who limit the freedom of decision making for a woman.
- Other autonomy measures like autonomy in self income expenditure, work autonomy and children related autonomy did not show significant association with family type.
- Family type and autonomy in family income expenditure autonomy are found to be significantly associated with greater proportion of domestic workers from nuclear family
reporting high autonomy in decisions about utilizing family income for family related expenses. Dasgupta (2002) has concluded that the control of women over their earnings depends on the number of male members in the family given the patriarchal set up in Indian households. Sen et al (2006) have also brought out the relationship between generational inequalities that characterize the joint families and disempowerment of women in terms of their reduced participation in decision making.

Hypothesis 2: The extent of autonomy in decision making of women domestic workers in Pune city depends on income levels and locality.

Income of the Domestic Worker and Autonomy in Decision making
- Income of the domestic workers did not show a statistically significant association with self income expenditure autonomy and family income expenditure autonomy. Self income expenditure autonomy was high across all income groups. However, a greater proportion of respondents from higher income showed high family income expenditure autonomy as compared to the respondents from lower income groups showing high family income expenditure autonomy.

Income of the spouse and Autonomy in Decision making
- Income of the spouse showed significant association with family income expenditure autonomy as well as with the self income expenditure of the domestic workers. In case of currently married domestic workers with non earning or non contributing husbands, the self income expenditure autonomy is high for close to ¾ of respondents in that group. Among
the currently married domestic workers with earning husbands, the proportion of respondents with higher self income expenditure autonomy increased with increasing income levels of the spouse. This reflects a pattern where a greater contribution of husband towards household can offer more freedom to the woman for spending her income for herself.

- The family income expenditure autonomy shows a more complex picture as 54.1% of the domestic workers with non contributing husbands had low family income expenditure autonomy. Some of these cases reflected situations where the domestic workers made the decisions about family expenditure jointly with another earning member like son or daughter. In other cases, husband is a partner in decision making about family expenses even though he is a non earner. In case of 45.9% of domestic workers with non contributing husbands, the high family income expenditure autonomy reflected more of responsibility of making income expenditure decisions rather than freedom of decision.

- In case of earning and contributing husbands, there is no uniform pattern about earnings of the spouse and family income expenditure autonomy for the domestic worker.

- Meitei (2001) has reported that household income is not a significant determinant of women’s autonomy. Kishor Sunita and Kamla Gupta (2009) have found that having earnings with control over them and the level of earnings of women relative to the earnings of their husbands are critical variables that determine the women’s participation in decision making. Acharya et al (2010) have found that women from middle and richer class have the least decision-making power.
**Location and Autonomy in Decision making**

Location did not have association with family income expenditure autonomy or with the self income expenditure of the domestic workers.

**Hypothesis 3: The working of domestic workers’ associations in Pune has been instrumental in bringing about progressive changes in work conditions of women domestic workers in Pune city.**

- There is no difference between the unionized and non unionized domestic workers with respect to two work conditions viz. timely receipt of wages and extra payment for extra work.

- There is statistically significant association between union membership and the following work conditions which are more favourable for the unionized domestic workers as compared to non unionized domestic workers.
  - Receipt of Bonus
  - Availability of paid leave (monthly)
  - Regularity of increments
  - Access to saving account
  - Registration with Maharashtra Domestic workers Welfare Board

- Nimushakavi (2012) has found that unionized domestic workers fared better in terms of access to government schemes and knowledge about minimum wage fixation by government.

- The wages rates and therefore the wage earnings are primarily decided by the individual arrangements between the employer and the domestic workers and unions do not directly enter into these arrangements. Nimushakavi (2012) has also reported that membership of an organizations did
not directly result in better wages as the unions are not always involved in negotiating wages. Out of the four organisations included in this study, only one organization, Pune Shahar Molkarin Sanghatana, publishes a rate card for various jobs. Unions like Pune Zilla Gharkamgar Sanghatana (Pune District Domestic Workers Union- PDDWU) have taken the view that -“From the outset it was clear that the main target could not be the employer as it would only lead to dismissal of the workers. The PDDWU, therefore, decided to put their demands to the state, focusing on the duty and responsibility of the government to ameliorate their terrible working conditions”.

Hypothesis 4: The organized women domestic workers exercise better autonomy in decision making as compared to the unorganized ones.

Union Membership and autonomy

- A greater proportion of unionized domestic workers reflected high autonomy in decision making with respect to self income expenditure as well as family income expenditure.
- The association between union membership and autonomy in decision making with respect to self income expenditure as well as family income expenditure was reexamined for the currently married domestic workers only. This did away with the effect of marital status on autonomy. A larger proportion of widows and separated women formed a part of the sample among the unionized domestic workers than among the non unionized ones.

• A significant association between the union membership and autonomy in decision making related to self income expenditure and family income expenditure among the currently married domestic workers was observed.

• In order to probe the relation between the union membership and autonomy further, the autonomy score of unionized domestic workers was analysed with respect to their activity status within the union. A greater proportion of the active union members i.e. the union members who participate in union activities, indicated higher autonomy in decision making related to self income expenditure and family income expenditure as compared to the members who are not active. The chi square test result indicated significant association between activity status of union workers and their autonomy in decision making related to self income expenditure and family income expenditure.

• Finally, the autonomy scores of unionized domestic workers are found to be statistically significant in comparison to the non-unionized domestic workers. The self income expenditure autonomy as well as family income expenditure autonomy was found to be significantly higher for the unionized domestic workers than for the non-unionized domestic workers.

Thus, union membership and more importantly participation in union activities is associated with greater autonomy in decisions relating to income and expenditure. This can be attributed to the fact that participation in meetings, demonstrations as a part of union activities and collective strategies inculcate the feeling of individual as well as collective identity as worker. It promotes a belief that the work environment can be improved by collective action. Active participation in union activities also facilitate greater interaction with the outside world creating opportunities
to interact with the other partners in the process i.e. government officials and labour leaders. Members of Molkarin Sanghatana and Molkarin Panchayat have staged demonstrations in Delhi fighting for their demands. (Sakal Times, 2012) These activities tend to have an empowering effect on their personalities as well as boosting their confidence about what they can do.

Dasgupta (2002) has stated that women who are organized are likely to have greater control over their earnings than those who are not. Chen et al. (2005a) have discussed the impact of SEWA on its members in terms of having a greater ‘say’ in a range of household decisions including work, major expenses, children relayed major decisions and decisions involving social customs. Hill (2010) has found that union membership and participation in public forums build a sense of public status, identity and esteem which is also reflected in their enhanced capacity to act, to speak out, to negotiate and advocate within the family, the community, the workplace and the public/political sphere. Union membership is thus seen as the ‘means’ and ‘ends’ of socio-economic well-being.

6.7 Objectives of the Research

The research study has fulfilled the following objectives.

1. To understand the specific as well as general socio-economic conditions of women domestic workers in Pune city.

The general socio-economic conditions of domestic workers were examined in the study. The socio economic status of women domestic workers in Pune city was studied with respect to their age, education, marital status, income, migration status, number of children and family size. Education and income of the spouse was also studied (refer pp 171 to 177). The study
has examined the living conditions of women domestic workers in Pune city (refer pp178-182).
The specific conditions related to domestic workers were studied with reference to their work conditions, wages, increment and work relationship (refer pp.182-200).

2. To evaluate the extent of freedom of decision making/autonomy by women domestic workers in Pune city.
The extent of freedom or autonomy in decision making by domestic workers was studied with respect to 13 decisions involving various aspects of work, income and family (refer pp. 200-209).

3. To study the role of domestic workers’ organizations in the betterment of women domestic workers in Pune city.
The impact of unions on the work and personal lives of the members was studied from the perspective of members and also from the benefits derived by the domestic workers from the membership of union (refer pp 210-220).

4. To bring about a comparison between organized domestic workers and unorganized domestic workers in Pune city.
An analysis of work conditions of unionized domestic workers as compared to non unionized domestic workers was made. Unionised workers do indicate better working conditions in terms of receipt of Bonus, availability of paid leave, regularity of increments and access to social security (refer pp. 250-258). Unionized domestic workers also exercise greater income expenditure autonomy as compared to non unionized domestic workers (refer pp. 258-267).
6.8 Limitations of the Study

- The study is geographically limited to the selected areas within Pune City.
- The study is about live out part time women domestic workers only.

6.9 Recommendations

- The Government of Maharashtra has taken lead in legislating for and creating a welfare board for domestic workers. It is a welcome step and needs to be followed up in the form of regulation of work conditions of domestic workers. Inclusion of domestic work in the schedule of minimum wages, regulating other work conditions like bonus, leave, overtime will ensure decent work for domestic workers.

- The question of older domestic workers is a critical one. In the absence of any social security coverage for old age, they are extremely vulnerable and are forced to work in order to survive. A provision for old age pension for the older domestic workers is the need of the hour.

- The Domestic Workers Welfare Board has a huge administrative responsibility of registering and administering welfare schemes to the domestic workers in the state. For ensuring efficient working of the Board, the current gap in the administrative set up, in terms of infrastructure, needs to be addressed.

- The draft National Policy on domestic workers has stated that domestic workers, like other workers, should have the right
to organize into representative unions and organizations. This right should be recognized and promoted at the national and state level so that domestic workers have a representation and voice at the policy table.

- Employers of the domestic workers are an integral part of the process of transforming the informal work relationships from into formal ones. Therefore, sensitization of the employers, dissemination of adequate information to them and circulation of a model code of conduct for them would be an ideal course of action to ensure a positive and constructive contribution from the employers in the process of creating decent work relationships.

- The domestic workers need to be equipped with skills and training in order to enhance their earning potential. Unions of domestic workers can be entrusted with this responsibility. The training course initiated by YCMOU in Maharashtra is an ideal first step in that direction. The organizations and unions of domestic workers can play a pivotal role of an active partner in expanding its coverage.

- A constructive social dialogue among the three stakeholders- i.e. domestic workers and their representatives, employers and their representatives, and government – will go a long way in ensuring decent work for domestic workers.

6.10 Further research possibilities

- A comparative study of strategies, functioning and efficacy of various unions and organizations of domestic workers in Pune
city could be undertaken. Such analysis can be extended to organizations working in other cities as well.

- A detailed study about education and employment of children of domestic workers could be undertaken.

- A study of impact of training on domestic workers could be undertaken in the medium term.

- As employers are critical partners in the process of ushering in decent domestic work, an exploration of their perceptions about work relations, legal and formal work structures, and their expectations from the paid domestic work sector as regards quality of work, professional services etc. may be undertaken.