

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE DOMESTIC WORKERS IN  
NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA**

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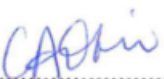
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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN WOMEN, LEADERSHIP &  
GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**JUNE 2023**

## DECLARATION

This Research Project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university.

Signature:  .....

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**DEDICATION**

*To the young girls and the women of Kenya*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I thank God Almighty for enabling the completion of this project. Additionally, I thank my supervisors Dr. Marygorety Akinyi and Prof. Tom Ondicho for their encouragement and diligent guidance throughout this research. I also offer special gratitude to the University of Nairobi, for providing an accommodating environment for study and carrying out this research. I appreciate the immense support of my mother, Mrs. Mary Osiro, for the push and encouragement which she gave in equal measure and which I so needed to get this research done. I also acknowledge the support of my friend and sister, Nicole, who accompanied me to the field and assisted in recording the data.

## ABSTRACT

Domestic work is an informal sector which employs thousands of female workers. Despite the ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention in 2011, female domestic workers face many challenges. The convention seeks to ensure that domestic workers access healthcare, are paid at least minimum wages, access paid leave and are eligible for social security benefits and they hardly receive the minimum wages stipulated in law or any social security and medical benefits. The general objective of this study was to explore the experiences of female domestic workers in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The Marxist Feminist Theory and the Caroline Moser Model underpinned the study. The study was conducted in Nairobi City County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was used in this study. The study population was female domestic workers under the 23 Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya. Systematic random sampling was applied in the study sample selection. A sample size of 10 female domestic workers selected randomly from 10 out of the 23 Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya was used. The study used in-depth interviews to collect data from female domestic workers. In-depth interview qualitative data was recorded, categorized, and subjected to theme analysis. From the study findings, the typical house chores were homogenous across various homes. The findings depict that most of the domestic workers received a monthly pay that was below the government's minimum wage and majority of the participants lived and worked in employers' residences. All the domestic workers revealed that they had acquired new skills in the course of their employment. These findings revealed that the female domestic workers did not have good sleep. The study findings indicated that the female domestic workers left their previous employers due to various issues, including: - violation of their rights, salary delays, accusations of interference with marital issues, health issues, low pay, reduced salaries, mistrust, and misunderstandings with their employers. This study recommends that domestic work rules of engagement be formalized. This could be achieved through the recruitment and training be carried out by registered agencies or firms. This study also recommends to advocacy groups to take up the issue of minimum wage payments paid to most of the female domestic workers in Nairobi. This study recommends that domestic workers, through informal employment agencies be taught on various skills that would be handy in performance of their duties. Finally, this study recommends that employers treat the domestic workers with respect, love and dignity.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS**

BBC	-	British Broadcasting Corporation
GoK	-	Government of Kenya
IDWN	-	International Domestic Workers' Network
ILO	-	International Labour Organization
KCSE	-	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KUDHEIHA	-	Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers
NHIF	-	National Hospital Insurance Fund
NSSF	-	National Social Security Fund
UNECA	-	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Domestic work is an informal sector job which employs thousands of female workers in Kenya. According to an interviewee in a documentary titled *“The Hidden Lives of “Housegirls”*, domestic workers work in a hidden industry, within people’s private households, working in slavery-like conditions (BBC Africa Eye Documentary, 2019). Female domestic workers are young women and sometimes older women who are employed in homes to take care of domestic chores. The arrangement is usually either they live with their employers, or they report early morning and leave in the evening. Ideally, it is crucial to provide adequate training to domestic workers, enabling them to effectively fulfill their responsibilities. This training would equip them with the necessary skills to carry out their duties proficiently. Additionally, it is essential to establish clear and transparent terms of engagement. Domestic workers should have a cordial relationship with their employers to promote the well-being and mutual benefit of both parties.

Domestic work is an old industry which is highly recognized and has its roots in colonialism and slave trade (West, 2021). During these times, people were taken in by the colonial masters and were expected to work for their masters carrying out domestic and farm work. International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 75% of domestic workers globally are women. The world has evolved to be a global village and hence opportunities arise for demand for domestic work. More women are joining the domestic work environment. This has been enhanced by the ballooning of the middle-class population who can afford the services of domestic workers (Makhitha, 2021). The middle-class population are getting into formal employment and therefore the need to have domestic help with their house chores. Unfortunately, domestic work is largely informal, and not all governments have regulations, policies and laws that govern domestic work. Domestic workers continue to be one of the least socially acknowledged and protected types of employees internationally, despite the critical role they play in taking care of households and contributing to the economy (Oxfam, 2013).

Domestic workers perform chores which include caring for babies and children, cleaning, gardening, washing, cooking, driving and security services. Domestic work is popular especially with women (Cheung & Kim, 2022). This is because domestic work does not require formal education and specialized skills. Many girls across the developing world are not getting a basic education and this has been attributed to poverty and cultural traditions which do not value girls' education. This is common in Africa and Asia (Herz & Sperling, 2004). When girls drop out of school, a move which reduces their chances of employment in the formal sectors of the economy, they are denied the opportunity to join the job market and they are therefore left with limited options such as becoming domestic workers. According to (Mori, 2021), unemployment results from a mismatch between educational attainment and skill demands. Although the youth have formal education, it is still true that many young people lack the specific knowledge and skills that employers are looking for. Due to the frequent failure of the school-to-work transition, many young Africans find themselves underemployed or without jobs (UNECA, 2017). There has been a lack of sufficient examination regarding the contributions of domestic workers to welfare and human rights.

Despite the existence of domestic work for many centuries, research has not adequately assessed the plight of female domestic workers. Civil society organizations have tried to campaign for the rights of domestic workers (Yin & Kofie, 2021) but despite their efforts, the desired results have not been realized. The female domestic workers, who are to a large extent from poor backgrounds and are mostly illiterate or semi-literate, have few options for recourse. They are therefore vulnerable to abuse and mistreatment from their employers. De Villiers & Taylor suggest that there should be adequate legislation, regulations and policies that guide and govern domestic work (de Villiers & Taylor, 2019).

According to reports from around the world, domestic workers who are women consistently confront difficulties. An International Labour Organization research underlines the difficulties domestic workers experience in finding employment (International Labour Organization, 2017). The report claims that appreciation for domestic employees is rare. Domestic workers work in an unregulated atmosphere that exposes them to abuse (IDWN, 2018). Despite there being laws in some countries, instances of sexual assault, violence, verbal abuse, human rights breaches, and mistreatment continue to be documented. Even though some may not be aware of the existing

rights and freedoms, domestic workers have rights (Blofield & Jokela, 2018). There has been extensive coverage of the condition of Saudi Arabia's female domestic workers (Reyes, 2017; Wickramarachchi, 2020; Sharp, 2021; Malkin et al, 2022). Injustice, violations of their fundamental human rights, domestic abuse, and forced isolation are all experienced by female domestic workers (Abder-Rahman et al. 2021).

In Nepal, (Singh & Khakurel, 2021) note that poverty at the family level of domestic workers is a major contributor to their violations. The capabilities of domestic workers are therefore hampered by the poverty levels at family level. Similarly, according to (Adisa et al. 2021), domestic labour is comparable to modern-day slavery in Nigeria. The experiences of female domestic employees are ruined by lengthy working hours, enormous workloads, and little pay because domestic workers do not have contracts with their employers. According to (Ahmad et al, 2019), domestic workers should have the right to fair labour practices if domestic work is legally regulated.

In India, (Ghosh & Godley, 2020) assert that female domestic workers and their employers have a professional relationship that is characterized by caste differentiation. As a result, some of the female workers have distant and abusive relationships, marred with exploitation in the work environment. A few of the relationships are characterized by care, support, understanding and consideration. The constant variable, however, in all these relationships, is exploitation.

In Spain, (Aceros et al, 2021) assert that female domestic workers face oppression and poor living conditions. The authors recommend activism as a remedy for these experiences. They opine that through activism, community engagement is enhanced, and this would lead to strengthened social ties, foster a sense of belonging for female domestic workers, promote psychological empowerment and provide opportunities for sharing experiences. However, activism demands time and effort, and these may not be readily available to most domestic workers.

In Singapore, (Loh & Estrellado, 2019) explain that the experiences of female domestic workers depend on their personal attributes and those of their employers, rather than the legal systems or social protection policies, if any. Bortel et al. (2019) asserts that domestic workers should have favourable working conditions. Despite the difficulties they encounter every day, female

domestic workers frequently devise resilience tactics that help them succeed in the workplace, according to (Bortel et al. 2019).

According to Kaiper (2018), domestic workers in South Africa make significant contributions to the country's economy. However, their valuable role often goes unrecognized and underappreciated in society. They are rarely trained for their work, and it is often assumed that they ought to know what to do and how to carry out their tasks. Their engagements with their employers are not backed by any contract or mutual agreement and is therefore largely informal. The work environment is often not conducive and there are cases of mistreatment and low wages. Similarly, in South Africa, there is no legal or regulatory framework that governs the work of domestic workers.

Cirillo (2021) notes that domestic workers are prone to abuse. Female domestic workers often express feelings of isolation and describe their lives as being dependent on the unpredictable demands and desires of their employers. It was reported that the workers are often mistreated by their employers, their wages are also low, and they do not have job security as their employers could sack them at any time (de Villiers & Taylor, 2019). All these occur because most domestic workers lack contractual agreements between the domestic workers and their employers. These workers should not live in confinement but should be offered opportunities to network as this would enhance relationship building and support for each other.

Owidhi (2017) notes that the ILO is very concerned about providing decent work for domestic workers. In Kenya, every worker is guaranteed the right to just labour practices, as well as the right to fair compensation, decent working conditions, the formation or membership in a trade union, and the right to picket. Like all other workers, domestic workers should receive a fair wage, have access to occupational health and safety measures, receive additional security, and enjoy higher living standards.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Female domestic workers still face significant difficulties even after the Domestic Workers Convention was ratified by Kenya in June 2011. The treaty aims to guarantee domestic employees' access to healthcare, payment of at least the minimum salary, availability of paid leave, and eligibility for social security benefits. In Kenya, domestic employees are rarely paid

the legally required minimum salary, and neither do they receive any social security or health benefits. Article 3 of the ILO Convention for Domestic Workers is broken down by these exclusions. Additionally, this violates the Sustainable Development Goal No. 8, which emphasizes that everyone has a right to equal remuneration for equal work performed without discrimination.

There has been an upsurge in demand for female domestic workers as more middle-class families enter the formal labour sector. When their employers are at work, the female domestic employees are employed to look after households and perform domestic chores. However, because this sort of arrangement is never formalized, it makes it more likely that female domestic workers' rights will be infringed. Female domestic workers typically have no recourse when their rights are infringed because their employment is informal.

In Kenya, female domestic workers constitute a huge group of workers in the informal sector, yet little is documented about their experiences. There is thus a need to explore the experiences in this category of informal workers in the country. Therefore, this study explored the experiences of female domestic workers in Nairobi City County. This would add to literature on rules of engagement of female domestic workers with their employers, characteristics of female domestic workers and working conditions of female domestic workers in Nairobi County.

### **1.3 General Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to explore the lived experiences of female domestic workers in Nairobi City County, Kenya

#### **1.3.1 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study were:

- i. To establish the characteristics of female domestic workers who are registered under Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya.
- ii. To examine the rules of engagement between female domestic workers who are registered under Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya and their employers.
- iii. To assess the working conditions of female domestic workers who are registered under Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya.



## **1.4 Research Questions**

- i. What are the characteristics of female domestic workers who are registered under Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya?
- ii. What are the rules of engagement between female domestic workers who are registered under Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya and their employers?
- iii. What are the working conditions of female domestic workers who are registered under Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya?

## **1.5 Justification of the Study**

Kenya's Vision 2030 outlines an ideal scenario where there is enhanced employment security, flexibility, and labour relations (Government of Kenya, 2007). This concurs with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Number 8, which advocates for decent work, economic growth, social protection, and employee rights at work. Through this study, important aspects of female domestic workers were established. These will aid in addressing pertinent issues – such as rules of engagement and working conditions - that may arise from the experiences of female domestic workers in Nairobi County.

This research will provide valuable insights for NGOs and advocacy groups focused on addressing the concerns of female domestic workers. These organizations, which advocate for gender equality, human rights, and the application of just laws, will benefit from more targeted advocacy efforts. The research will shed light on the experiences faced by female domestic workers. Recommendations will provide a solid basis for advocacy organizations to push for the implementation of policies and regulations aimed at safeguarding the rights of domestic workers. These organizations can utilize the study's findings to advocate for measures that promote the welfare and protection of domestic workers. Furthermore, this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and theory on the experiences of female domestic workers, bridging information gaps. It will also serve as a valuable reference for future studies exploring the experiences of female domestic workers.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya which offered a robust sample for the study's goals because it is a metropolis. The study targeted female domestic workers who were typically employed as female domestic workers and live within Nairobi County. The interviews with the female domestic workers mainly focused on the experiences of female domestic workers in Nairobi County.

## **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The study was not without limitations. Majority of the respondents were not keen on “sitting down” for a length of time for the interview as they considered this was time they could have spent doing something more productive such as taking care of their children or doing household chores. Some of them indicated that they engage in small businesses in the evenings to make extra income to substitute for their pay. This necessitated the interviewer to give a token for each of the respondents to enable them sit down for the interview. A gesture which was most appreciated by the respondents. Secondly, the interviews were carried out in the respondents' houses, and this meant that there was a lot of distractions as they kept on interrupting to take care of household duties, especially attending to their children and this meant that the interviews took longer than expected. To mitigate this, a few of the interviews, were carried out away from their houses. Finally, several the interviews had to be carried out late in the evenings as the respondents were at work and the researcher had to wait on them to return from work.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

Literature was reviewed in this chapter and divided into three sections: an empirical review, a theoretical foundation, and a list of knowledge gaps. The study focused on the conditions under which female domestic workers in Nairobi City County were employed, their characteristics and their rules of engagement.

#### 2.2 Empirical Review

##### 2.2.1 History of Domestic Work

According to Meerkerk et al. (2015), the necessity for care labour is universal because every person depends on the care of others at some point in their lives. The authors argue that because domestic work is a significant component of the global division of labour, it is vital around the world and ancient Mesopotamian sources still mention it today.

In the African culture, young girls were obligated to do the house chores within the home. In some instances, young girls visiting relatives were exploited by being expected to carry out the house chores with no pay. This practice is part of the reason why there was an influx of young girls dropping out of school to get employed as domestic workers in the urban areas. In her poem “*Freedom Song*” below, Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye (Kachele, 2022) paints the picture of how young girls were subjected to domestic work at an early age and the tribulations they went through.

*“Since she is my sister’s child  
Atieno needs no pay.  
While she works my wife can sit  
Sewing every sunny day:  
With her earnings I support  
Atieno yo.*

*Atieno’ sly and jealous,  
Bad example to the kids*

*Since she minds them, like a schoolgirl  
Wants their dresses, shoes and beads,  
Atieno ten years old,  
Atieno yo.*

*Visitors need much attention,  
All the more when I work night.  
That girl spends too long at market.  
Who will teach her what is right?  
Atieno rising fourteen,  
Atieno yo.”*

However, when the free primary education was introduced vide The Basic Education Act of 2013, and the directive by the Kenyan government to keep all children in school, girls working in domestic work have reduced. There are gender disparities in the world's labour markets (Castellano & Rocca, 2020). According to (Uzodike, 2019), women in Africa have lower levels of education, income, power, and representation in most economic and political arenas. The poor women who are already on the periphery of the economy suffer the most when programmes for economic recovery are implemented. This is because although being aware of the economic situation, they are rarely involved in decision making. Employers treat female domestic employees with scorn and disregard since they are less educated, come from lower-income households, and have no leverage in negotiations (Cabral et al, 2021). This trend is not new to society, where a person's economic status heavily influences how they are treated. As a result, female domestic employees are subject to unfair labour practises. This is because they do not have legal labour contracts with their employers, and instead, their connection is just based on two parties' mutual understanding.

Although gender has been a topic of discussion among economists since the early 1900s, gender was not considered the economists' analysis. The female gender was treated only based on male to female dynamics instead of what the women could achieve on the roles given to them (ILO, 2007). There is a wage difference between the genders as men are generally paid more as compared to women, in the same job group.

The majority of female domestic employees are employed by single households either on part-time or full-time basis. While some employees simply provide a single task or service to their employers, others offer a variety. The employee is frequently not covered by any regulations because the job relationship is often informal (Garca & González, 2018). This puts the domestic help at risk of abuse. Every time a disagreement arises, employers may turn to crude methods of penalising the domestic staff. Domestic employment and other informal jobs are primarily distinguished by the close relationship that exists between the employer and employee in the former. Class differences exist between domestic employees and their employers. Due to their economic clout, the bosses belong to a higher social class and have control over the employees' daily lives.

Numerous documented testimonies demonstrate that domestic workers' pay ranks low in the job market. They are typically employed informally in Kenya and this highlights their vulnerability (Owidhi, 2017). Additionally, the bulk of domestic employees still endure terrible working circumstances. Compared to emerging and developed countries, this position is troubling and a concern. Domestic employees experience the most workplace discrimination because they are regarded as being beneath society and have even the lowest earnings. This hinders them from interacting and bargaining with their employers, and makes it extremely difficult for them to obtain other employment (Owidhi, 2017).

Domestic workers in Mukuru's informal settlement claimed that it is difficult for them to resolve conflicts, breaches, and abuses that occur at work, according to a baseline report by Oxfam (2013). The domestic workers reported that the employers frequently intimidate workers who file grievances or make claims against them by making use of their social and economic power. The action of the workers to report intimidation was not helpful as the authorities demanded bribes in order to prosecute the perpetrators. The workers were not able to afford or pay for the bribes, hence their cases were not resolved. Employers frequently corrupted officials, including local officials, chiefs, and the police.

### **2.2.2 Domestic Work and Modes of Contract**

Domestic work can be considered a profession without borders. Many individuals employed in domestic work report that they often receive unexpected additional tasks and are frequently asked to work longer shifts than originally anticipated. Due to their reliance on the daily needs of

their employers, domestic workers often lack formal employment contracts and experience irregular working hours. These circumstances can be categorized as workplace misconduct. Furthermore, it is concerning that only a small number of employers disclose the wages of domestic workers to the appropriate authorities, which results in the denial of their employees' social security benefits. This practice has long-term consequences for domestic workers. This failure means that employees do not accumulate the requisite credits or a recorded work history to be eligible for social security benefits in retirement (Palmer & Tan, 2022).

The Employment Act of Kenya No. 11 of 2007 guarantees the basics of employment contracts and expectations as listed below: -

Section 35 outlines how and when an employee's services can be terminated and the length of notice period. The notice period is dependent on the frequency of the payment of wages/salaries. So that an employee who is paid their salary monthly should be given a month's notice before termination of their employment. Section 28 lists that every employee is entitled to at least twenty-one leave days per year with full pay. Section 29 entitles every female worker to three months paid maternity leave.

Workplace relationships, according to Chung and Cheung (2017), are a crucial component of employer-employee engagement. The results of the study, which involved interviewing and surveying 318 people, revealed that social workplace ties are more successful at boosting engagement among foreign workers than among domestic ones. These results concur with those of Jain and Mishra (2018), whose research found that the rules of engagement for domestic employees are influenced by their work. The type of domestic worker demand in metropolitan regions was described by the writers who noted that for a certain class of people, hiring domestic help has become customary. The demand for domestic workers is influenced by various household factors, such as the employment status of women within the household and the stage of the household's life cycle. These additional household dynamics contribute to the necessity of hiring domestic workers.

The average wage for domestic workers was determined to be low in an Oxfam (2013) baseline research. According to the survey, only one home in Nairobi reported a monthly income of above Ksh. 8,000, which is also below the city of Nairobi's stated minimum salary of Ksh. 8,580

for domestic employees. According to the study, 72% of the households—65 out of 90—earned less than the monthly minimum pay for domestic employees. This suggests that Nairobi's employers pay their domestic workers inadequate wages, demonstrating their disregard for the law. The fact that women are vulnerable and without a group or agency to take any real action, as well as the insufficient enforcement by the relevant government offices, make the problem worse.

In Kenya, the minimum wage payable to workers is usually reviewed during alternate years on labour day. According to the Regulation of Wages (Agricultural Industry) (Amendment) Order, 2022, on May 1, 2022, former President Uhuru Kenyatta announced an immediate increase of the minimum wage of 12% to help workers cope with a surge in consumer prices. This meant that from on May 1, 2022, the lowest category of domestic workers must be paid at least Kshs. 8,612.60 in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu.

Veena and Kusakabe (2021) investigated the standards of conduct for domestic workers in Bangkok. They go on to say that when a person decides to change something, they can alter their social location, employment, gender, age, ethnicity, and network access. A person's social position can alter as a result of how these differentiation axes interact with social hierarchies. Due to their legal immigration status and the nature of their job relationships with their employers, domestic workers are in a risky situation. According to the study's findings, migrant employees select their employers so that they can bargain on the basis of their ethnicity. They can elevate their social position in comparison to their employers by emphasizing their ethnicity. The migrant domestic workers prefer to work for these employers despite the fact that their compensation does not match that of other employers.

Behera et al. (2021) assessed the mental health of female domestic workers in India. The impact of the domestic workers' resilience on their wellbeing was also investigated in this study. Additionally, it interrogated the aspects that helped them remain upbeat and supported their wellbeing throughout the lockdown. Forty-five (45) domestic employees participated, which used a mixed methodology to collect data. It emerged that domestic employees' well-being was average. Other factors that contributed to domestic workers' wellbeing during the lockdown were social involvement, safety, and support from employers.

Governments have started to pay attention to concerns relating to domestic workers' rights as the number of domestic employees rises in various countries across the world (Wang et al, 2018). Wang's study revealed that foreign domestic workers lacked access to secure and regular migration routes, had inadequate employer involvement policies, put in long hours, earned little, and were abused by their employers while working under exploitative conditions. The findings suggested that foreign domestic workers shouldn't have their pay divorced from the minimum wage and that minimum wage policies shouldn't treat them differently from other workers.

### **2.2.3 Female Domestic Workers' Voices and Organization**

Characteristics displayed by female domestic workers can vary within their work environments. Economists have long studied concerns related to male and female labor force participation, with a focus on analyzing the market mechanics affecting both genders, rather than considering gender itself as a distinct category (ILO, 2007). However, a global movement has emerged over the years, advocating for the segregation of data by gender in all types of documentation. This movement aims to address issues such as early considerations of female labor force participation, salary disparities between men and women, and wage discrimination, by recognizing the fundamental role played by gender in markets.

There are many instances of domestic worker violence, including verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual molestation and rape (Al-Hindi, 2020). The government's psychiatric facilities in Bahrain reported that 30%-40% of attempted suicide cases involved foreign domestic workers (Khan & Mingyi, 2018). Even though sexual harassment is illegal in Bahrain, it nonetheless affects many women, particularly migrant women who work as domestic helpers and in other low-paying service occupations. The police and the embassy received reports of most of the cases. Due to their fears of being victimised and for their own safety, many of the victims were unable to pursue legal action against their employers (Huecker et al, 2020). Additionally, instances of gender discrimination in the workplace and in public life are common.

The largest labour union in Kenya, Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), has influenced how the country's businesses and employees interact. One of COTU's stated goals is to "better the social, economic, and political conditions of all workers in all parts of Kenya." Another is to "enable the organisation of all employees in the labour movement." However,



because COTU's focus is on unionisable workers, domestic workers, who are not unionisable, do not enjoy any benefits from COTU apart from the agitation for better pay for all workers, domestic workers included.

Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA) serves as a representative body for domestic workers (Kimani, 2014). Despite the existence of this union, it is worth noting that most workers in the domestic sector choose not to join labor unions due to concerns about potential retaliation and victimization by their employers. As a result, it is up to each worker, individually, to negotiate with the employer for a favourable benefit package and to defend their rights.

In India, Ghosh and Godley (2020) investigated the characteristics of female domestic workers. Thirty female domestic employees in Calcutta participated in semi-structured interviews for the study between 2015 and 2016. They asked the female domestic helpers to consider their interactions with their female employers. Some of the ladies engaged in a status-differentiated professional relationship. Others described a remote and abusive relationship that was marked by direct and explicit exploitation. Most of the participants spoke of a loving, considerate, and understanding relationship as being supportive and caring. However, all three groups of women believed that there was some amount of exploitation in their interactions with their female bosses.

Relationships between domestic workers are dynamic and change depending on how they are engaged. Some domestic employees are employed by means of a contractor or agency. In many of these situations, the agency or contractor hires the domestic worker and bargains the employment agreement with the employer. The employer-employee relationship consequently becomes triangular, more official, and less intimate. In a few of these situations, the agency or contractor offers the domestic worker support services by checking on their welfare. Many organizations operate in a way that makes domestic workers vulnerable to exploitation. This is especially true for organizations that send domestic labour abroad. Domestic workers are frequently compelled to sign contracts that contain slavery clauses while travelling to foreign nations. Their passports are frequently seized, and they are required to turn over their initial paychecks to cover the costs of their travel, recruitment, and transportation. Even more domestic employees operate as independent contractors for a variety of clients and, in some situations,

even supply their own tools. Some domestic workers participate in cooperatives where they bargain contracts to do domestic services for different private clients or families (Cheong et al, 2021).

Women who work as casual domestic help are subject to a compulsory code of silence, which is enforced by employers through denial of employee benefits and threats of violence against the women who have voiced concerns (Oxfam, 2013). Lack of regulation in this industry not only diminishes the value of domestic work's economic and social contributions to growth, but it also makes abuse and exploitation of employees worse. Inadequate food and accommodations, including a lack of privacy, sexual and gender-based violence, contract substitution, low wages, excessive work hours, the lack of breaks or rest days, restrictions on free speech and association, and all the aforementioned. (Hyslop et al, 2022).

According to Amnesty International (2013), Kenya has a surplus and fragmented labour market. Due to the high skill requirements of the technologies used, workers in the formal sector frequently have higher levels of education than those in the informal sector. This has increased the number of casual workers, including most women who reside in urban centers' informal settlements. Many middle-class and affluent households' domestic helpers are among those with informal contracts. These women know very little about the laws that are currently in force, and which control their employment conditions.

#### **2.2.4 Rights of Female Domestic Workers**

Employers utilise strategies like threatening the women who have complained that they will use violence and depriving them job prospects to accomplish the compulsory code of silence that surrounds domestic employees (Oxfam, 2013). The absence of regulations in the domestic labour sector makes it more difficult for female domestic workers to carry out their responsibilities. Their employers subject them to unfair labour practises. This includes working long hours and getting little sleep, not eating enough, being physically or verbally abused, performing labour-intensive chores, and being sexually abused (Santoso, 2019).

Domestic employees work conditions can vary and adapt based on the nature of their employment. Some domestic helpers work for or are hired through agencies. They recruit the

domestic help and even bargain with the employer over their pay and benefits. The procedure becomes more formalised as a result, losing its inherent personal element. Elderly care in many countries is solely the responsibility of bureaus and agencies (McDonald, 2017). This promotes professionalism and gives the elderly the assurance that the person caring for them is impartial and wouldn't inflict any harm on them.

According to Bisht et al (2019), there is a high demand for domestic workers due to the strong preference for nuclear families. They noted that the workplace was rife with discrimination, harsh exploitation of domestic workers, and low compensation. Additionally, overtime compensation was not increased by the employers. There was no organized society or social safety net for domestic employees, therefore they were vulnerable to exploitation. The aim of Bisht's et al (2019) study was to assess domestic workers' working conditions in the Udaipur area. Through a planned schedule of in-person interviews, primary data was acquired. This study concluded that domestic workers were subject to employment discrimination. They were unable to demand better salary because of their weak bargaining position and lack of financial resources.

Tariq et al. (2020) examined the working conditions and occupational health concerns of female domestic workers in Karachi. A sample size of 406 female domestic workers was used. The researchers utilized the snowball method and administered a pre-tested questionnaire to collect the data. The relationship between several variables and exposure to violence, work-related injuries, and chemical exposures was investigated using multivariate logistic regression.

Only 14.5% of the tested domestic workers in the Tariq et al. (2020) study reported annual salaries of Rs. 15 000 or above. Funding for children's health or education totaled more than 1%. Verbal acts of violence included shouting, constant criticism and job threats. The most common work-related injuries were cuts, burns and bruises (23.6%). When compared to caring for children or cooking, doing laundry had a significantly higher odds ratio (OR) for experiencing cuts (OR = 2.09; 1.15-3.71, OR = 2.29; 1.07-4.88, and OR = 4.66; 2.68-8.08). Tariq's study concluded that establishing domestic labour standards, creating economic parity for all low-wage workers, and holding companies accountable for respecting those standards are essential.

Domestic employees may be given humiliating or abusive tasks, such as massaging the bodies of their male bosses or washing their undergarments, and they must find a way to cope. The burden

placed on the women is frequently unreasonable, and inability to perform tasks may lead to dismissal or wage withholding. Most domestic workers do nothing about their situation; instead, they simply inform their friends and relatives about it, who frequently give them advice on what to do, which frequently does not involve seeking legal recourse or notifying the authorities (Oxfam, 2013).

According to Astagini and Sarwono (2022), there is a stigma in Indonesia that domestic workers are lower, unskilled labourers. Female domestic employees and their employers should connect with commitment and loyalty in mind. Both the female domestic employees and the employers can benefit from this contact process. These opinions are also held by Cirillo (2021), who investigated how female domestic workers used and mobilized their personal networks to achieve their objectives. Domestic labour is frequently mistreated and kept secret. According to the domestic workers, their lives are lonely and dictated by their employers. Mobility, though, plays a crucial role in their daily lives. Despite these obstacles, they persistently seek out different approaches to experience metropolitan environments and institute business relationships.

Employee-employer relationship considerations take precedence over workplace issues, according to Gurtoo (2017). The methods for empowering domestic workers are both exhilarating and debilitating. The dynamics of economic and occupational support are strengthened, but there are negative repercussions on psychological well-being. These opinions align with those of Loh and Estrellado (2019), who looked at the experiences of Singaporean female domestic workers. Their working environments, interactions with their employers, and psychological wellness were the main subjects of the study. The study interviewed participants. High degrees of variation were indicated by the studies. This implies that the personal traits of either their employers or employees affect domestic workers' life.

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**

This study is guided by the Marxist Feminist Theory and the Caroline Moser Model.

### **2.3.1 Marxist Feminist Theory**

Marx (1859) created the Marxist feminist theory. The theory primarily recognizes the methods through which economic systems shape society as a whole and influence day-to-day existence. It focuses on analyzing and describing the ways in which capitalism's mechanisms subjugate women. Marxist feminists contend that the only way to liberate women is to completely overhaul the current capitalist system, where a significant portion of women's labor remains unpaid. Theorists in this paradigm, like Benston (1969) and Morton (1971), claim that there are two primary categories of labor divisions in the capitalist system. The first division is productive because it employs workers to create products or services having a market value for which they are paid a wage. The second type of division of labor is reproductive, which is related to family and home and includes everything a person does for themselves and is not intended to be paid for, such as household chores like cleaning and childrearing. Both forms of labor are significant, but different people have access to them in various ways depending on certain characteristics of their identities (Engels, 1990).

In a capitalist economy, women are assigned to the private sphere where their labor is reproductive, unpaid, and uncelebrated. Using women as a cheap source of labor is advantageous for both public and private institutions, and it increases profits for manufacturers (Engels, 1990). Due to the exclusion of female workers from productive and gainful opportunities, the male folk control the work environment; society, especially in the African setup dictates that women take up domestic roles as part of their gender roles (Engels, 1990). Consequently, employers may treat female domestic workers in this way since they have economic sway over them, albeit this is obviously restricted because economic sway is not the same as real power. Therefore, the domestic worker will be taken advantage of by the cunning capitalist employer as long as she is unaware of her rights and advantages and the law. Of course, some employers are incredibly trustworthy and loyal, and they treat domestic workers fairly.

### **2.3.2 Caroline Moser Model**

One of the most widely used frameworks for gender analysis is the Caroline Moser framework (March et al, 1999). This is built upon Moser's conceptualizations of gender roles, requirements,

and strategies for planning for development and gender equality. The theory further expands on the concepts of gender roles and demands, highlighting the interconnectedness of community, productivity, and reproduction as the three core roles. The mapping of the gender division of labour is part of this technology. Reproductive work includes all aspects of household upkeep and maintenance. Compared to men, women's productive labour is frequently less acknowledged and recognized. This is because society, particularly African societies, view women's labour as incidental. Men are valued more highly at work than women, which supports patriarchy even in the workplace.

The communal planning of social events and services is an example of community work; while this form of work is rarely considered in economic studies, it is crucial for the spiritual and cultural growth of communities. People perform this activity, which is largely unpaid, to give back to their communities and to better themselves. It serves as a tool for fostering self-government and community organization. Both men and women participate in community events, yet there is a gender labour divide (Schouten, 2022).

As a result, this paradigm makes a clear distinction between gender roles. The approach emphasizes that either a man or a woman must do every task. The idea that women should solely perform female roles and men should take care of what is properly theirs. No gender may perform the duties of the other. This was mostly used in traditional African civilization, when men were only permitted to carry out manly duties and women were only permitted to play the roles that were assigned to them. This encouraged patriarchy, which persists today.

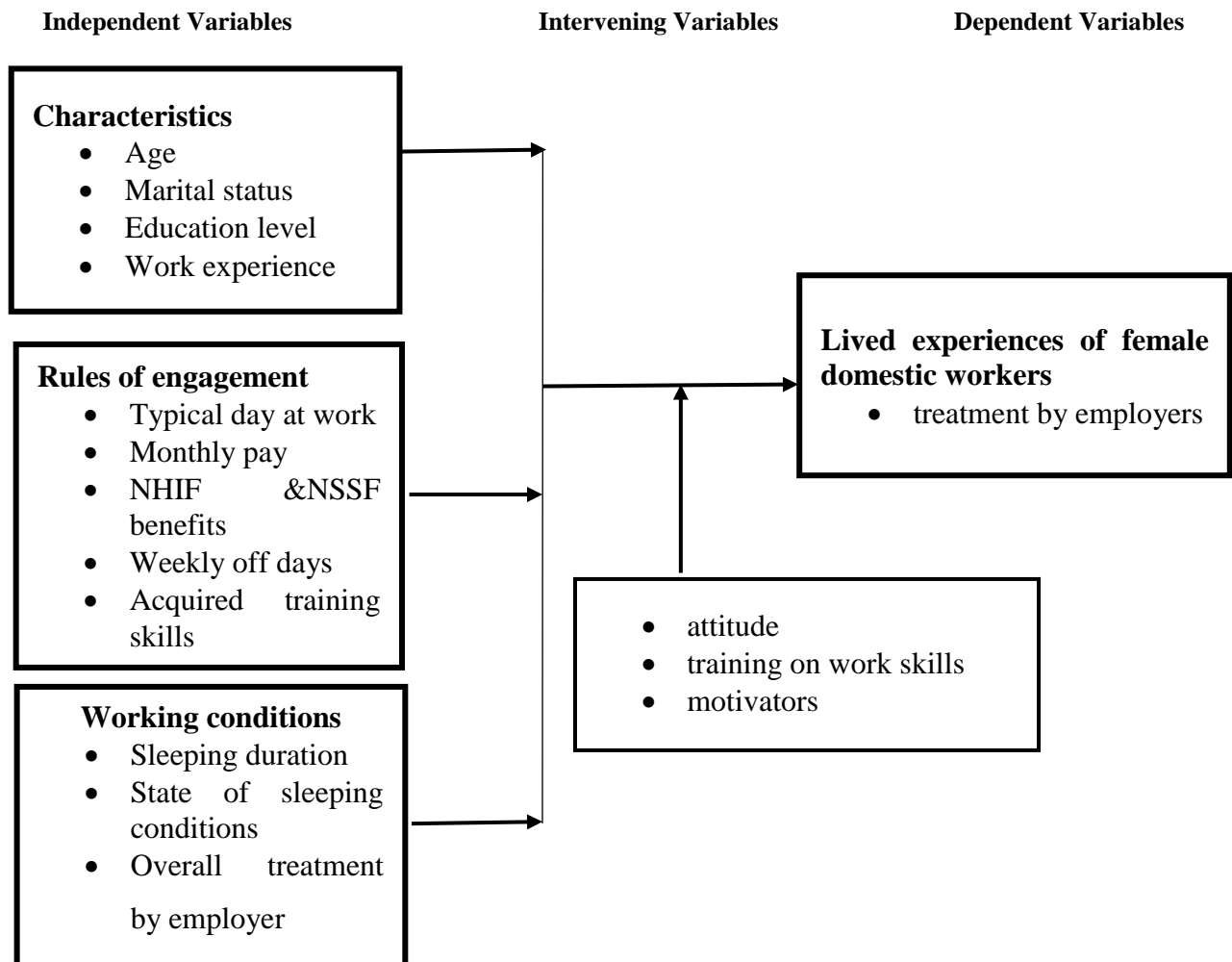
The Caroline Moser Framework makes work that typically goes unnoticed visible by acknowledging that women execute reproductive and community management tasks alongside productive employment (Schouten, 2022). Domestic work is frequently viewed as an unnoticed reproductive function that is primarily performed by women. However, when any type of reproductive work is commercialized and transformed into productive work, it is frequently identified if it is carried out by men and is also highly populated, such as in the case of chefs. This concept is pertinent to the study because it offers insight into why female domestic workers encounter so many difficulties at the hands of their employers.

## 2.4 Summary of Literature Review

The experiences of female domestic workers were not well described in the studies that were analyzed. The studies that were examined centered on the typical experiences of domestic employees at various workplaces. There was a contextual gap in the literature from the evaluated research because they were conducted in foreign nations, which have various regulations and experiences with female domestic employees. This study involved female domestic workers who are registered under Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County, Kenya.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.



### ***Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework***

The study looked into how workers were accessed by the employers, their monthly pay and whether their employers paid for them the requisite NHIF and NSSF. The study established domestic workers' ages, level of education and whether they lived with their employers in full-time capacity or commuted from their homes daily. To assess their working conditions, the study assessed their places of rest or sleep, the duration of time they worked each day and whether they were provided with the requisite tools and equipment to enhance their work.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter gives an in-depth description of the research methods employed in this study. It highlights the research design, the target population and details on how the sample was selected. Instruments for data collection and how data was collected are outlined and finally, the data analysis is explained. The chapter concludes by giving the ethical considerations for the study.

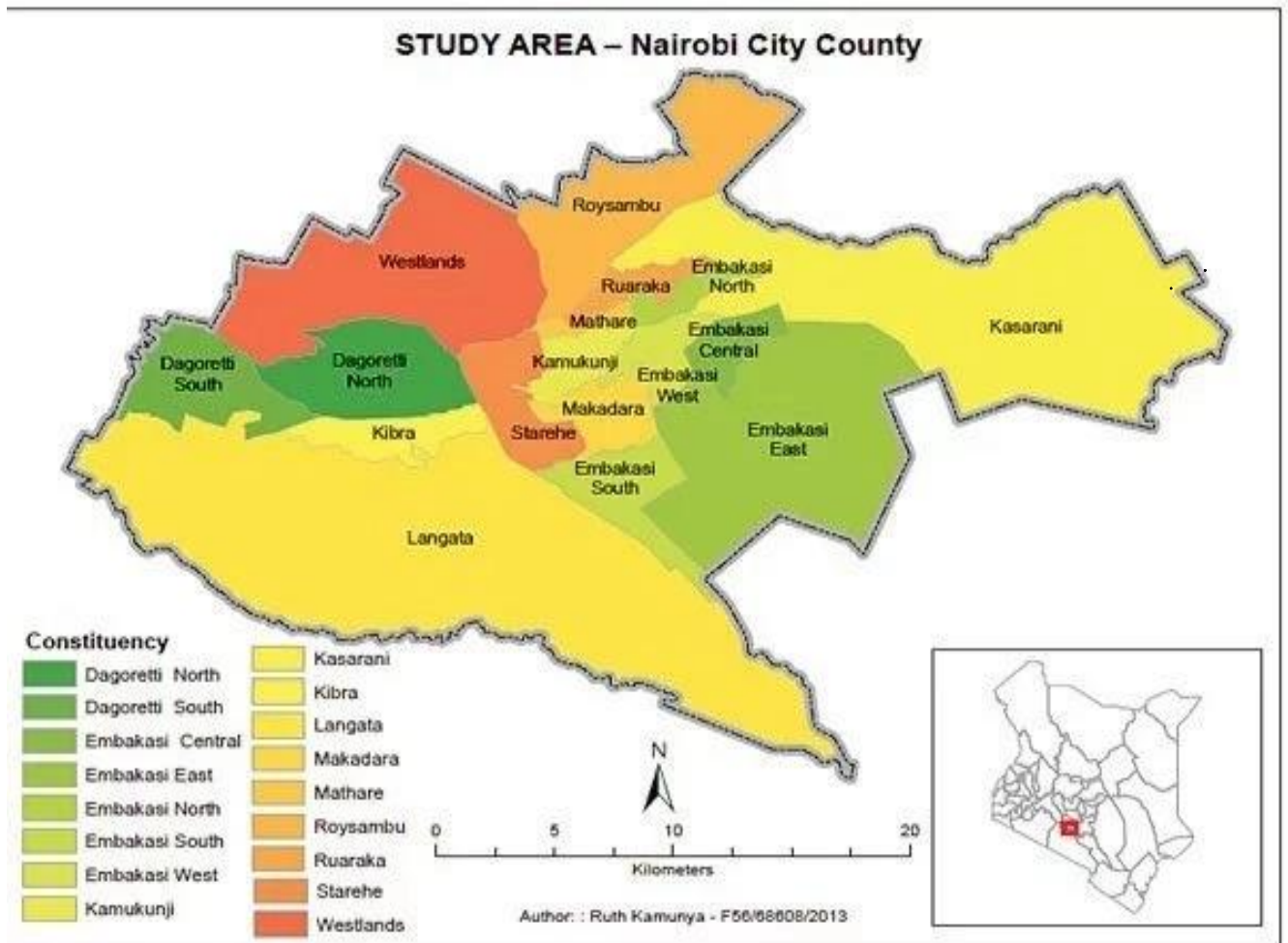
#### **3.2 Research Area**

The study was conducted in Kenya's Nairobi City County. Although it is the third-smallest county, Nairobi is not only the nation's capital but also its the most populous city. The last census was made official in 2009, when it was recorded that there were 3,138,369 people living in the city of Nairobi. Since then, it has increased to almost 3.5 million. More than 3.5 million people reside in the metropolitan area. Nairobi, commonly referred to as the "Green City in the Sun," has a history that dates back to 1899 and is still expanding as people from the countryside move to this large city in search of economic possibilities.

The 2009 Census Report also showed that Nairobi is continually expanding and now has a surface area of 696 square kilometres. The population density is roughly 4,850 people per square kilometer translating to 12,600 inhabitants per square mile. Swahili and English are widely spoken in Nairobi. One of the biggest slums in the world is located in the city, and over 22% of locals are considered to be living in poverty.



The majority of Kenya's ethnic groups, including the Luo, Luhya and Kamba, are all represented in Nairobi's ethnic diversity. Nairobi being cosmopolitan makes domestic work to flourish as people from different parts of the country who move to Nairobi can work for their own tribesmates. The tribe of Kikuyu make up 20% of Nairobi's population. This city is also home to large populations of Somalis, Asians, and Europeans. Due to the abundance of employment options, there are a lot of expatriates living here, which has caused the city to grow rapidly.



### 3.3 Study Design

According to Mohammed (2013), a research design provides the necessary data to effectively address the research questions. This study employed a descriptive research design as it allowed for the collection of information that directly addressed the research questions. To explore the experiences of female domestic workers in Nairobi County, descriptive data was employed.

### 3.4 Target Population and Unit of Analysis

The study focused on female domestic workers who were registered under the 23 Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County. Nairobi County was selected as the study location due to its cosmopolitan nature and its role as the capital city of Kenya, where a significant number of residents require the services of female domestic workers. Nairobi County also offered a representation of the female domestic workers across the country.

Therefore, the 23 Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County formed the unit of observation while the female domestic workers registered under the Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County formed the unit of analysis. Table 2.1 below provides the list of the 23 Househelp Bureaus in Nairobi County and this represented the sampling frame for the study.

**Table 2.1: Sampling Frame**

<b>S/No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>
1	Better Help Maids Kenya	Moi Avenue Rd
2	Nancie’z Bureau	Donholm
3	Max Child Care	Kilimani Rd
4	Donholm Housegirls	Donholm

5	Well Trained House Girls	Donholm
6	Honest House girls	Donholm
7	House Girls Bureau, Donholm	Donholm
8	House Girls Bureau, Jericho	Jericho
9	House Girls Bureau, Kitengela	Kitengela
10	Divine House Help Center	Komarock
11	Hobby Housegirls	Komarock
12	Mary Employment Bureau	City Square
13	Mama Derick Trained Housegirls employment bureau	Buruburu
14	Excellent Housegirls	Buruburu
15	Bingo Housegirls Agencies	Buruburu
16	Mama Bonie Housegirls	Umoja 2
17	Blessed Bureau	Umoja 2
18	Daymaids	Umoja 2
19	Alichu House girls and boys Bureau	Buruburu
20	Madam P House Helps	Hurligham Plaza
21	Sashley Nanny Agency	Moi Avenue
22	Auntie Sue Househelp Agency	Waiyaki Way
23	Fairdeal Househelps	Donholm

### 3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

According to Kendra (2018) a sample is a subset of a population. The size or quantity of the study population is the primary determinant of the unit of analysis, according to Kothari (2004). The study's objectives (Ongayo et al.,2018) was 10 respondents. Systematic random sampling identified female domestic workers each selected randomly from the 23 Househelp bureaus in Nairobi county, Kenya. Househelps that participated in the interview were from the following bureaus: -

**Table 2.2: Sample Size**

S/No	Househelp Bureau	Location
1	House Girls Bureau, Donholm	Donholm
2	House Girls Bureau, Jericho	Jericho
3	Mama Bonie Housegirls	Umoja 2
4	Blessed Bureau	Umoja 2
5	Madam P House Helps	Hurligham Plaza
6	Sashley Nanny Agency	Moi Avenue
7	Auntie Sue Househelp Agency	Waiyaki Way
8	Fairdeal Househelps	Donholm
9	Mary Employment Bureau	City Square

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.6.1 In-depth Interviews**

Interviews collected information on the experiences of female domestic workers in Nairobi City County. With the help of one research assistant, the researcher interviewed the selected female domestic workers within a period of one (1) month. Consent from the female domestic workers was sought and assurances of confidentiality made. The interviews were conducted in the best conducive environment, away from disruptions and noise, as much as possible. Each interview took an average of one (1) hour and were conducted in Kiswahili. Each respondent was allowed sufficient time during the interviews to relate their experiences. This ensured that respondents exhaustively gave their responses. The interviews were recorded.

#### **3.7 Data Processing and Analysis**

Data record matching, conclusion and response to the study questions were all included in data processing and analysis. Direct excerpts and carefully chosen remarks from interviews were included in the report to highlight the findings in a descriptive approach. Qualitative data was thematically analysed. Separate code sheets were made to identify and decipher patterns for each of these data sets. All taped work was translated from Kiswahili to English and transcribed. During translation, the terms used in Kiswahili language were translated exactly as there were to avoid misinterpretation during qualitative analysis.

#### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

The moral guidelines that direct research from interpretation to completion and publication of data and beyond are known as ethical considerations. The researcher requested the interviewees' consent as a matter of research ethics. The objectives were explained, as well as a request to join by signing an informed consent form. The respondents were made aware of their choice to opt out of the study at any time, as well as their freedom to divulge only information that they felt comfortable doing so. Privacy and confidentiality were protected during data collection, analysis, report production, and distribution. This was accomplished by using codes and pseudonyms in place of real names.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the study's results. The findings of the study are presented on themes based on research objectives which include examining the rules of engagement between female domestic workers and their employers in Nairobi County, Kenya; establishing the characteristics of female domestic workers in Nairobi County, Kenya and assessing the working conditions of female domestic workers in Nairobi County, Kenya.

#### 4.2 Response Rate

A total of 10 in-depth interviews were successfully conducted and this was a response rate of 100%. The high response rate of 100% resulted from carrying the interviews in a conducive environment and assurance to respondents of anonymity and confidentiality. Mugenda & Mugenda (2002) recommended that a response rate of 70% and above is excellent. The overall response rate of 100% enhanced the credibility of the study's results.

#### 4.3: Characteristics of Female Domestic Workers in Nairobi County

##### 4.3.1: Age of Respondents

The study sought to find out the age of the respondents. The distribution of their age is as shown in Table 4.3

**Table 4.3: Age of Respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 18 years	2	20
18-22 years	4	40
23-27 years	2	20

28-32 years	1	10
Above 32 years	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The findings from table 4.3 revealed that majority of the respondents were aged between 18-22 years (40%), followed by those who were less than 18 years (20%) and 23-27 years (20%) respectively. 10% of the respondents also indicated that they were aged between 28-32 years and above 32 years respectively. These results corroborate with those of Mbugua (2014) which revealed that 60% of domestic workers from Dagoretti sub-County in Nairobi County were aged between 19-35 years while the remaining 40% were 36 years and above. Manirakinga (2020) study also indicated that majority of domestic workers in Rwanda are between age 18-30 years (78.3%) followed by those who are under 18 years (19.8%) and those above 30 years represented 1.9% of total domestic workers.

#### 4.3.2: Marital Status of Respondents

The study also sought to find out the marital status of the selected female domestic workers. The results were outline in table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4: Marital Status of Respondents**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Single	5	50
Married	2	20
Divorced/Separated	3	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results in table 4.4 showed that 50% of the respondents were single, 30% were divorced/separated while 20% of the respondents were married. These results also concurred with those of Manirakinga (2020) study which outlined that most of the domestic workers in Rwanda are single (93.4%) followed by those who are married (2.8%) while 1.9% of the respondents had separated with their spouses and were single mothers respectively. However, the study by Guantai (2020) disagreed with these findings as it outlines that 84% of domestic workers in Lang'ata Sub-county, Nairobi county were married while 16% of domestic workers were single and none were divorced.

### 4.3.3 Education Level of Female Domestic Workers

The distribution of the education level of female domestic workers was as shown in table 4.3 below.

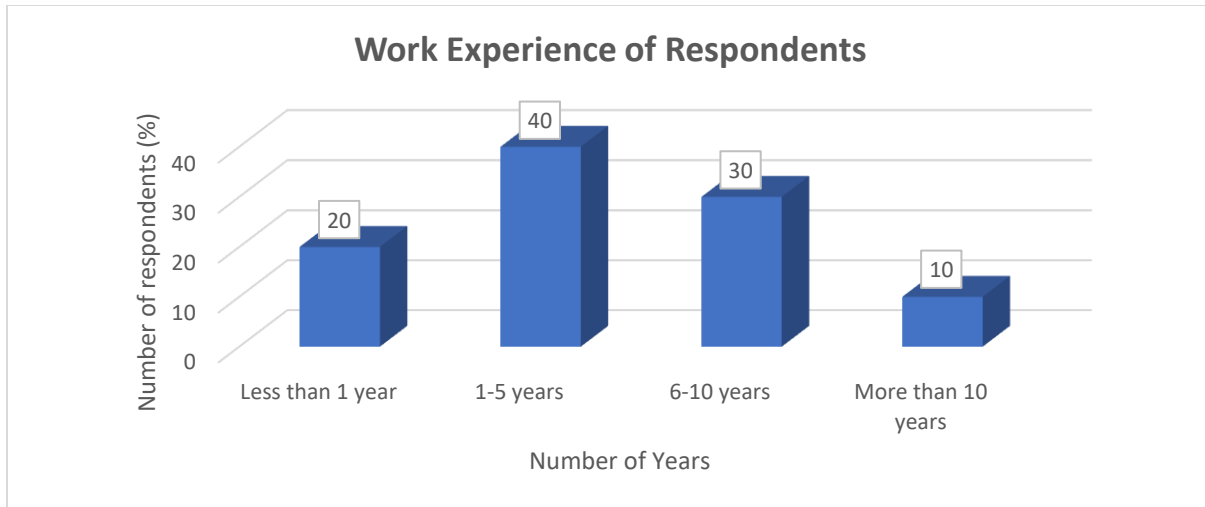
**Table 4.5: Education level of Respondents**

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
primary school dropouts	5	50
high school dropouts	3	30
KCSE graduate	2	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Out of the 10 female domestic workers interviewed, the results in table 4.3 revealed that most of the respondents were primary school dropouts (50%), 30% of the respondents were high school dropouts and 20% of the respondents were KCSE graduates. These results concurred with those of the study by Mudau et al (2017) which indicated that 67.9% of the domestic workers in Mpumalanga province, South Africa had reached primary school level, 26.4% of them complete secondary schools and 4.7% of them had not attended school. Guantai (2020) study also agreed with these findings since it revealed that 86% of domestic workers in Lang'ata sub-county, Nairobi county had completed their primary school while 14% had attained secondary school education.

### 4.3.4: Work Experience of Respondents

The study sought to find out the number of years the respondents had worked as domestic workers. The results were illustrated in figure 4.2 below.



**Figure 4.2: Work Experience of Respondents**

The findings in figure 4.2 showed that most of the respondents (40%) had worked as domestic workers for a period of 1-5 years, followed by 30% of the respondents who had a work experience of 6-10 years, then 20% had less than 1 year of work experience and 10% had more than 10 years' work experience. Similarly, the study by Mbugua (2014) also showed that 70% of domestic workers in Dagoretti sub-county, Nairobi County had 3-10 years of work experience, 20% of them had a work experience of 10 years and above and 10% had 1 year and below work experience. Ndulu (2018) study also concurred with these results as it highlighted that majority of female domestic workers in Nairobi County (58%) had a work experience of 1-5 years, 24% had 6-10 years, 11% had above 10 years work experience and 7% had less than 1 year work experience.

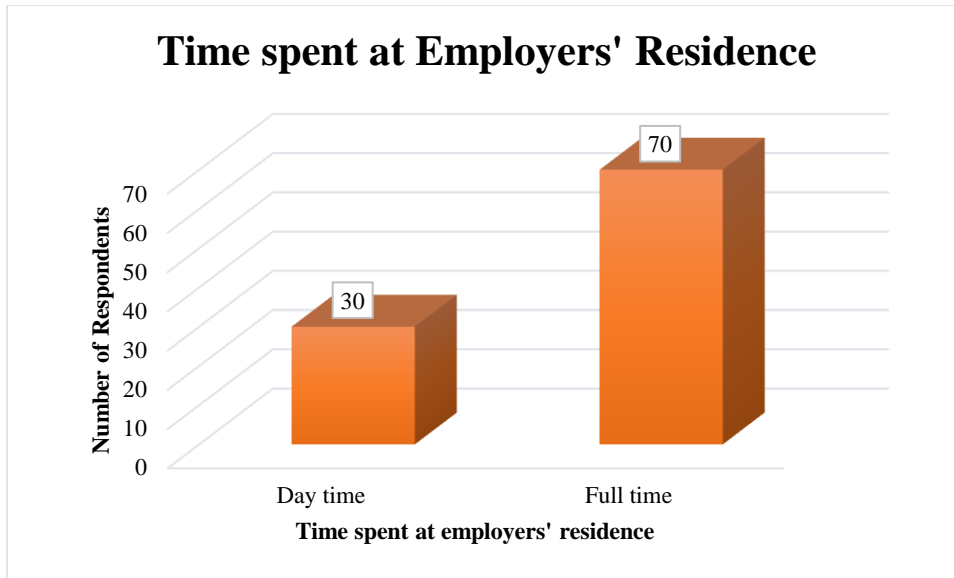
#### **4.4: Rules of Engagement Between Female Domestic Workers and Their Employers**

The study sought to establish the rules of engagement between female domestic workers and their employers.

##### **4.4.1: Time Spent at Employers' Residence**

Figure 4.3 shows the nature of work of the female domestic workers in terms of time spent at employers' residences.





**Figure 4.3: Time Spent at Employers' Residence**

The findings reveal that 70% of the respondents worked full time and lived under the employers' residence while 30% of the respondents worked during day time and left in the evening to their homes. Further, out of the 7 respondents worked full time, most of these respondents indicated that their typical day started at 4 am and completed by 10 pm. Whereas, the 3 respondents that worked at day time outlined that they report to work between 7am and 8 am then start their house chores as instructed by their employers then leave their employers' residence between 8-9pm

The responses that best represented the findings were as follows;

*“ I wake up at 4 am and start washing clothes, preparing breakfast and the kids for school. Once everyone has left the house, I continue with the other house chores including cleaning the house, the compound and washing utensils. I usually complete my chores by midday then take a lunch break, before going to pick the kids from school. I start preparing dinner by 5:50 pm and ensure the children have bathed, finished their homework then I serve them dinner. Afterwards, I wash the dinner utensils then retire to bed.”* (Respondent 2)

*“My day begins at 5am where I prepare breakfast for the entire family and set the dining table for them to serve themselves since the children are also grown-ups, I then*

*continue with the other house chores such as washing clothes, washing the utensils, cleaning the house, the compound and attending to the family garden. By 12 pm I prepare lunch for those left at home and the other workers then complete the remaining house chores and go for shopping as instructed by the employer. I prepare dinner at 6pm, set the table, wash the dinner utensils then retire to bed.”* (Respondent 7)

*“I report to work at 7 am and start my house chores at 7:30 am, once everyone has left the house. I prepare lunch for me and the other workers working within the compound then pick the children from school by 4:30 pm. I start preparing dinner by 6 pm after ensuring the children have finished homework and bathed. I serve the kids dinner then leave for home once the employers get back from their job.”* (Respondent 6)

These results showed that the interviewed female domestic workers fully spend their time in the different house chores assigned to them by their employers but with very limited breaks. Similarly, a study by Ndulu (2018) involving in-depth interviews with 30 domestic workers in Nairobi county highlighted that the interviewed respondents begins early in the morning, with tasks such as cleaning, cooking, laundry, and childcare. They often work long hours, with limited breaks or rest time throughout the day. The work involves physically demanding tasks and requires multitasking skills.

#### **4.4.2: Monthly Salary Payment**

The participants were also asked to indicate the monthly salary they receive from their job. Table 4.6 shows the distribution of the pay for female domestic workers.

**Table 4.6: Monthly Salary Payment**

<b>Monthly Pay (Ksh)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
4000-6000	3	30
6001-8000	5	50
8001-10000	1	10
above 10000	1	10

<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>
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The findings in table 4.6 showed that 50% of the respondents' monthly pay ranged between Ksh 6,001-8,000, 30% of the respondents' monthly pay was between Ksh 4,000-6,000 while only 10% of respondents' monthly pay was and Ksh 8,001-10,000 and above Ksh 10,000 respectively.

The responses that best represented the findings were as follows;

*“I receive a monthly salary of sh 5,000 on the 5<sup>th</sup> of every new month but may delay in case my employer is also paid late.”* (Respondent 3)

*“I am paid a monthly salary of sh 8,000 on 1<sup>st</sup> of every month, my employer can either pay the full amount or in two instalments.”* (Respondent 8)

The two responses clearly reveal that at times employers delay payment of their female domestic workers due to their own personal reasons. In addition, the highest percentage (80%) of the respondent were paid low wages which were below the required minimum wages as per Regulation of Wages (Amendment) Order, 2022, on May 1, 2022 that outlined that the lowest category of domestic workers must be paid at least Kshs. 8,612.60 in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu. Moreover, in the study by Oxfam (2013), the average wage for domestic workers was determined to be low since only one home reported a monthly income of above Ksh. 8,000, which is also below the city of Nairobi's stated minimum salary of Ksh. 8,580 for domestic employees. Hyslop et al (2022) study also revealed that challenges experienced by casual domestic workers in Nairobi county included contract substitution, low wages, non-payment or late payment of wages and excessive work hours without compensation. Whereas, Agaya (2013) study revealed that domestic workers interviewed in Mukuru informal settlement said that some employers withhold their wages or fail to provide proper contracts, leaving domestic workers vulnerable to exploitation and unfair treatment.

#### **4.4.3: NHIF & NSSF Statutory Payment**

The respondents interviewed were also asked to indicate whether their employers paid for their NHIF and NSSF statutory. These results were outlined in table 4.7 below.

**Table 4.7: NHIF & NSSF Statutory Payment**

<b>NHIF &amp; NSSF statutory payment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Yes	3	30
No	7	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

The results in table 4.7 showed that employers of 70% of the respondents paid for their NHIF and NSSF statutory benefits while employers of 30% of the respondents did not pay for their NHIF and NSSF statutory benefits.

The responses that best represented the findings were as follows;

*“The employer does not cater for such benefits.”* (Respondent 1)

*“The employer only pays for NHIF.”* (Respondent 5)

The study by Mbugua (2014) also corroborates these results as it highlights that female domestic workers that were engaged in focus group discussions reported that they are exposed to demanding work conditions which often take a toll on their health and well-being. They may experience fatigue, physical strain, and mental stress due to the constant pressure and lack of rest however, their employers also rarely provide a specific medical insurance cover to cater for their health needs. In addition, Tariq et al (2020) study also noted that the most common work-related injuries were cuts, burns and bruises (23.6%) where the respondents’ employers catered for using their own money. These lack of legal protection and support mechanisms for domestic workers has been on the rise as outlined by the study since many house helps are not aware of their rights or are unable to enforce them due to limited knowledge, resources, and fear of job loss.

#### **4.4.4: Provision of Weekly Off Days**

During the interviews, the participants were asked whether their employers granted them a day off, on a weekly basis. Table 4.8 indicated their responses.

**Table 4.8: Provision of Weekly Off Days**

<b>Weekly off day</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Yes	8	80
No	2	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings in table 4.8 showed that 80% of the respondents were granted a day off per week while 20% of the respondents were not granted any day off per week.

The responses that best represented these results were as follows;

*“Yes, I am given a weekly off day on Sunday.”* (Respondent 4)

*“No, I am not given any off day.”* (Respondent 5)

Cirillo (2021) study concurs with these results as it reveals that most of the domestic workers that were interviewed reported having only one day off per week, while some did not have any designated off days at all. This lack of time off affected their physical and mental well-being, as they are unable to rest, spend time with family, or engage in personal activities. On the other hand, Guantai (2020) study highlighted that the off days for female domestic workers were often unpredictable and subject to the discretion of their employers. Some participants mentioned that their employers would occasionally cancel their off days without prior notice, making it challenging for them to plan their personal lives or decide. In addition, the fact that they often work and reside within their employer's premises, they have limited opportunities for social interaction or participation in community activities during their time off.

#### **4.4.5: Acquired Training Skills**

The participants were also asked to indicate whether they have been taken through any kind of training to acquire skills for their jobs. The results were presented in table 4.9 below.

**Table 4.9: Acquired Training Skills**

<b>Acquired Training Skills</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Yes	6	60
No	4	40

<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>
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The findings in table 4.9 showed that 60% of the respondents had been taken through training to acquire skills for their jobs while 40% had not been taken though training to acquire skills for their jobs.

The following responses best represented the outlined results;

*“I have learnt a lot in the house. I have learnt how to use a washing machine which I never knew about. My cooking skills have also improved by using oven and cooker. I can now multitask.”* (Respondent 10)

*"I have learnt to communicate clearly with people from my previous employer and my current employer. I have also learnt to cook foods which I had not cooked before."* (Respondent 6)

*"My current employer did not teach me any new skills since most of the things I was expected to do, I was well aware of how to do them."* (Respondent 9)

The findings of the study by Mudau et al (2017) concurred with these results since it also highlighted that 78% of house helps in Mpumalanga province, South Africa reported that their employers did provide training and support to enhance their skills. As a result, this enabled them to improve their job performance and career prospects. However, Agaya (2013) study of women domestic workers in Mukuru informal settlements disagreed with these findings as it revealed that majority of participants (75%) expressed the challenge of limited access to education and skill development opportunities. Thus, without access to training programs or the means to upgrade their skills, they often face difficulties in finding better employment prospects or escaping the cycle of poverty. In addition, Gladys (2022) study also noted that language and literacy barriers were identified as additional challenges in accessing training for some domestic workers. Participants who had limited proficiency in the primary language of instruction or faced literacy challenges found it difficult to participate in training programs that required reading or comprehension skills.

#### **4.5: Working Conditions of Female Domestic Workers**

The study sought to assess the working conditions of selected female domestic workers in Nairobi County.

#### 4.5.1: Sleeping Duration of Female Domestic Workers

Respondents were asked to indicate their daily sleeping duration and their results were as shown in table 4.10 below.

**Table 4.10: Sleeping Duration**

<b>Sleep duration</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Less than 4 hours	2	20
4-5 hours	5	50
6-8 hours	2	20
Above 8 hours	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

The results in table 4.10 showed that 50% of the respondents get sleep for a period of 4-5 hours, 20% had less than 4 hours of sleep while 20% of respondents had sleep for 6-8 hours and 10% had sleep of above 8 hours. Similarly, a study by Ndulu (2018) agreed with these results as it highlighted that most of the domestic workers (78%) in Nairobi county experience sleep deprivation or insufficient sleep due to the time demands placed on them. As a result, these sleep deprivations had negative effects on their physical health, mental well-being, cognitive function, and overall quality of life. In addition, Mutu (2017) study also revealed that domestic workers in Westlands Sub-county, Nairobi county reported feeling stressed, anxious, and irritable due to the lack of quality sleep. Sleep deprivation and disturbed sleep patterns had a negative impact on their overall mood and mental well-being.

#### 4.5.2: Sleeping Environment for Female Domestic Workers

Table 4.11 showed the state of the sleeping environment of the female domestic workers living with their employers.

**Table 4.11: State of Sleeping Environment**

<b>State of Sleeping Environment</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Comfortable	4	60
Not Comfortable	3	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings in table 4.11 showed that 60% of the respondents agreed that the sleeping environment was comfortable while the remaining 40% confessed that the sleeping environment was uncomfortable. The results of the study by Astagini and Sarwono (2022) corroborates these findings as it concludes that female domestic workers in Indonesia are exposed to poor working conditions where most of them sleep in shared or cramped spaces, have limited control over the sleep environment, experience noise disruptions from household activities and inadequate bedding or mattresses. Mutu (2017) study also highlighted that domestic workers in Westlands Sub-county, Nairobi county reported experiencing body aches, discomfort, and fatigue due to inadequate sleeping surfaces.

#### 4.5.3: Overall Treatment by Employer

Respondents were requested to indicate the overall treatment by their employer. Their responses were as shown in table 4.12.

**Table 4.12: Overall Treatment by Employer**

<b>Treatment by Employer</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Good	4	40
Poor	6	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

The results in table 4.12 were revealed that most of respondents (60%) outlined that they received poor treatment by their employers while 40% of the respondents received good treatment by their employers. A study by Bisht et al (2019) also concurs with these results as it concluded that domestic workers in Udaipur area were subject by their employers to employment discrimination, harsh exploitation and low compensation. They were also unable to demand better salary because of their weak bargaining position and lack of financial resources. However, Nyaura and Ngugi (2019) study findings disagreed with these results as it revealed that a significant number of workers felt that they were treated with respect and dignity by their employers. They reported positive interactions, fair treatment, and acknowledgment of their contributions to the household.



Additionally, respondents who experienced poor treatment by their employers also cited various violation of their rights as employees and humans. The researcher also sought to know how the domestic workers dealt with these incidences.

***“My employer, on some occasions calls me names that are meant to body shame me. I just take it and respect her because it’s part of the job and I want the money.”***

(Respondent 7)

***“There is a time she accused me of stealing some cash from her house. She later found the money-she had misplaced it. I felt bad. I cannot steal from my employer, I respect her, I am only there for the job.”*** (Respondent 2)

These responses also concurred with those of Tariq et al (2020) study on domestic employees in Karachi as it outlined that domestic workers complained of being humiliated and given abusive tasks, such as massaging the bodies of their male bosses or washing their undergarments, and they had to find a way to cope.

Further, the participants also gave their suggestions on how working conditions with their employer could be enhanced. These included;

***“My employer should let me in her thoughts of how I should be executing my work around her home, so as to enable peace and efficiency.”*** (Respondent 1)

***“My boss should stop feeling insecure with me since I only came to work, no other interest.”*** (Respondent 9)

***“To improve working conditions with my employer, the best way is to have a conversation with my employer so that we can agree on conducive ways to live with each other for both of our benefits, emotionally and physically.”*** (Respondent 5)

These suggestions concurred with those of a study by Behera et al. (2021) which revealed that factors which contributed to domestic workers' wellbeing include safety, respect, trust, social involvement, and mutual understanding with their employers. In addition, Loh and Estrellado (2019) study on experiences of Singaporean female domestic workers outlined that the personal traits of either their employers have a significant impact on the quality of domestic workers' life.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the research findings based on rules of engagement between female domestic workers and their employers, characteristics of female domestic workers and the working conditions of female domestic workers in Nairobi County. The chapter also draws conclusion for the study and makes appropriate recommendations. The study's contribution to knowledge is also explained.

#### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

A summary of the research findings is provided, organized according to the research objectives.

### **5.2.1 Characteristics of Female Domestic Workers in Nairobi County**

The second objective was to establish the characteristics of female domestic workers registered under the Househelps Bureaus in Nairobi County. Thirty percent (30%) of the female domestic workers interviewed reported to employers' residences in the morning and left in the evening. The remainder 70% lived and worked under their employers' roof. Hence, majority of the participants lived and worked in employers' residences. 80% of the respondents were over 18 years of age and 50% were primary school dropouts. 50% were single, 30% either divorced or separated and 20% married. 60% of the respondents reported having been taken through training to acquire basic skills to perform their jobs, while the remaining 40% had not been taken through any form of training when they reported to their current work places. All the domestic workers revealed that they had acquired new skills in the course of their employment. These skills, according to the findings, were acquired in past and present employment endeavours. The female domestic workers appreciated the new skills acquired. This, they explained, would enhance their employability.

### **5.2.2 Rules of Engagement Between Female Domestic Workers and Their Employers in Nairobi County**

The first objective was to examine the rules of engagement between female domestic workers registered under the Househelps Bureaus in Nairobi County and their employers in Nairobi.

The findings of the study indicated that 30% receive a pay of between Kshs.4000 - Kshs.6000 per month. Fifty percent (50%) of the interviewed female domestic workers receive a pay of between Kshs.6001 and Kshs.8,000 per month, 10% of them received a monthly pay of between Kshs.8001 and Kshs.10000 while another 10% received a monthly pay of above Kshs.10000. The findings depict that most of the domestic workers received a monthly pay of Kshs.4000- Kshs.8000 and that 80% of the female domestic workers' pay was below the government's minimum wage of Kshs.8613 per month.

The findings indicated that only 30% of the female domestic workers had their employers paying for their NSSF and NHIF. The remaining 70% did not enjoy the benefit of employers paying for their NSSF and NHIF meaning that most of the participants did not enjoy NSSF and NHIF

payment from their employers. Findings showed that eighty percent of the female domestic workers were granted weekly off days while 20% had no weekly off days. Hence, majority of the participants were granted weekly off days by their employers.

### **5.2.3 Working Conditions of Female Domestic Workers in Nairobi County**

The third objective was to assess the working conditions of female domestic workers registered under the Househelps Bureaus in Nairobi County. The findings of the study indicate that out of the 7 female domestic workers who lived with their employers, 60% indicated that the sleeping conditions were comfortable and the remainder 40% indicated that they were not comfortable with the sleeping conditions. Those who indicate that the sleeping conditions were not comfortable revealed that they slept on sofa set, in a store and on the floor. These findings revealed that the female domestic workers did not have good sleep. The study findings showed that 20% of the participants slept for less than 4 hours each day, 50% of the participants slept for atleast 5 hours and only 10% got over 8 hours of sleep. From the study findings, the typical house chores were homogenous across various homes.

The study findings indicated that the female domestic workers left their previous employers due to various issues, including: - violation of their rights, salary delays, accusations of interference with marital issues, health issues, low pay, reduced salaries, mistrust and misunderstandings with their employers. The female domestic workers indicated that their employers had done various bad things to them. These included: termination of job without being paid, accusations of theft, demeaning tasks like being made to wash inner garments and verbal abuse. These acts are a violation of the female domestic workers rights as human beings and secondly as employees.

From the findings, the female domestic workers revealed that their employers treated them the way they did due to trust issues, nature of the employers and employer-employee relationships. The female domestic workers attributed treatment by employers from the engagement they had with them. According to the domestic workers, trust and understanding was important in how they were treatment by their employers. The domestic workers indicated that they desired to be treated with dignity and respect. The domestic workers alluded to being human beings, with equal rights as their employers or any other persons. They also desired to be treated with love and understanding.

The female domestic workers indicated that they had been provided with adequate tools and equipment to facilitate their work. The findings revealed that domestic workers indicated that these tools and equipment had made work easier. They were able to finish their chores in time. Efficiency in execution of chores was also enhanced. The participants gave their suggestions on how working conditions with their employer could be enhanced. The female domestic workers indicated that the relationship with employers could be enhanced through mutual understanding.

The female domestic workers proposed that employers should treat them with respect. The domestic workers asserted that they should be treated with love. They also desired to be guided with dignity, in case they made mistakes at their workplaces. Some of the female domestic workers interviewed suggested that domestic workers jobs be regulated to promote respect. Communication, according to them, should be both ways. This, the domestic workers said, would mitigate any misunderstandings with their employers.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Female domestic workers typical house chores were found to be homogenous across various homes. A significant number of female domestic workers were found to be receiving salaries and wages that fell below the government's minimum wage. Additionally, it was discovered that only 30% of the participants had their employers contributing to their NSSF (National Social Security Fund) and NHIF (National Hospital Insurance Fund). Moreover, the majority of the participants reported being granted weekly days off by their employers.

Majority of the participants lived and worked in employers' residences. Domestic workers acquired new skills in the course of their employment. These skills had been acquired with the worker's past and present employment endeavours. The study showed most of the female domestic workers did have adequate sleep hours. The female domestic workers had been given enough sleep hours by their employers. Adequate tools and equipment were provided to the female domestic workers. This greatly facilitated their work. The workers were able to finish their chores in time. This was due to efficiency in execution of chores.

The study findings indicated that the female domestic workers left their previous employers due to various reasons being - violation of their rights, salary delays, accusations of interference with marital issues, health issues, low pay, reduced salaries, mistrust and misunderstandings from

their employers. Some of the mistreatment that the female domestic workers went through included: termination of job without pay, accusations of theft, made to wash inner garments and verbal abuse.

From the findings, the female domestic workers revealed that their employers treated them the way they did due to trust issues, nature of the employers and employer-employee relationships. Mistrust and misunderstanding greatly affected the way the female domestic workers were treated by their employers. The domestic workers desired to be treated with dignity and respect, with love and understanding.

#### **5.4 Recommendations of the Study**

The study aimed at analyzing the experiences of female domestic workers registered with Househelps Bureaus in Nairobi City County.

##### **5.4.1 Recommendations to Advocacy Groups**

This study recommends that domestic work rules of engagement be formalized. This could be achieved through the recruitment and training be carried out by registered agencies or firms. Advocacy groups could partner with the Ministry of Labour & Social Protection in the country with a view to working on modalities and regulations of formalizing domestic work. Through this, regular clashes between domestic workers and their employer would be resolved. Mistreatment to female domestic workers would consequently be reduced.

This study also recommends to advocacy groups to take up the issue of minimum wage payments paid to most of the female domestic workers in Nairobi. This would involve liaison with the Ministry of Labour & Social Protection in the country to ensure enforcement of the minimum wage guidelines. It would also be important to work on regulations that would make it mandatory for employers to submit NSSF and NHIF payment of domestic workers' behalf. This would promote fairness to domestic workers. It would also secure the domestic workers' healthcare in the course of their employment.

This study recommends that that domestic workers, through informal employment agencies be taught various skills that would be handy in performance of their duties. This would enhance efficiency at work and the ability to negotiate for better salaries and other terms of contract such

as payment of NSSF and NHIF. Advocacy groups should also advocate for better living conditions of the domestic workers. This would enhance their living conditions in employers' houses. It is a recommendation of this study that female domestic workers, through advocacy groups, be provided with a platform to lodge their complaints against mistreatment from their employers. Finally, this study recommends that employers treat the domestic workers with respect, love and dignity. In case of mistakes committed at their workplaces, the study recommends that formal complaints should be lodged and resolved amicably. The general public should be encouraged, by the advocacy groups, to treat female domestic workers with respect and dignity. Communication should be encouraged between the workers and employers. This would mitigate any misunderstandings.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

The research was restricted to the female domestic workers registered with Househelps Bureaus within Nairobi County. Further research could be carried out in other urban areas in Kenya. Other factors that have an influence on experiences of female domestic workers could be the subject of other studies. For example, family and cultural background of the female domestic workers and their upbringing. This study adopted a descriptive study design and recommends future studies to use a mixed-methods research strategy. This would include quantitative techniques, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. This study interviewed only the female domestic workers. Further studies could incorporate employers of domestic workers. This would enhance the findings of the study.

#### **5.5 Contributions to Knowledge**

This study fills the knowledge gap that existed from previous studies. This study focused on the experiences of female domestic workers. There was a contextual gap in the literature from the evaluated studies because they were conducted in other jurisdictions, which have various regulations and experiences with female domestic employees. This study was carried out amongst female domestic workers registered with Househelps Bureaus in Nairobi, Kenya. The study distinctly examined rules of engagement of female domestic workers, characteristics and working conditions of female domestic workers within Nairobi City County, Kenya.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix I: Consent Form**

Greetings. My name is Cynthia Osiro and currently a student at the University of Nairobi undertaking Master of Arts in Women, Leadership & Governance in Africa. I am carrying out a research in Nairobi County.

You have been selected to participate in this study as one of the respondents considering you are a female domestic worker who lives in Nairobi City County. Kindly note that the information you provide will be confidential and shall be used exclusively for the report and your identity will be protected.

You have every right to withdraw from the interview at any time or skip any questions that you are not comfortable discussing. Some of the questions may be difficult to discuss but this provides an opportunity to share your experiences and it's our plan to share the report widely to increase awareness on the oppressive experiences subjected to female domestic workers living in Nairobi City County.

If you agree to this interview sign here as surety of your consent



Sign:.....

## **Appendix II: Interview Guide**

1. What is your age?
2. Do you live with your employer or you are a “day-scholar”?
3. What is your marital status?
4. What is your level of education?
5. How many years have you worked as a domestic worker?
6. How long have you worked for your current employer?
7. Why did you leave your previous employer?
8. What is your typical day at work?
9. How did your current employer find you?

10. Where in your employer's house do you sleep at night?
11. What time do you wake up? What time do you go to sleep?
12. How much are you paid?
13. Does your employer pay for your NHIF, NSSF?
14. Are you granted a day off every week?
15. What's the worst thing that your employer has done to you that made you feel bad?
16. How did you handle the incident?
17. Generally, how does your employer treat you ?
18. Why do you think your employer treats you the way she does?
19. How would you like to be treated by your employer?
20. Which tools/implements have you been provided with to enhance your work?
21. Have you been taught any basic skills to assist you perform your work?

22. If yes, what skills have you learnt to assist perform your work?

23. Where did you learn these skills, if any?

24. In your opinion, what can be done to improve the working conditions with your employer (s)?



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