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**ACTION-RESEARCH IN ANALYSING WORKING CONDITIONS IN HOUSEHOLD  
LABOUR MARKET OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN MURCIA CITY**

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***Key words:***

Immigrant women, non profit entities, domestic work, working conditions.

***Abstract:***

The massive of immigrant women in recent decades, has resulted in social and labour insertion of these effectively enforced through the domestic sector, but in which conditions? The aim of this research is to show working conditions of this job (wages, working week, social insurance, tasks performed, etc.) through the information getting to several Spanish families who were seeking to immigrant household workers to work in their homes in Murcia City. Given the difficulty of obtaining data showing with any precision the object of the research, we resorted to the assistance of various non-profit entities to gather information necessary to conduct the study developed.

**1. Introduction: Domestic Work**

Domestic work, understood as a set of tasks aimed at maintaining and organizing home plus attention and care of people, has suffered significant discrimination in employment and social field. There are several characteristics applicable to this type of activity, but if we try to synthesize, it is possible to summarize it in two: this is a highly feminized activity and it is socially invisible. One of the main reasons for this phenomenon is that domestic work has been performed and continues to play in the private sector or, in other words, this job did not exceed the limits of home (Parella, 2003). Unlike others activities such as agriculture or crafts, in that time especially since the industrial revolution, were integrated into the production system and markets, domestic work was anchored to the household and reproductive work.

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Is true that working from home is discredited, but not less necessary. In fact, in recent decades and Spanish families demand different services in their homes, due to social change about in our society and to the limited Spanish Welfare State (García, Santos and Valencia, 2012) which cannot cope with the situation. We are referring to two relatively new phenomena for Spanish society: the progressive aging of population and the incorporation of women into labour market. If the obligations of the home were covered by women (without any help from the state nor from male counterpart), this new situation generates a new need and Spanish women are now less willing to give coverage. Immigrant women now help to cope with the “vacancy” generated in the Spanish homes (Benlloch and Pérez, 2010; Garcia, Santos and Valencia, 2012).

## 2. Migration in Region of Murcia

For Murcia Region, the massive of immigration, especially of women (Table 1), has caused social and labour insertion of these, effectively enforced through employment in the household work market, which result in a very high volume of household work performed by immigrant women. They have participated in the care of the needs generated in the tertiary sector especially in home services such as housework, child care, elderly, sick and disable (Colino, 2007).

**Table 1. Evolution of foreign registration certificate (1999-2009) by sex in the Region of Murcia**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Women	5.037	6.203	8.212	16.448	19.243	34.516	51.383	61.944	75.714	81.447	87.723
Men	10.976	16.291	19.036	36.356	38.791	58.292	84.704	98.435	112.871	116.178	122.191
Both	16.319	22.823	27.512	52.975	58.150	92.863	136.103	160.390	188.597	197.805	210.103

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Immigration, Ministry of Immigration and Emigration (Anuario estadístico de Inmigración, Secretaría de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración).

## 3. Conditions of Employment Applied

As any job, the working conditions of a person employed in home care are established by a legal framework that regulates them. Depending on the nature of employment generated, we apply a kind law or another. The peculiarity of this regimen -that is one way of fraud and precariousness of this job- is established because it varies depending on the legal status of the contractor and the hours worked. For example, if the worker is employed by a public legal person (Social Services belonging to local authorities) or private (home help company), the employment relationship would be governed by the Workers Statute (E.T)<sup>3</sup> and therefore the General Scheme of Social Security is applied, whereas if he is hired by a family (which corresponds to employer) the Labour Relationship Service of Special Character family Home<sup>4</sup> with its own Social Security Scheme would apply.<sup>5</sup> In most cases this latter legislation, is most

<sup>3</sup> Workers Statute translation into Spanish “Estatuto de los Trabajadores” (E.T) and this law in Spanish is: “Ley 8/1980 de 20 de marzo del Estatuto de los Trabajadores”. It is the general labour law in Spain.

<sup>4</sup> “Real Decreto (R.D 1424/1985), de 1 de Agosto, que regula la Relación Laboral de Carácter Especial del Servicio del Hogar Familiar”. This law was applied between 1985-2011, and was amended by “R.D 1620/2011 de 14 de Noviembre”.

<sup>5</sup> Law regulating Social Security Scheme (to household workers) in Spain: “Decreto 2346/1968 de 25 de septiembre que regula el Régimen de Seguridad Social Especifico de Empleados de Hogar”. This law is also specific to “special

frequently applied. As any working relationship, these two special laws regulate the components of labour conditions, such as: the employment contract, the tasks to be performed, the working hours, the weekly rest, the holidays and day off, the annual holidays, the wages, the social security obligations and the termination of the contract, dismissal or withdrawal.

#### **4. Non Profit Entities and Immigrant Women**

The routes of immigrant women working in the area of home care pass from personal contacts (though friends and family) to press advertisements or on the street. But after residing for a while in a given area, they make new contacts, among which their own employers and non-profit entities to form part of their social and labour insertion. It is difficult to know with any precision the characteristics of this type of job given the high degree of statistical invisibility of this activity. Hence, to carry out this research, we used information generated by various non-profit organizations in their mediation activity. These are entities that register a large number of immigrants (in legal and illegal situation in Spain) to brief them on their training programs; programs for the labour market through training and employment exchange in the area of home (household work) to put at their disposal.

Below is a list of some organizations working with immigrant people and offering a series of actions aimed at social inclusion and employment for them:

##### **a) Private Entities**

- **Red Cross (Cruz Roja):** Develops training programs and job opportunities for immigrants with residence permits and work. Its area of action is the Region of Murcia.
- **Caritas (Cáritas):** Conducts training courses (nursing, cooking, job search techniques) and provision of job opportunities for immigrants. Its area of action is the Region of Murcia.
- **Columbares:** Develops training courses (in labor and leisure) and job opportunities for immigrants. Its scope is the region of Murcia.
- **FADE Foundation (Fundación FADE):** Provides immigrants with a series of training courses, as well as an employment agency. Its area of action is the municipality of Murcia.
- **CEPAIM:** Training courses and job opportunities for immigrants with residence permits and work. Its area of action is the Region of Murcia.
- **Radio Eccla Foundation (Fundación Radio Eccla):** Delivery of training and job opportunities for immigrants with residence permits and work. The performance area is the municipality of Murcia.
- **Murcia Welcomes (Murcia Acoge):** Offers training (social skills, greater care, food handling) and job opportunities for immigrants. The performance area is the region of Murcia.

##### **b) Unions**

- **General Union of Workers (Unión General de Trabajadores UGT):** Guidance and Counselling of immigrants in obtaining and maintaining the residence and work permit. Job opportunities for immigrants. Its area of action is the Region of Murcia.
- **Workers' Commissions (Comisiones Obreras, CCOO):** Training actions aimed at the territorial, labor law and issues of immigrant women. Its area of action is the Region of Murcia.

##### **c) Religious Entities**

- **Congregation Sisters of Mary Immaculate (Congregación Hermanas de María Inmaculada):** helps immigrant women or not (also Spanish women), in training them in domestic work, diverting them to families wishing to hire them in their homes. Both the training

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jobs” like household work, and was amended by “Ley 27/2011 de 1 de Agosto sobre Actualización y Modernización del Sistema de Seguridad Social.

activities as the provision of job opportunities are open to women in legal or illegal situation. Its area of action is the municipality of Murcia.

Within these programs some are exclusively directed towards the social and professional integration of immigrant women through home help, which fosters continuous contact with Spanish families looking for immigrant women to cover their needs. Thanks to these entities we have been able to contact with a significant number of families wishing to employ immigrant women. Using information provided by these entities has been possible to draw out a description of the working conditions of immigrant women and the characteristics of the labour market within Murcia City. Obviously the results are partial (we cannot survey all the immigrant women working in household labour market) and we cannot establish a complete representative sample. However, despite these limitations, given the high number of respondents, the results provide very useful information to acknowledge the reality of these workers.

## **5. Working Conditions Analysis: Methodology**

Given the difficulty of obtaining data showing with any precision the object of our study, we resorted to the assistance of various non-profit entities to gather information necessary to conduct the research. Thanks to these entities we were able to contact 154 families, 108 of which have agreed to be surveyed. The survey records the profile of the supply such as the work week, hours, wages, tasks and Social Security pay. Note that all the data collected is of 2010 and belong to Murcia City. Using the data obtained, we developed a database, which allowed us to analyse these services partially.

### **5.1 Working Conditions Analysis: Profiles of employment in household work offered by families**

In this section we describe the characteristics of different jobs in the field of household work, depending on the type of position offered: **Internal** (if the employee resides in the home where she works), **External** (the worker does not sleep in the home where she works) and **Hourly or Per Hour** (to work four hours maximum per day).

Table 2 provides information on the type of rank offered, which corresponds to 47% internal, followed by 31% external position and finally the 20% per hours. As for the work week, we see that 41% of household requires a person from Monday to Friday, 49% from Friday to Saturday, 6% from Monday to Sunday and 4% individual days. In the case of internal work, 77% are looking for someone Monday to Saturday, 8% from Monday to Friday and 10% Monday to Sunday.

**Table 2. Offers Features: Total and type of job. Working conditions (%)**

	TOTAL	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL	HOURLY
<b>Type of Job</b>		47	31	20
<b>Working Week</b>				
Monday to Friday	41	8	68	76
Monday to Saturday	49	77	32	5
Monday to Sunday	6	10	0	5
Single days	4	2	0	10
<b>Type of Contract</b>				
Temporary	11	12	9	10
Temporary/Summer	6	12	0	5
Indefinite	82	77	85	75
<b>Social Security</b>				
Without Social Security	32	21	9	95
With Social Security	67	79	88	5
<b>Average hours worked per week</b>	44	57	42	17
<b>Average Salary: Euros</b>	601	706	617	330

For the external position it is observed that 68% of the offers are work from Monday to Friday and 32% from Monday to Saturday. As for the offers to work per hours, we see that 76% of the offers are work from Monday to Friday, 5% from Monday to Sunday and 10% for single days work. If we analyze the overall distribution of types of contracts we see that families are looking for job stable, since 82% want a person to work indefinitely, while 11% on a temporary basis. If we disaggregate the information by the type of job (internal, external and hourly), we note that it generally agrees with the results of all tenders.

The estimated average salary is EUR 601 (3.77 Euros/Hour) per month, with an average of 44 working hours per week. These entities determine this through negotiation in order to raise families on minimum wage to be paid. These organizations make it clear to the engaging party that you cannot deduct Social Security of the worker's minimum wage (633 Euros per month in 2010), as the trend of most families is paid below the minimum justified by the fact they do not have enough money.

The data telling us about Social Security are very interesting, simply because 32% of the families are not willing to pay it; this fact shows that 32% of the offers of the sample are left in the economy. The employers compromise to the employees to pay their Social Security, but in reality those employers do not pay, therefore the employees are the one paying the full amount of their Social Security (EUR 167 per month in the year 2010). In the long run, they decide not to pay it due to the high amount, causing their job to remain in the underground economy. Since the entities responsible for carrying out mediation, insist that families must pay Social Security, the extra pay and vacation in these cases that are covered by the legislation. This point is very important because without improved working conditions, the need for these families to look for cover in their house, will not be covered in a stable manner, because these women, while working improperly, end up looking for another job with better conditions.

The results discussed above refer to the characteristics of all jobs, but the data do not reflect the same depending on the type of job. For example, there are also differences in the number of weekly working hours, because to become an intern nearly 60 hours a week (57 hours), while the legal maximum is 40 hours per week. The minimum weekly rest condition is often difficult to accept and respect by the families, who in many cases are looking for someone to work continuously seven days a week. The average salary offered is of EUR 706 (2.54 Euros/Hour) per month, which is disproportionate in terms of the number of hours worked by the woman. On this point, the various responsible of the job boards (in non-profit entities) agree that in many cases families of poor working conditions do not have enough income to meet all expenditures.

On Social Security we see that 21% of households do not pay Social Security, including failure to pay the extra pay and vacation. This it's the reason why the majority of immigrant women with residence and work permit are not willing to work internally, but those who do not own and have just arrived in Spain are more willing to do so, even though they would rather work externally. Nevertheless they accept their situation as such.

When we speak of "the situation" we are referring to women newly arrived in Spain and in this study, more specifically in Murcia, and seeking to work in the domestic and internally because they manage a property which does not lead to any expense. This way, they can send the money to their country, while they remain in Spain with the minimum necessary. Once they have saved enough money to rent a room and get a residence permit and work, they seek to work outside the family and to enlist in Social Security. As for the families, they initially want to hire a person with residence and work permit to work in domestic, but when it is impossible to find someone, they risk hiring someone in illegal situation, which logically cannot be registered in the Social System.

If we focus on the external set type, we see that the number of hours they work each week, it corresponds to 42, with an average salary of EUR 617 (3.79 Euros/Hour) per month. In the figure of foreign worker, we observed that 9% of the families are not willing to pay Social Security, while 88% do, but sometimes have to be the worker herself who is just met. In terms of working per hours, the average weekly working hours is 17 hours and the average wage EUR 330 (5.80 Euros/Hour) per month. Note that a work per hours does not necessarily means that you sign up for Social Security to the worker (as stated in the legislation referred to the Special Employment Relationship for Domestic Employees R.D 1424/1985, described above), which is why 95% of the families who offered this job do not pay.

To finish the job description, Table 3 shows information about the main tasks requested by the employee. The data reveal that 87% of the families require cleaning job, 79% ironing and 76% work in the kitchen. As for the attention of people, 54% for child care and 40% for elderly care.

**Table 3. Offers Features: Total and type of job. Tasks requested (%)**

	TOTAL	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL	HOURLY
<b>Type of Tasks Requested</b>				
1. Cleaning	87	90	88	76
2. Ironing	79	85	76	67
3. Cooking	76	85	79	48
4. Child care	51	40	74	43
5. Elderly care	40	60	24	19

## 6. Conclusions

Domestic work is presented as one of the most important ways to achieve social and professional integration of immigrant women. Among the various resources that these women possess to achieve their integration, there is the support given by various non-profit organizations which through training and employment exchanges available to immigrants (in this case for immigrant women) achieve greater inclusion of them in the Spanish society.

We know that household work is an activity that it is most often covered by immigrant women, but under what conditions? To improve the working conditions of those employed in the household work is a very complex task, given the necessary interaction of the actors in this area (local government, unions, businesses and non-profit entities). It is true that in the early 90's, this activity was presented as an area of high potential for job creation, but in practice it has become a precarious area where immigrant women are the main path of integration, and for families a quick way to meet their needs (at least temporarily) and for administration in a job that exists, but remains in the shadow economy.

Today these women have been found in non-profit entities a channel (at least "informal") which allows them to represent their professional reality, hence that we consider that these intermediary organizations can not only play a role with local families, but also with the other entities (local government, business home help, Social Security Treasury, etc..) to improve working conditions effectively. These entities have the information and trading tools to influence change, inspiring the administrative authority for the legal management of the labor market, leaving the informal situation in which these entities are to act as mediators in a job remaining in the economy.

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