



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMESTIC WORKERS: A CASE OF AKHERI WARD –TANZANIA

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Abstract: A study on examination of the socio-economic characteristics of domestic workers was carried out at Akheri Ward in Arusha-Region. A cross sectional research design was employed to carry out the study. Both probability and non-probability techniques were used to select a sample of fifty six (56) respondents of which 40 were domestic workers, 13 were employers and the rest were key informants. The sample size was established using Cohort approach. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using in-depth interview with key informants and structured questionnaire respectively. Statistical Package for Social Science computer software was used to produce descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages. The study found that majority (87.5%) of domestic workers was female. Either 95% of domestic workers had primary or no formal education falling under the age between 14 – 24 years. The study also revealed that majority of domestic workers (92.5%) is under paid as compared to International and National standards. The study concludes that domestic workers are characterized by low wages, below the age of majority and with little or no formal education. The study recommends that the Ministry responsible for work, youth, and employment and disabled should put more emphasis on the implementation of existing laws and guidelines to improve the welfare of domestic workers. The study further, recommends that awareness creation on the existence of laws and guidelines associated to domestic workers should be done to domestic workers, respective employers and community at large.

Key word: *Domestic worker, Socio-economic characteristics, decent work*

1.0 Introduction

According to the International Labor Organization’s Domestic Workers Convention (ILODWC) No. 189, domestic work is understood as “work performed in or for a household or households”. Clause 1.b states that domestic worker is “any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship” (ILO, 2011). The ILO categorizes domestic workers into various groups, including: full-time or part-time; employed by a single household or by multiple households; residing in the household of the employer (live-in worker) or living separately (live out); and transnational domestic worker or in-country domestic work.

Worldwide there are at least 53 million domestic workers, 83% of whom are women (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2013). Tens of millions of women and girls are employed as domestic workers in private households (Negusei, 2013). While such female domestic employees play a crucial role, “they are among the most exploited and abused workers in the world” (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Experts in transnational labour relations have noted that due to the high unemployment in developed countries, “over 60 million women



predominantly from poor countries constitute a mobile labour force especially in the Middle East, Europe, Canada and the United states” (Hawkesworth, 2006).

Africa is the third largest employer of domestic workers, after Asia and Latin America which has an estimated 5.2 million domestic workers with a 70% female composition; however, in a region where “almost everyone has a domestic worker” (ILO, 2013), that estimate is probably low. In sub-Saharan Africa, 65 million children are involved in child labor and among the domestic workers; nine out of ten are girls. In Uganda, about six million people are employed as domestic workers (Platform for Labor Action, 2008). This paper emphasizes that with the intersection of age and gender for house girls comes increased susceptibility to subordination, exploitation, and oppression, rendering them more liable to verbal and physical abuse, but also to emotional, sexual, and economic manipulation. Uganda has the world’s youngest population with over 78% less than 30 years old (Population Secretariat of Uganda, (2013). In Africa, youth account for 60% of the unemployed (Ighobor, 2013). Such unemployment has resulted in rural–urban migration (Mukwaya, Bamutaze, Mugarura, & Benson, 2012) and urban-centered domestic work.

South Africa is the country with the highest number of domestic workers in the region. In 2010, 1.1 million domestic workers were working for private households, with the majority concentrated in the provinces of Gauteng (which includes Johannesburg and Pretoria) and KwaZulu-Natal (with Durban). More than three-quarters of all domestic workers in South Africa are female, and the sector was the country’s third largest employer for women in 2010, employing approximately 15.5 per cent of all women workers. In Zimbabwe children are often sent to stay with better-off relatives, where they are expected to “earn” their maintenance (Bourdillon, 2006). As in other regions, child domestic workers below the age of 15 years are excluded from the estimates.

However, it is more common in other parts of the sub-region, such as in Mali (4.4 per cent) and Senegal (3.8 per cent). It is not entirely clear whether this reflects actual differences between countries, or whether the large gap is a statistical artifact resulting from different survey methodologies. In southern Africa, notably in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, domestic work is more common than in other parts of the continent (Dinkelman and Ranchhod, 2012).

In the United Republic of Tanzania, urban middle class women have drawn on *Undugu* (a Swahili term representing an ideology of kinship, bonds of friendship, ethnicity and tribal bonds) as a cultural means of obtaining the labour of “house girls” from poorer relations (Kiaga, 2012).

The Rapid Empirical Survey of Domestic Workers in the United Republic of Tanzania has revealed that there are 883,779 domestic workers in mainland Tanzania and 203,622 in Zanzibar, working within an employment relationship by declaring themselves as domestic workers. This represents 5% percent of the total working age population (15 – 64 years) in Tanzania (23.47



million as of 2012 census). However, if we consider the people performing domestic tasks, hidden in very informal arrangements, this number increases to 1,728,228 (7 percent of total working age population) reflecting the fact that a large number of people are involved in domestic work without necessarily being recognized as workers and therefore are not able to enjoy their labour rights. 75 percent of those who perform domestic tasks are women and 25 percent are men, (Kiaga, 2012).

In Tanzania there is no a specific provision which strictly applies to domestic workers alone, Domestic workers under Tanzania laws are considered together with other employees, so their rights are provided for under the Employment and Labour Relations Act, 2004 and Regulation of Wages and Terms of Employment Order, (Regulation of Wages and Terms of Employment Order, 2010).

The maximum ordinary working hours that an employee is allowed under the law to work per week working days is forty-five (45) hours meaning nine (9) hours a day. The nine hours are exclusive of the one-hour daily lunch break. The lunch break is to be provided after five hours continuous working time. Lunch break is unpaid time and is the employee's own time because they are not paid for lunch breaks. Any hour (s) in excess of the forty-five hours must be compensated as overtime hours. It is also prohibited for an employee to work more than twelve hours in a day, (The Employment and Labour Relations Act, 2004). The law prohibits employers to require or permit an employee to work overtime except in accordance with an agreement. However, even under an agreement employer and employee cannot negotiate for more than the average number of overtime hours provided for under the labour laws example 50 hours. The law puts a limitation on the number of overtime hours that an employee can work. Section 19 (3) (b) prohibits an employee to work more than 50 overtime hours in any four-week cycle.

Despite the existence of the laws and guidelines for protecting the welfare of the employees still domestic workers are under paid and exploited. According to Jerome (2018) the unique feature of the domestic workers place of work contributes to their vulnerability. This is because they work at their employer's home places which are difficult for the government to regulate. It is therefore important to explore the vulnerability of domestic workers by examining their socio-economic characteristics which not only exposes them to susceptible environment but also inability to benefit from the existing local and international conventions.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Study Area

The study was conducted at Akheri ward in Arumeru district in Arusha region, According to 2012 census, Akheri ward has a population of 13,699 people where 6610 (48.25%) are male and 7089 (51.68%) were female. A cross sectional research design was employed to assess the socio-economic characteristics of domestic workers. The study sample comprised of 56 respondents of which 40 were domestic workers, 13 were employers and the rest were key informants. The sample size was established using Cohort approach.



Both probability (random sampling) and non-probability (purposive) techniques were employed to get the sample. Simple random sampling was used to select domestic workers from the established list of domestic workers and employers whereas purposive sampling was used to select Ward Executive Officer (WEO), Social Welfare Officer and Gender Desk Officer. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaire. Qualitative data were generated through in-depth interview with key informants including; WEO, Social Welfare Officer and Gender Desk Officer. Statistical Package for Social Science computer programme software was employed to process quantitative data to produce descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data were subjected to content analysis to present peoples 'observation on socio-economic characteristics of domestic worker at Akheri ward.

3.0 Results and Discussions

3.1 Socio-economic characteristics of domestic workers

This section provides the findings on socio-economic characteristics of domestic workers. These characteristics include; age, sex, education and income profile.

3.2 Age of domestic workers

Age is an important aspect of work which enables researcher to understand which age group of the respondents are mostly engaging in the work, the study considered different intervals of age groups with an intention of getting different views concerning the study. Majority of domestic workers which is 82.5 percent fall under the age category of 14-24 years and 17.5 percent of the domestic workers fall under the age of at least 25 years as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Age profile of respondents in years (n=40)

Age	F	(%)
14– 24	33	82.5
25 – 35	5	12.5
36+	2	5
Total	40	100

Source: Research findings, (2019)

The findings reveal that the majority of domestic workers at Akheri ward fall at the age of 14 - 24 years. According to the United Republic of Tanzania structure of education, children of that age are supposed to be at school (secondary and tertiary education). This implies that most of the domestic workers lack opportunities for secondary and tertiary education which could give them skills that could guarantee decent employment. It further, implies poverty at individual, family and the National level. It should be noted that domestic workers do not contribute to the National



Income as far as their wages do not fall to any employment scheme of service and pay as you earn cannot apply into their wage payment system in most cases.

The findings in this study are in line with ILO (2011) which found that domestic workers were young girls mainly found working in the cities after being recruited from the rural areas either by their employers, friends or agents. The study also found that surveyed domestic workers mainly start work at a fairly low age of 7, although experience shows that they start work at a much younger age. According to ILO (2016) these children come from different backgrounds - polygamous family, poor families with both parents' alive, parentless families and divorced and separated families where children are raised by single parents, guardians and with minor help from neighbours. A study by Blagbrough, J (2008) revealed that more than 400 current or former child domestic workers who were consulted, most had begun to work by the age of 12, and many of these at a much earlier age in some countries.

3.3 Sex of domestic workers

The study intended to assess the sex of domestic workers so as to find out who engage mostly in domestic work. It was found that 35(87.5%) of domestic workers were female whereas only 5(12.5%) were male. This signifies that female are mostly considered as domestic workers which may be due stereotypes that exists among the communities. This means that most of female could not get opportunity to get employable skills as compared to their male counterparts who would be in school. This further will widen up the gap between male and female in terms of socio-economic development.

The study by Mahanta and Gupta (2019) revealed that the great majority of domestic workers are women and due to the peculiar nature of their work, domestic workers are vulnerable to sexual, physical and mental abuse. Also the Labour Force survey of Panama by ILO (2018) which provides data on domestic workers on a yearly basis indicates that domestic workers are predominantly female. However, the issue of sexual harassment at workplace for such women workers remains underreported. Women continue to endure harassment, and assault that they dare not publicly share for fear of losing their job, or experiencing other forms of retaliation.

3.4 Education of domestic workers

It was an intention of this study to reveal the educational status of domestic workers so as to examine their ability to analyse issues and make rational decisions. The level of education is also among the important factors which influence individuals' level of thinking and judgment. According to URT (2002) education is the only principal mechanism for developing human skills and knowledge. The findings revealed that 38 (95%) of the majority of the respondents had primary education or less and 2(5%) had secondary education as shown in Table 2:



Table 2: Education profile of domestic workers (N=40)

Education level	F	(%)
No formal education	28	70
Primary education	10	25
Secondary education	2	5
Total	40	100

Source: Research Finding, (2019)

This implies that most of domestic workers do not have knowledge and skills that could help them secure a reputable employment. It may also implies that most of households prefer employing domestic workers with less or no education so as to pay them less wages which is contrary to the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) which calls on Member States to ensure that the work performed by domestic workers under the age of 18 does not deprive them of compulsory education or interfere with opportunities to participate in further education or vocational training. This is also in line with National laws in both Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar. It may also be interpreted that becoming a domestic worker is related to having less or no formal education which could deprive their ability to know their rights and defend them. For example, it is likely that most of domestic workers are ignorant of the URT employment and Labour Relations Act of 2004, which stipulates a maximum of 45 hours per week, with a daily limit of 9 hours, and 28 days of paid leave per year, while many Tanzanians including domestic workers continue to work excessive hours (i.e. more than 48 hours per week). Child domestic workers are assigned heavy tasks for long hours, which result in chest/back pains and general tiredness. There are occasions where they are sexually abused by their male employers or other members of the family. Other health hazards include burns from fire, hot water or iron. They receive very low salaries and sometimes they are remunerated in kind (ILO, 2011)

Although, the Labour Relation Act of 2004 has insisted on the maximum working hours, effective implementation of the legal framework for maximum hours of work that has been set up could redress this situation, but it applies to only a small percentage of the population that is employed in the formal sector (ILO, 2010)

3.5 Income and payment of wages

In order to understand the wage rate as paid to domestic workers, the study categorized the wages into two major categories based on researcher(s) own experiences. The findings revealed that majority of domestic workers (92.5%) are paid between TZS 20,000/= and 50,000/= as shown in Table 3, which is below the minimum wage rates set by the Tanzanian Government as stipulated in Employment and Labour Relations Act, 2004 section 19.



Table 3: Income and payment of wages (n=40)

Wage paid per month	<i>F</i>	(%)
TZS 20,000 to 50,000	37	92.5
TZS 60,000 to 100,000	3	7.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: Research findings, (2019)

Based on the findings, it can be interpreted that community attitude towards the nature of obligations of the domestic workers and lack of awareness of the guidelines for minimum wage rates set by ILO, 2012 and Tanzanian government contributes to low wages for domestic workers. In view of domestic workers' characteristics such as long working hours, low wages, and little or no social protection it calls for awareness creation to domestic workers and their employers on the guidelines for minimum wage rate.

According to ILO (1970) convention addressing minimum wage levels and the protection of wages can play an important role in promoting decent work in the domestic work sector. Convention No. 189 and Recommendation No. 201 contain specific guidance on these issues, supplementing other relevant international labour standards on minimum wage setting and the protection of wages. However, ignorance on the existing laws and conventions contribute largely to low wage payment due to the fact that most of domestic workers work in informal sector. This is compounded by the fact that women workers in the unorganized sector are often illiterate, poor and ignorant of the law (Mahanta and Gupta, 2019)

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed at examining socio-economic characteristics of domestic workers. It concludes that majority of domestic workers are female who are characterized by low ages and little or no formal education. These characteristics have contributed to low wage payments among the domestic workers. The study recommends that the Ministry of Work, Youth, Employment and Disabled should put more emphasis on the implementation of existing laws and guidelines to improve the welfare of domestic workers. For example, the minimum employment age is 18 years old, but the study revealed that some of the domestic workers are employed under the age of 18 as recommended in various guidelines.

Regarding to wage payments, the study further recommends to the responsible Ministry that the standard set for minimum wage payment should be adhered purposely to promote the domestic workers' welfare. It is also a concern of this study that awareness creation on the existence of laws and guidelines associated to domestic workers should be done to domestic workers, respective employers and community at large.



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