

Socio-Economic Conditions of Housekeeping Workers in Organized Private Sector in Coimbatore, India

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Abstract

Housekeeping workers in private organisations faces many challenges in their employment, income and social security. This study examines the socio-economic conditions of housekeeping workers in organized private sectors in Coimbatore, India. It is based on primary data collected from a field survey on 100 sample housekeeping workers, selected by using simple random sampling method. Descriptive statistics and tabulation methods are used to analyse the data. The analysis is made across three categories of works such as permanent, temporary and outsourced. The results show that a significant gender wage gap is evident, with male workers earning a much higher average income than female workers. While permanent staff usually have better job security and more access to benefits, a significant number still face financial difficulties. Temporary and outsourced workers, in particular, deal with greater financial instability, fewer benefits, and lower job retention, even though they often feel respected by their peers and supervisors. And among the respondents, no one were aware of the welfare schemes for these workers provided by the government, only few female respondents were receiving benefits from the scheme of Tamil Nadu government which is for women welfare. The findings also show uneven income distribution, with women and certain social groups more often found in the lower income brackets. Although most workplaces are rated positively in terms of environment, many workers still face tough realities like physically demanding tasks, repetitive routines, low pay, and limited control over their schedules. These challenges contribute to financial insecurity and limit chances for growth and progress. Overall, the results point to the need for support housekeeping workers, especially those in less stable roles. Improving job security, offering fair pay, and increasing access to benefits are key steps toward ensuring fair treatment and a better quality of life for this essential workforce in Coimbatore's organized private sectors.

Key Words: *Housekeeping workers; Socio-economic conditions; Organized Private Sector; Coimbatore.*

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I. Introduction

“Housekeeping workers are indispensable to the effective functioning of the organized sector. They play a crucial role in maintaining standards of cleanliness, hygiene, and operational efficiency across diverse establishments, including hotels, hospitals, institutions, and corporate offices. Their work is essential for ensuring a positive and productive environment, contributing significantly to the smooth operation and public image of these organizations. This study aims to examine the socio-economic conditions of housekeeping workers within organized private sectors in Coimbatore, a significant industrial and commercial center in Tamil Nadu, India. Coimbatore’s robust economy, driven by sectors such as hospitality, textiles, manufacturing, and healthcare, generates substantial demand for housekeeping services. However, the working conditions and socio-economic well-being of these staff can be diverse, influenced by factors such as the specific industry, organizational policies, and local labor market dynamics.

The National Classification of Occupations (NCO) 2015 categorizes housekeeping workers primarily under Division 5: Service and Sales Workers, acknowledging the service-oriented nature of their roles. This classification highlights the range of occupations involved in upholding cleanliness standards within organized sectors. Research indicates that this work frequently involves demanding conditions. As noted by Xenia Chela-Alvarez et al., (2024), “Housekeeping is considered a low-skilled job, physically demanding, involving repetitive tasks, unhealthy postures, high demands, heavy workload and low control”. Studies have also pointed

out disparities in the treatment of housekeeping workers. For instance, Andrade et al., (2020) “Globally, hotel housekeepers demonstrate significantly lower levels of satisfaction than other hospitality workers in terms of work-life balance, relationships with management, pay, perceptions of work being useful to society and interesting work”. These issues can contribute to economic vulnerability and limit opportunities for career advancement within the organized sector.

“Long time working hours and on the contrary low compensation instigate employee to leave the organization and that also leads to make a high attrition rate, so to control the attrition rate, it is essential to maintain a balance between hours of work and wages they get”- Prof. Dr. Subhashish Chatterjee et al., (2018). This situation significantly affects the economic well-being of housekeeping workers, limiting their capacity to earn a sustainable livelihood. When a substantial portion of their time is dedicated to working for inadequate compensation, it restricts their access to essential resources, such as healthcare, education, and housing, which are vital for their overall well-being and prospects for upward social mobility.

Reports from workers in particular organizations indicate that their employment is often on an outsourced basis, characterized by very low salaries and the risk of termination without notice. They also report experiencing limited control over work schedules, with a requirement to work whenever and wherever needed. In some instances, female employees are assigned particularly straining tasks, such as lifting and moving furniture. Earnings are often barely sufficient to cover basic living expenses, including transportation and food, leaving minimal resources for family support. Elderly individuals shared that they have taken up this job to stay engaged and to support their basic needs. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and realities faced by housekeeping staff in Coimbatore’s organized private sectors. By analyzing their socio-economic conditions, employment terms, and workplace experiences, the research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform policies and interventions aimed at improving their well-being and promoting more equitable working conditions.

Objective:

- To examine the socio-demographic profile of housekeeping workers in organized private sector in Coimbatore
- To analyse the economic conditions of the housekeeping workers
- To assess employment conditions and workplace experience of the housekeeping workers

II. Review of Literature

Melita Josipović et al., (2020) investigated how hotel employees in housekeeping and front office departments perceive stress, examining the influence of socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, education, and marital status, as well as departmental roles. Data was gathered from 167 employees using a questionnaire based on the Occupational Stress Indicator. The results showed no significant differences in stress perception across socio-demographic groups or departments. However, management roles were identified as the main source of stress. The study highlights the importance of stress-reduction strategies to enhance employee well-being and maintain high service quality in the hospitality industry. Xenia Chela-Alvarez et al., (2024) examined how socioeconomic factors affect the self-rated health (SRH) of hotel housekeepers in the Balearic Islands using a cross-sectional survey with structured interviews (N=1,043). Statistical methods, including chi-squared tests and generalized linear models, were used to analyze the data. The findings show that poorer SRH is linked to older age, financial difficulties, job stress, work-life imbalance, and chronic conditions like arthritis and depression. The study highlights the impact of financial and workplace conditions on health and suggests that improving job conditions and financial stability could enhance the worker’s well-being. Maureen Snow Andrade (2020) explored job satisfaction among hotel housekeepers in 29 countries, with a focus on work-life balance, pay, and workplace relationships. Utilizing data from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), the study employs statistical techniques such as mean comparisons and regression analysis. The findings reveal that housekeepers report lower job satisfaction compared to other hospitality workers, largely due to low wages, poor work-life balance, and limited career growth. Nevertheless, strong coworker relationships and a sense of meaningful work contribute to higher satisfaction levels. The study highlights the urgent need for improved working conditions and more effective management strategies to boost job satisfaction for housekeepers worldwide.

Subhashish Chatterjee et al., (2018) explored the key factors contributing to the high turnover of housekeeping staff in private hospitals. Using a structured questionnaire, data was collected from 45 respondents and analyzed through descriptive (mean, median, frequency distribution) and inferential (Spearman correlation) statistical methods. The findings highlight that low remuneration is the primary cause of attrition, followed by unfavorable working conditions, limited career growth opportunities, job mismatches, and lack of managerial support. The study emphasizes the need for better wages, career advancement prospects, and an

improved work environment to retain housekeeping staff and ensure workforce stability in hospitals. Nahla Mohamed Nabil Attia et al., (2022) studied occupational health hazards among housekeeping workers at Zagazig University hospitals, looked at the health risks faced by hospital cleaning staff. Researchers used a survey to gather information from 68 workers about their job conditions, health problems, and safety measures. The findings showed that the most common hazards were related to posture and movement (ergonomic hazards), followed by physical risks like heavy lifting. The least common were mechanical hazards, such as accidents with equipment. Many workers reported stress, mental health issues, and physical health problems. The study suggests better training, proper safety gear, and improved workplace policies to protect workers. Rasika Shahane et al., (2022) examined the impact of ergonomics on the wellbeing of housekeeping staff in Pune's five-star hotels. It utilizes structured questionnaires for primary data collection from housekeeping staff and management, supplemented by secondary data from research papers and literature reviews. The analysis employs descriptive statistical methods including percentage analysis and graphical representation, to evaluate ergonomic awareness, training, equipment usage, and workplace conditions. Results show that while 93% of staff are aware of ergonomics, only 86% of hotels provide adequate training, and 62% of employees suffer from musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) due to physically demanding tasks. Additionally, 78% of hotels consider ergonomics in equipment selection, but only 58% integrate it into furniture design, impacting employee health and efficiency. The study underscores the importance of comprehensive training, balanced workload distribution, and ergonomic enhancements to improve staff well-being.

Ghufran Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman Ahmad et al., (2018) assessed the work environment and health status of housekeeping staff in Baghdad's Medical City using a descriptive research design with a purposive sample of 101 workers. Data collection involved structured interviews and a validated survey tool, ensuring reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87). Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used, including mean, percentages, t-tests, and regression analysis. Findings indicate that the work environment is moderately risky (92.1%), and staff health status ranges from fair to good (42.6% each). The study highlights the impact of biological, chemical, and physical hazards on workers' health and recommends periodic medical checkups, workplace monitoring, and further research on larger samples to improve occupational health and safety. Swapnajeet Sahoo et al., (2020) examined the mental health challenges faced by hospital housekeeping and sanitary workers during COVID-19. Using a cross-sectional, interview-based approach, it assesses anxiety and depression through the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), with data analyzed using SPSS software. Findings indicate that 25% of participants experienced psychological distress, with 11% reporting mild anxiety and 21% experiencing mild depression. Key concerns include PPE-related difficulties, infection fears, workload stress, and family anxieties, highlighting the urgent need for mental health support, targeted training, and administrative measures to safeguard their well-being. MS. J. ManoRanjini (2014) evaluated the knowledge of biomedical waste disposal among Group D health workers at Sri Ramakrishna Hospital, Coimbatore. Using descriptive research design, data was collected from 23 participants through semi-structured interviews and self-administered questionnaires. Descriptive statistical analysis showed that 78% of participants had good knowledge, while 22% had average knowledge. The findings highlight the need for continuous education to further improve waste management practices and strengthen infection control measures.

The reviewed studies highlight the numerous challenges faced by housekeeping staff in hospitality and healthcare settings, with stress, job satisfaction, turnover, occupational hazards, and mental health emerging as key concerns. Josipović et al. (2020) and Chela-Alvarez et al. (2024) identify job-related stress as a major issue, particularly for hotel housekeepers, while Sahoo et al. (2020) points to anxiety and depression, worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Job dissatisfaction and high attrition rates, driven by low wages, poor work-life balance, and limited career growth, are emphasized by Andrade (2020) and Chatterjee et al. (2018), particularly in hospital settings. Occupational hazards, including ergonomic, biological, and chemical risks, are highlighted by Attia et al. (2022) and Rahman Ahmad et al. (2018), with Shahane et al. (2022) stressing the role of ergonomic training and proper equipment use in reducing musculoskeletal disorders, though implementation gaps persist. MS.J. Manoranjani (2014) examines biomedical waste disposal, noting that while many workers have adequate knowledge, continuous education is necessary for effective infection control. Across these studies, poor working conditions, financial instability, and limited managerial support emerge as common stressors, underscoring the need for improved wages, career advancement opportunities, workplace policies, and mental health interventions to enhance employee well-being.

Research gap:

There is a noticeable lack of focused research on the socio-economic conditions of housekeeping staff working in the organized sector in Coimbatore. Most existing studies tend to concentrate on domestic workers in the unorganized sector or cover broader employee categories, leaving this specific group underrepresented. This highlights the need for research that looks closely at the unique challenges and opportunities faced by

housekeeping staff in structured workplaces such as hotels, hospitals, and corporate offices. Exploring areas like salary patterns, job security, working conditions, and access to benefits can offer meaningful insights. Such studies could help shape better policies and practices that support the well-being of housekeeping staff in the organized sector.

III. Methodology

Definitions:

The study is majorly focusing on the type of employment of the housekeeping workers say, Permanent, Temporary and Outsourced.

a. Permanent Employees

Permanent employees are individuals who have been confirmed in their positions after a period of experience, usually after a probationary period. They are entitled to a fixed salary, along with a comprehensive set of benefits as determined by the organization's policies. Their employment offers stability, and it is not subject to a specific time-bound contract.

b. Temporary Employees

Temporary employees are hired for a limited duration to fill needs within the organization. They do not have the same primary benefits as permanent workers and there is no guarantee of a long-term position. However, based on the organization's rules and performance assessments of the employee, they may be considered for a permanent role after a certain period of time.

c. Outsourced Employees

Outsourced employees are individuals hired through third-party agencies for a specific period to perform a particular set of duties. Their salary, benefits, and working conditions are subject to the terms of the agreement with the agency, not directly by the hiring organization. They are distinct from both permanent and temporary employees due to the intermediary nature of their employment arrangement. Many organisations are following contract basis employment for housekeeping services.

Methods of data collection:

The study is based on a field survey in Coimbatore city, Tamil Nadu, India. Total 100 sample housekeeping workers from different organized firms were selected based on simple random sampling method. The primary data from the sample workers was collected by using a well-structured schedule.

Statistical tools: Descriptive statistics, cross tabulation, figures and percentage analysis have adopted for the data analysis.

Variables: Gender, Social group, Age, Marital status, Education, Experience, Employment type, Type of organization, Monthly Income, Monthly Consumption expenditure, Benefits, Workplace experience

IV. Results Discussion

The demographic data in Table 1 indicates that most sample respondents are female at 74%, while males account for 26%. A significant number of participants belong to the SC group (49%), followed by BC (38%) and the General category (13%). The 36-45 age group has the highest representation at 47%. In terms of marital status, most respondents are married (72%). About 65% of respondents have 0-3 dependents indicating smaller households are common in the sample and only 5% have larger family size. While looking at Education level most respondents have either no formal education (34%) or have studied up to the primary level (31%).

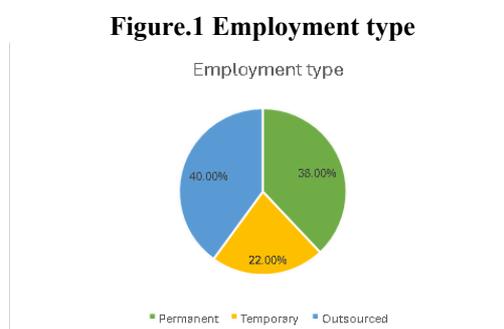
Table.1 Demographic profile

Demographic Background	Description	Percentage
GENDER	Male	26
	Female	74
SOCIAL GROUP	SC	49
	BC	38
	GENERAL	13
AGE	18-25	10
	26-35	26
	36-45	47
	46 and above	17
MARITAL STATUS	Married	72
	Unmarried	11

	Divorced/Separated	2
	Widowed	15
NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS	0-3	65
	4-5	30
	5 and above	5
EDUCATION	No formal education	34
	Primary level	31
	Secondary level	14
	Higher secondary level	13
	Diploma	5
	Graduate	3

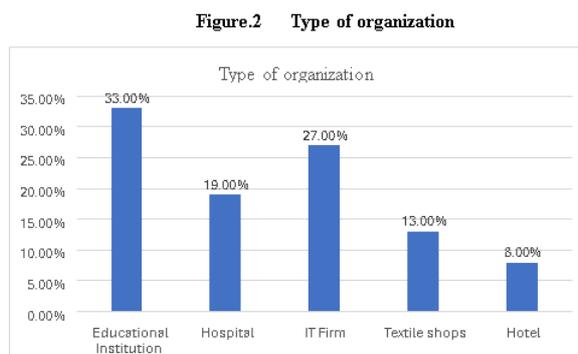
Source: Field Survey

The figure 1 indicates that most respondents are outsourced positions (40%), followed closely by those in permanent roles (38%). Temporary employment accounts for the remaining 22% of the workforce.



Source: Field survey

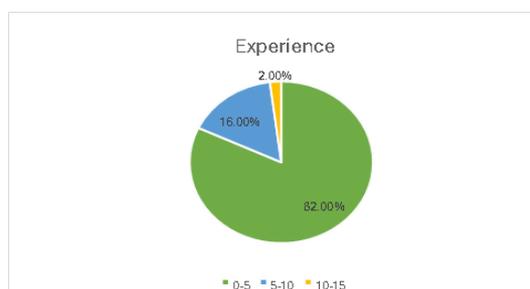
The figure 2 shows that housekeeping staffs are mostly employed in educational institutions (33%), followed by IT Firm (27%) and hospitals (19%), with smaller proportions working in textile shops (13%) and hotels (8%).



Source: Field survey

The figure 3 shows that the average experience level falls in the 0-5year group, accounting for 82% of respondents, followed by the 5-10year group at 16%, and the 10-15year group at just 2%

Figure.3 Years of Experience



Source: Field survey

The table 2 shows the distribution of employment types across different organizations. Among permanent workers, the majority workers are employed in IT offices (29%) and textile shops (26%). Temporary workers are mainly found in educational institutions (36%) and IT offices (32%). For outsourced employees, the highest concentration is in educational institutions (45%), followed by hospitals (22%) and IT offices (23%).

Table.2 Type of Organization with Employment type (%)

Employment type	Type of Organization					Total
	Educational institution	Hospital	IT office	Textile shops	Hotel	
Permanent	18	16	29	26	11	100
Temporary	36	18	32	14	0	100
Outsourced	45	22	23	0	10	100

Source: Field survey

The data in the table 3 shows that the overall average salary across all employment types and organizations are ₹13,588, the highest average salary in educational institutions is for temporary employees (₹14,903), while in hospitals it is for permanent staff (₹16,000). Outsourced workers earn the most in IT firms (₹18,289), whereas in textile shops and hotels, permanent employees receive the highest pay at ₹18,700 and ₹13,500 respectively. The overall average salary across all employment types and organizations is ₹13,588.

Table 3: Monthly Salary with Employment type (Average)

Employment type	Type of Organization					Total
	Educational institution	Hospital	IT Firm	Textile shops	Hotel	
Permanent	10643	16000	12873	18700	13500	14555
Temporary	14903	14375	14429	12333	NA	14306
Outsourced	8556	14044	18289	NA	11500	12275
All employees	10537	14732	15082	17231	12500	13588

Source: Field survey

The data in the table 4 explains that a significant income disparity exists across different categories. Male workers have a higher average income of ₹16,038, while females earn an average of ₹12,727. Among social groups, the BC category has the highest average income at ₹14,371, compared to the SC category, which has the lowest average income of ₹12,888. A key finding among educational levels is that individuals with no formal education have the highest average income of ₹14,512, whereas diploma holders have the lowest average income at ₹10,000.

Table 4: Average Monthly Income

Category	Average Income
Gender	
Male	16038
Female	12727
Social group	
SC	12888
BC	14371
General	13940
Educational level	
No formal education	14512
Primary level	13526

Higher secondary level	13190
Diploma	10000
Graduate	13333

Source: Field survey

The data in the table 5 shows that the overall average net income across all Employment types are ₹11,310, and Outsourced employees have the highest average family income(₹33,700) and net income (₹14,187), despite moderate consumption. Permanent employees have a slightly lower family income (₹30,118) and net income (₹9,066), while temporary employees have the lowest family income (₹29,568) with a slightly higher net income (₹9,955).

Table 5: Family income, Consumption expenditure and Net Income with Employment type (Average)

Employment type	Family Income	Consumption Expenditure	Net Income
Permanent	30118	21052	9066
Temporary	29568	19613	9955
Outsourced	33700	19513	14187
All employees	31430	20120	11310

Source: Field survey

The table 6 indicates a considerable difference in the income distribution between males and females. While a comparable percentage of both genders are positioned within the ₹10,000 to ₹20,000 income range, a substantially higher proportion of males (31%) are found in the highest income category, earning more than ₹20,000, compared to only 7% of females. Conversely, a significant portion of females (32%) are represented in the lowest income range of ₹0 to ₹10,000, a category in which no males are present.

Table 6: Gender with Monthly Salary (%)

Monthly Income	Gender	
	Male	Female
0-10000	0	32
10000-20000	69	61
More than 20000	31	7
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey

The table 7 illustrates that there is a notable disparity in high-income earnings across different social groups. While the majority of individuals in all three groups earn a middle-range income of ₹10,000-₹20,000, the BC and General groups have a significantly higher percentage of high earners (19% and 15% respectively) compared to the SC group (8%).

Table 7: Social Group with Monthly Salary (%)

Monthly Income	Social Group		
	SC	BC	General
0-10000	23	26	23
10000-20000	69	55	62
More than 20000	8	19	15
Total	100	100	100

Source: Field survey

The table 8 indicates that the connection between education and income is not straightforward. Graduates have the highest percentage of high earners, with 33% earning over ₹20,000. It is also a notable finding that individuals with no formal education are more likely to be high earners than those with a primary or higher secondary education.

Table 8: Educational level with Monthly Salary (%)

Monthly Income	Education level				
	No formal education	Primary level	Higher Secondary level	Diploma	Graduate
0-10000	15	16	33	80	33
10000-20000	65	74	59	20	34
More than 20000	20	10	8	0	33
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Field survey

The table 9 shows that among all employees, 96% are in debt but only 72% receive benefits and permanent employees have the lowest percentage of debts at 55% and the highest rate of receiving benefits at 100%. Temporary employees have higher debt levels at 77%, with 91% receiving benefits. Outsourced employees show the highest debt burden of 85%, while 95% receive benefits. Despite permanent employees being least in debt, they receive the most support.

Table 9: Debts and receiving any benefits with Employment type (%)

Employment type	Debts	Receiving any benefits
Permanent	55	100
Temporary	77	91
Outsourced	85	95
All employees	96	72

Source: Field survey

The table 10 shows that there is a notable disparity in benefits based on the type of employment. All permanent employees receive a Provident Fund and Employee State Insurance, and a large number are also provided paid leave. Unlike temporary and Outsourced workers, who are far less likely to get fundamental benefits. In addition, a high percentage of temporary employees (40%) get no benefits at all, whereas Outsourced workers are more likely to receive transportation allowances.

Table 10 Types of benefits with Employment type (%)

	Provident fund	Employee State Insurance	Paid leave	Medical Insurance	Maternity Benefits	Transportation allowance	Accommodation	No benefits
Permanent	100	97	47	42	3	26	29	0
Outsourced	12	15	2	15	5	73	13	8
Temporary	0	0	0	23	14	18	5	40
All Employees	43	43	19	27	6	43	17	12

Source: Field survey

The table 11 shows that among all employees, 94% feel respected, and 56% express a desire to continue in their job and permanent employees report the highest level of respect from colleagues and supervisors at 100% and 76% express a desire to continue in their job. Temporary employees have 95% feeling respected, but only 55% wish to stay in their current job. Outsourced employees have the lowest desire to continue in their job, with just 37%, although 87% feel respected.

Table 11 Respect from workplace and Desire to continue in job with Employment type (%)

Employment type	Respect from colleagues and supervisors	Desire to continue in job
Permanent	100	76
Temporary	95	55
Outsourced	87	37
All employees	94	56

Source: Field survey

The table 12 in the table shows that among all employees, the highest rating is 53% for good, stating a positive working environment. Notably, there is no negative environment, as no one reported the environment as bad or very bad. Permanent employees rate the working environment as the highest with 50% saying it is very good. Temporary employees rate it the highest with 64% saying it is good. Outsourced employees have the highest rating of 55% for good.

Table.12: Working environment with Employment type (%)

Employment type	Working environment-Cleanliness, Safety and comfort				
	Very good	Good	Neutral	Bad	Very Bad
Permanent	50	45	5	0	0
Temporary	36	64	0	0	0
Outsourced	10	55	35	0	0
All employees	31	53	16	0	0

Source: Field survey

V. Summary and Conclusion

Housekeeping workers in private organisations in India faces many challenges in their employment, income and social security. This study examines the socio-economic conditions of housekeeping workers in organized private sectors in Coimbatore, India. This study is based on primary data collected from a field survey on 100 sample workers, selected by using simple random sampling method. Descriptive statistics and tabulation methods are used to analyse the data. The analysis is made across three categories of works such as permanent, temporary and outsourced. The results show there is a clear employment divide with outsourced workers making up the largest group (40%), followed by permanent (38%) and temporary (22%) employees. Permanent workers are primarily found in IT offices and textile shops, while outsourced workers are mainly in educational institutions and hospitals. The study highlights a divided employment structure among housekeeping workers, with clear differences in working conditions and financial well-being.

The average income is ₹13,588, with a net income of ₹11,310, though a significant gender gap exists where all low-income workers are female and most high-income earners are male. The data also reveals a weak link between education and salary, as many high earners have no formal education. Financially, outsourced and temporary workers face more debt and instability, while permanent staff are more financially secure with comprehensive benefits like a Provident Fund and ESI. This lack of job security and limited career advancement are key reasons why many outsourced and temporary workers do not want to stay in their jobs, even though the study found overall positive workplace conditions with no reports of unsafe environments.

While permanent staff usually have better job security and more access to benefits, a significant number still face financial difficulties. Temporary and outsourced workers, in particular, deal with greater financial instability, fewer benefits, and lower job retention, even though they often feel respected by their peers and supervisors. And among the respondents no one were aware of the welfare schemes for these workers provided by the government, only few female respondents were receiving benefits from the scheme of TN government which is for women welfare.

The findings also show uneven income distribution, with women and certain social groups more often found in the lower income brackets. Although most workplaces are rated positively in terms of environment, many workers still face tough realities like physically demanding tasks, repetitive routines, low pay, and limited control over their schedules. These challenges contribute to financial insecurity and limit chances for growth and progress.

Overall, the results point to the need for better support for housekeeping workers, especially those in less stable roles. Improving job security, offering fair pay, and increasing access to benefits are key steps toward ensuring fair treatment and a better quality of life for this essential workforce in Coimbatore's organized private sectors.

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