Exploration of the Child Domestic Workers' Lived Experiences in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Magolanga Shagembe
PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
smagolanga@gmail.com
&
Thomas Ndaluka
Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Thomas.j.ndaluka@gmail.com

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Abstract

This qualitative study, based on a phenomenological design, explored the lived experiences of child domestic workers aged 15 to 18 years in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Children in this age group are above the national and international legal minimum age for admission into light work. The findings of our study indicated that although domestic work is perceived by the child domestic workers as a method for impoverished children between the ages of 15 and 18 to earn money, get experience, and learn new life skills, it also entails loneliness, challenges in assimilating into an unfamiliar social context, and child sexual exploitation and abuse. Also, a significant number of CDWs originate from low-income, rural households, with financial poverty, children's idleness after completion of primary school, and a desire for income serving as important antecedents for their entry into domestic work. The process of social construction of the concepts "a child" and "childhood" includes the idea of typification. Hence, in the Tanzanian socio-cultural atmosphere, domestic work for underprivileged youngsters may be a better alternative for survival than opting for other options like commercial sex work, remaining idle in financially precarious homes, working and living on the streets, and "panya road" (children's criminal gangs). In addition to addressing poverty, ensuring light (domestic work) for children under 18 years, and acknowledging that childhood and its roles differ depending on the sociocultural atmosphere, researchers and policymakers should pay attention to these children's best interests, socio-cultural realities, and their

perspectives and worries regarding this phenomenon in a quest to developing research-driven interventions and policies.

Key Words: *lived experiences, child domestic workers, domestic work*

Introduction

Societies have different notions about "a child" and "childhood," which results in an odd philosophical perspective on "a child" and "childhood" (Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2017). The Eurocentric view of childhood portrays it as a period of independence, naiveté, and dependency and seeks to prevent children from entering work to prevent them from being exploited (Liebel, 2004). The basis of this perspective is the premise that "childhood free from work" will provide children adequate time to play, grow, learn, and enjoy being children (Gunnlaugsson, 2022). However, this perspective has come under criticism for disregarding and suppressing the traditional values of indigenous people, imposing structures on them, and seeing childhood as a universal social phenomenon (Shahadah, 2005). Again, from the sociocultural milieu, whether a child has a "*free from work"* childhood or not depends on the sociocultural context in which they are born, nurtured, and develop. As a result, the Eurocentric perspective of "ideal childhood" as a benchmark for acceptable and unacceptable lifestyles for children fails to capture the reality of the majority of children's lives around the world, particularly in mid-income and low-income countries (Hart & Tyner, 2006; Beazley et al., 2009; Ansell, 2017; Omorogiuwa, 2017).

In light of this, it is not surprising to find young children in African and Asian cultures engaged in labor-intensive family production in an effort to maintain the family's subsistence economy (Abebe & Bessell, 2011; Gunnlaugsson, 2022). Since the earliest days in the African environment, domestic work has been a major part of daily life. Children have helped their mothers by producing food and searching for water and firewood. Domestic work is a traditional and/or natural kind of rearing, and children doing household duties for their own families and children doing domestic work may accomplish comparable tasks, but what distinguishes them is mostly the employment component (Ganie et al*.,* 2013). Consequently, children, and young girls in particular, migrate to urban areas in search of domestic work for both

economic reasons and as a means to escape early marriage. Hiring a child as a domestic worker is a typical practice in both rural and urban contexts (Blerk, 2016). Omorogiuwa (2017) supports this by contending that social, cultural, and economic factors inherent in the African environment may be used to explain childhood and working children's experiences in Africa.

Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals seeks to eliminate children's participation in work by 2025, but CDWs are becoming increasingly popular due to demand and supply, difficulties in balancing work and family obligations, and rising female labour market involvement (ILO, 2016; Winarni, 2018; Singh & Pattanaik, 2020). Hence, according to Thevenon and Edmonds (2019), almost one in ten children (152 million in total) in the age group of 5–17 years are employed globally. Child domestic work (CDW) is a major issue in developing nations, with 168 million children aged 5–17 expected to be working as minors in 2012 (Thevenon & Edmonds, 2019). This has sparked debates about whether or not children under 18 should be allowed to work as domestic workers, particularly those at or above the international legal minimum age for admission to work, which is 14 years. However, some studies, such as Aufseeser et al. (2018) and Maconachie et al. (2022), claim that finding work for children may meet their material requirements, pay for their education, help them learn new things, boost their competence and self-esteem, and prepare them for adulthood.

Nevertheless, the scholarly discussions on child domestic workers, from their definition to their acceptability, have been impacted by the prevalent global discourses on working children. However, internationally and in the context of this study, "child domestic workers" (CDWs) refers to all children and young people under the age of 18 who work in other people's families (outside their own families), performing domestic tasks like cooking, cleaning, gardening, caring for the children, elderly, and sick, tending the garden, caring for animals, running errands, and helping their employers run their small businesses, among other tasks, for a wage (UNICEF, 1999; Kaphle, 2006; Klocker, 2014; Blagbrough, 2018).

In light of this, it is important to note that working children as a social category have paradoxically lost their profile and disappeared as players on

the international stage ever since children's employment was for a long time referred to as a "social problem" in the capitalist world, particularly in Europe and North America (Liebel, 2004). It has long been seen as one of the most significant societal issues, including human rights breaches, in the modern era (Gafur, 2017). However, Matogwa (2021) asserts that the definition of a social problem has always been up for debate. As a result, what would be considered a social issue in the context of European imperialism may not always be viewed as such in African societies. For instance, despite substantial international efforts to address the issue, children continue to work, primarily in agriculture and domestic work, in undeveloped countries like those in Africa (Black, 2002; Villiers & Taylor, 2019).

However, the existing literature, such as that by Bhat (2005), Anti-Slavery International (2014), Jacquemin (2004), and Blagbrough (2008), concentrates on negative work-related experiences utilizing the positivism paradigm or studies domestic work more generally, regardless of age, and involves adults, often employers and community members, as study participants, leading to limited information on CDW's lived experiences in Tanzania (Caroline-Emberson & Wyman, 2020). While there are valid reasons to include adults in studies on child domestic workers, it is crucial to hear the children themselves describe their personal experiences related to their work because adults' perspectives are likely to be influenced by their own personal experiences and preconceptions (Levison, 2000).

Due to some gaps in the literature and the disregard for the legal minimum age for children's admission to work, research on child domestic workers in Tanzania is still relevant and significant. For instance, primary education in Tanzania begins at ages six and seven and lasts for seven years, meaning that ages 15–18 are no longer considered school age, except if the concerned continue their education in secondary or vocational schools. In addition, research on child domestic work is mostly conducted by economists and positivist researchers and quantified using positivist and empiricist frameworks (Walakira, 2009). This study used an interpretivist and constructivist paradigm with a phenomenological design to explore the work-related experiences of child domestic workers (15–18 years old) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, because these children are older than the international

minimum age for admission to work (Law of the Child Act, 2009, and ILO Convention No. 138 of 1998). The main goal was to increase the "stock of knowledge" by adding viewpoints from CDWs themselves, who were considered significant players in the phenomenon.

This study is organized into four sections. The problem of the study and setting have been established in the first section. The methodology and theoretical underpinnings were presented and justified in the second section. The third section of this study presents, analyzes, and discusses the lived experiences of the CDWs in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The fourth section presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Methodology

Schutz's phenomenological sociology was used as a framework to explore the lived experiences of child domestic workers through in-depth interviews and field observation. A qualitative approach and phenomenological design were used to provide a detailed account and description of such lived experiences. The starting point for the analysis was the roles of agency, context, and subjectivity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This study used purposeful and snowball sampling techniques to recruit 29 child domestic workers aged between 15 and 18 years old in the five municipalities of the Dar es Salaam Region: Temeke Municipal Council, Kinondoni Municipal Council, Ilala Municipal Council, Ubungo Municipal Council, and Kigamboni Municipal Council. All of the CDWs “lived-in” their employers’ households, and the majority of the CDWs (n = 22, 75.9%) were girls, and seven (24.1%) were boys. The majority had an experience of 12–24 months, 37.9 percent 6–12 months, and 17.3 percent more than 24 months. 58.6 percent had completed primary school, 27.6 percent had no formal education and/or were dropouts, and 13.8 percent had completed secondary school.

The first point of contact came from both casual and official discussions with local authorities, who introduced us to families with CDWs under the age of 18. The researchers then approached the employers to request authorization to use child domestic workers under their control as study participants. The researchers explained all the components, rationality, and procedures of the study to both employers and CDWs. Additionally, the researchers responded

to inquiries from CDWs and employers about this study. The confidentiality and sensitivity of the information supplied in this study were the participants' main issues of concern. Employers gave written consent for their CDWs to participate in this study after being thoroughly briefed and reassured about the confidentiality issue. The participants were interviewed in their homes, other locations where they felt more comfortable, like play grounds, or the employers' offices (when the employers were not there) to minimize distractions.

Findings and Discussion

The child domestic workers described their first-hand accounts of working at employers' homes and their domestic work narratives. The themes that surfaced following the IDIs were reflective of the participants' personal experiences with domestic work, as evident in the following sections.

Children's Mode of Entry into Domestic Work

Most of the CDWs who participated in the study (23 of them) claimed that social links between their families and the employers' families contributed to their introduction to domestic work, while for the other six, it was their own decision. In addition, the bulk of the CDWs in the present study had moved from rural areas to Dar es Salaam, where they had done so in order to work as domestic workers or in any other employment opportunity that was readily accessible to them. For instance, Sikujua (a fictitious name) shared her story of becoming a domestic worker.

Box 1: Story of a 15-year old female child domestic worker on how she became a domestic worker

Sikujua began working as a household worker in Ubungo Makuburi when she was just 14 years old. She describes her experience as follows:

"I recall that it was last year that my "dada" came to our community in Busokelo Mwanza for the purpose of attending a wedding. She also made it known to my mother that she was looking for a domestic worker and discussed with her the potential of taking me with her in order to sustain my life and the lives of our family. My mother consented to allowing me

to travel to this city to work as a domestic worker because we were very poor and I wasn't in school.

I was overjoyed to have landed the position and saw it as an opportunity to help my family and get away from my difficult existence. Besides, because of my age, "dada" has been giving money to my mother, and that money is used to meet the necessities of the family" (IDI No. 2 with a female CDW in Ubungo, September 6, 2021).

The scenario in Box 1 above demonstrates how social relationships between the parents' and employers' families played a major role in determining whether CDWs were allowed to work as domestic workers. This finding suggests that children's participation in domestic work is influenced by social systems related to one another, such as the parents' financial need and employers' demand for a CDW. Participants consensually expressed related views on their entry into domestic work throughout the interviews, as evidenced below:

> *"...sometimes we successfully complete primary education, but since our families can't afford to send us to secondary school, we choose to look for employment rather than merely staying at home, getting married, or having unexpected pregnancies. For instance, my parents could not afford to purchase me a school uniform or rent a room for the whole of the school year because our secondary school is a bit out of the way from our hamlet. I was meant to start Form One in 2019. I consequently had no choice but to look for a job like this"* (IDI No. 13 with a female CDW in Kigamboni, November 14, 2021)

According to the excerpt above, some families' inability to pay for their children to attend secondary education after they successfully completed primary school led some children, like the one in the statement that was quoted above, to look for jobs like domestic work because they saw it as a way to avoid staying idle at home, getting married too young, and/or ending up with unexpected pregnancies. This research sheds light on the 2015-2016 Tanzania

Demographic Health Survey (TDHS) findings that showed an increase of 5 percent in teenage girls marrying at the age range of 15-19 years, compared to the 2010 survey. For instance, Tanzania has implemented policies and strategies to combat poverty, such as the National Poverty Eradication Strategy of 1998 and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, but rural areas still have the highest rates of poverty (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, 2010; Magombeyi & Odhiambo, 2016). Hence, the rise in CDWs is likely due to the need for basic necessities, such as food and clothes, from financially strapped families. Children may accept employment as a way to escape the difficulties they face at home. In agreement with the findings above, a participant from Kinondoni had this to say:

> *"The bulk of us typically remain inactive after completing primary school, so those who are both faithful and skilled at arithmetic get recruited easily for domestic work. What would happen if they (the employers) came to the villages in search of domestic workers? The historical background, in particular the family features, would be the major factor utilized to recruit these people. On my side, I was residing with my aunt, who had two businesses. She closed one of them while her younger sister helped her with the other. She made the decision to connect me with my current employer, so I had to travel to Bunju. As we were unable to continue with our education through secondary school, it goes without saying that this employment is readily available to the less fortunate"* (IDI No. 8 with a female CDW in Kinondoni, 10 November 2021).

According to the cited statement above, domestic work is a readily available career option for child domestic workers, but a lack of formal and professional training programs may lead to the perception that it is unskilled work. It is now necessary for society to abandon this conviction, as domestic work needs to be formalized and made decent, while taking into account the legal minimum age for children's admission into work. Formal training for domestic workers is likely to help them better understand their roles and the knowledge and skills required to perform those roles, and gain more self-

confidence. The children interviewed in this study often adopted domestic work as a backup plan after failing the standard seven national examinations. This situation is what is referred to as "*an existential typification*" in phenomenological sociology, as the CDWs were likely to develop these notions as they navigated through their immediate socio-cultural contexts (Schutz, 1962).

Similar experiences were postulated in the findings of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) (2016) study on a situational analysis of domestic workers in the United Republic of Tanzania. Kinship relationships are among the conditions that make it easier for child domestic workers, particularly those from rural areas, to find employment in urban settings. Child domestic workers use networks of friends, neighbors, housemates, ethnic group members, and prostitutes as their entry points into employment. This study focuses on domestic workers aged 15-18 years, whose circumstances may differ from those of adults. Adults may have more negotiating power over their pay than children, as they may make their own decisions. Besides, this study found that child domestic workers and their families are an integral part of children's participation in domestic work. Any intervention involving child domestic workers must include measures at several levels, including those affecting families, societies, and national laws as well as the child domestic workers themselves. According to the assumptions of the phenomenological theory, the subjective perspectives and experiences of the children about domestic work are essential for providing effective help and developing legislation that is appropriate for child domestic workers and takes into account the Tanzanian context.

Duties and Responsibilities of Child Domestic Workers

The findings showed that child domestic workers handle a wide range of duties in their employers' homes; therefore, their responsibilities may be broadly divided into nurturant and non-nurturant tasks. There was a common theme across the comments, indicating that CDWs have been carrying out a variety of homemaking and care responsibilities in their employers' homes, allowing the employers and other members of their employers' families to engage in their everyday activities. Pili (a fictional name) describes her typical day as a domestic worker in Kinondoni, which includes preparing breakfast

for the family, preparing the employer's three-year-old son for school, taking him to the school bus stop, coming back home, and cleaning the house. She remarked:

> *"I often wake up at around 5:00 a.m. each day to start preparing meals for my younger brother and get him ready for school. Thus, I am always the first to wake up but the last to sleep, and I usually go to bed at around 11:00 p.m. each day*" (IDI/female CDW in Kinondoni, 16th October, 2021).

A typical Pili's day begins at 5:00 a.m. and ends at 11:00 p.m., with CDWs spending time caring for the family, cooking meals, washing clothes and dishes, going to the "*genge*" (food kiosks) and the shop, ironing, leading the children to and from the bus stop, and cleaning the house. It almost goes without saying that taking care of the children and doing household chores like cooking, washing dishes, cleaning the house, gardening, keeping an eye on the house, caring for any household pets, doing weekly shopping and getting supplies, making beds, washing the car, and caring for the elderly were always common tasks among the CDWs interviewed for this study. An A-type personality[9] with passion and enthusiasm for caring for the children and doing household duties was required to succeed as a domestic worker.

Similar to this, a different female CDW from Temeke stated her daily responsibilities as follows:

> *"I often take care of the children, prepare and escort them to and from school, and do household chores like wash the dishes, cook, and do the laundry."* (IDI No. 28 with a female CDW in Temeke, February 12, 2022).

The CDWs interviewed for this study performed a variety of domestic duties, such as taking care of the children, cooking, washing dishes, cleaning the

[9] Individuals with A-type personalities frequently flourish in fast-paced environments and can be highly self-driven and goal-oriented. Due to their race against time and belief that time is precious and should not be wasted, they are also inclined to take on numerous jobs at once and regularly accept more duties in order to succeed (Yazici & Altun, 2013)

house, gardening, keeping an eye on the house, caring for pets, doing weekly shopping, making beds, washing the car, and caring for the elderly. This finding implies that an A-type personality with passion and enthusiasm for caring for the children and doing household duties is required to succeed as a domestic worker. Once more, the child domestic workers ought to be dependable and healthy enough, both physically and mentally, to carry out their assigned responsibilities for most of the day.

Researchers also observed CDWs in the field performing tasks such as caring for children, the elderly, and the sick. However, all of the duties carried out by children in DW are similar to those carried out in unpaid domestic chores in their own homes and are not included in the definitions of child employment or child labor (Thevenon & Edmonds, 2019). This study argues that Western perspectives on childhood are not necessarily representing Tanzania's context, contrary to existing literature such as those by Liebel (2004) and Gunnlaugsson (2022), as children, parents, and employers may frequently see no problem in CDWs because children's participation in DW in Tanzania is grounded in socio-cultural practices about children's upbringing. For instance, Thevenon and Edmonds (2019) discovered that Africa frequently scores top in the proportion of children working, with 1 in 5 children under the age of 18 presumably working, whether at their employer's house, on the street, or at their biological family's home.

The authors of this study, therefore, contend that the reality of child domestic workers in Tanzania is permeated with the notion that using children as domestic servants is not a problem. Thus, any effort to combat or regulate it should focus on the opinions and issues that CDWs have with it. For example, the CDWs interviewed for this study were over the legal age limit to work in Tanzania, and the majority of them had either completed or left primary school. Because of their limited formal education, the majority of them considered domestic work a way to augment it and support their families. It is, therefore, essential to pay attention to their concerns and uncertainties in DW. Schutz's phenomenological sociology which suggests that social scientists should analyze social life from the perspective of the subjective meanings of everyday actors while preserving an objective mindset (Harrington, 2000). It is important to avoid having preconceived notions about

the lived experiences of child domestic workers and instead focus on their "biographical situation" in the social world as a result of their prior exposure to domestic chores. Their common sense has a "stock of knowledge at hand", and their understanding of right and wrong in relation to their participation in DW is generally accurate.

"*I Must Work to Eat, Escape Idleness, and Support My Family*": Reasons for Children's Participation in Domestic Work

It was also found that many CDWs, particularly from rural Tanzania, chose domestic work as a way to make ends meet and get out of financial hardship. They were happy and grateful to be working as domestic workers, as it gave them a chance to provide for their biological families financially. This suggests that some parents send their children, while other children decide on their own to work in urban areas to alleviate their families' poverty. Domestic workers are an essential support system for low-income families in rural regions, as they could use their income to support their extended family, avoid financial difficulty, and/or cope with life's disasters. An 18-year-old male participant discussed the reasons for the children's choice of domestic work. He remarked:

> *"There are several explanations for why children choose domestic work... For instance, if a child successfully completes standard seven studies but, due to poverty, his or her parents are unable to afford to feed him or her and send them to higher education, it becomes necessary for that child to find domestic work for his or her own gain, such as getting access to food and supporting the family, instead of just staying at home. In contrast to where I'm from, I have a better life in this family and eat well, which is why I mentioned that home life is difficult. I also look good here."* (IDI/ male CDW in Temeke, October 20, 2021).

The CDW explains that his parents were unable to pay for school expenses, leading him to drop out of school and opt for domestic work to earn a living and provide support to the family. His experience with domestic work and life in the employer's family impresses him compared to what he experienced

in his biological family. This suggests that these children have a dire need for survival, so they opt for easily accessible jobs like domestic work.

Schutz's (1962) and Schutz and Luckmann's (1973) assumptions suggest that a person's understanding of a social reality is influenced by their common-sense knowledge. Domestic work is a common kind of employment for many children, especially after either completing or dropping out of primary school, and it may provide some children with a way out of abusive guardianships or parenthood. However, domestic work should not be considered a safe environment for all children under the age of eligibility for work and not just a way for children to get away from violence against children (VAC) in their biological families. This entails that children need to be safe and free from any kind of violence, whether in or outside their biological families. This study found that a drop-in children's domestic work engagement is only likely to happen if their families' economic circumstances improve. This may explain why there are 86.6 million children working in sub-Saharan Africa, where agriculture employs four out of every five children (FAO, 2021).

Field observation also revealed that all CDWs lived in the families of their employers, making them less likely to incur extra living expenses. For instance, given that the CDWs' workplace is frequently their employer's home, where most of them eat and sleep for free, no transportation expense is required to get to and from work, and they are not required to pay expenses like electricity and water bills, the impact of their low pay was significantly less than it would have been if they were living outside of their employers' households. Furthermore, this should not be used as a justification for not regulating their work, including setting a wage that is fairly reasonable for the role that they play.

Employer-employee relationship for child domestic workers: being treated as family members, not as workers or employees

This study found that informal contractual agreements between CDWs and their employers were common. The majority of CDWs expressed their appreciation for being treated more like family than like employees by their employers and/or the employer's relatives. The IDIs conducted with CDWs indicated that the degree to which the CDWs feel like they are a member of

the employer's family affects the formation of a positive and meaningful relationship between the employers and the CDWs rather than how much money they are paid. Vero (not her real name) had this to say in that regard:

> *It is impossible to conceive of and believe it... Creating stories with my family members (here) took up nearly four hours of my day today. and the fact that my boss refers to me as "mwanangu," which is Swahili for "my child," instead of Vee or Vero (not her real name). As a result, she is the mother of every child in that home, and I myself appreciate it in contrast to someone who would treat me like a worker or employee"* (IDI/ a female CDW in Ilala, 11th October, 2021)

This participant made it apparent why she enjoyed being referred to as her employer's daughter (without using her name) and that she felt good about being treated as a family member in her employer's family. The most important details in the quoted statement above are that most child domestic workers receive fair and just treatment in the homes of their employers and that they value it as an honor and a source of pride. Contrary to how it has been described by other researchers such as Bhat (2005), Jacquemin (2004), and Blagbrough (2008), Schutz's phenomenological sociology suggests that child domestic workers perceive fair and reasonable treatment from their employers as an opportunity rather than a threat to their lives. However, some employers may use this circumstance as justification for failing to pay CDWs and for imposing additional duties on the workers, such as making them work on public holidays. However, the benefits of feeling like a valued and important part of the employer's family generally outweigh the drawbacks.

Shagembe and Ndaluka (2022) assert that many people who hire child domestic workers think of them as members of their families and that being treated as a member of the employers' families entails a variety of things like sharing meals, receiving fair treatment, and participating in shared recreational activities. Consequently, the primary performance measure for a child domestic worker is how much affection is shown to the family, in particular the children. Also, because the job relationship in DW focuses on a

particularly private area and blurs the lines between work and family, custom and contract, love and duty, and the house and the outside world, domestic work performed by children is typically not seen as "real work" (Beswick et al., 2010). The employer's household is the workplace for domestic workers, according to a Punjab study conducted by Rani and Saluja (2018). It is, therefore, expected that the employer-employee relationship is frequently not restricted to work but enforced as much as it is for the larger sustaining systems. By providing context-specific information from Tanzania, this study expands the stock of knowledge.

Nonetheless, one participant spoke of her pleasant job experiences in terms of how much she valued being treated like a biological family member of the employer. The main factors that made her appreciate working as a domestic worker, as opposed to if she had none, were love, respect, support from the neighborhood, and being regarded like a family member. In her words, this is what she said:

> *The family is full of love; the parents as well as the children respect me very much, and the children treat me like their blood sister. There are many things I adore about living here. Also, incredibly supportive are the neighbors. Again, I am fortunate to be employed by this family since mom frequently takes us out on outings and shopping excursions during her time off from work and sometimes just after she gets home from work. She purchases staff for all of us without distinction, and I am content. What I receive from this place gives me joy and purpose in life.* (IDI/ a female CDW in Kinondoni, 9th November, 2021).

According to the statement that was cited above, having supportive neighbors, feeling loved by family members of the employer, and being treated with respect all contribute to a person's sense of satisfaction, joy, and purpose in life. Similar to the participant quoted above, a majority of CDWs expressed greater admiration and gratitude in regard to their work. Hence, in the context of this study, a child domestic worker is likely to view domestic work as a beneficial opportunity rather than a threat, as documented in many other prior

studies, and this experience is likely to improve the children's psychological wellbeing (Bhat, 2005; Jacquemin, 2004; Blagbrough, 2008; Anti-Slavery International, 2014). The experience of the CDWs represented above, in accordance with a theory of phenomenological sociology, is what creates subjectivity in life events. The finding of this study suggests that while it may be conventional to view child domestic work as a "toxic" kind of employment for children, a portion of children really prefer working as domestic workers versus being idle at home with their biological families, especially after they have completed or dropped out of primary school (Blagbrough, 2008). Black and Blagbrough (1999) noted that despite all the exploitative and/or abusive conditions, child domestic workers develop a sense of obligation to their parents or families to remain with the employer and make the most of the "opportunity" or to continue sending money received from salary or pay home.

Gaining new skills through Child Domestic Work

The study also found that some child domestic workers have the chance to augment their meagre formal education with new life skills, which help them better prepare for adulthood. Due to this theme, it is typical for African families to require their children to work because they believe that by doing so, their children will learn more, particularly in the areas of social skills and self-esteem. Of the participants, one said that:

> *I personally appreciate my job; I like having a clear head, and I like the chance I have to work with the appropriate individuals. I get compensated based on the revenue our office generates each day, though sometimes I don't get paid much. But occasionally, even if the pay is modest, I typically leave the office content and happy because I get the chance to run my other online business through the offices of my employers. I can now use my smartphone to play around and look for customers for my online business. I purchase items like handbags, shoes, mobile phones, accessories, weavings, and other cosmetics from China, and after selling them, I make a lot of money. You shouldn't assume that I am a typical domestic worker since I am also*

> *a businessman, and I learned how to be one from my employer* (IDI/ a male CDW in Ilala, 6th November, 2021).

Another participant from Kinondoni argued that:

> *First of all, I am now accustomed to budgeting; my employer just provides me with the money so that I can decide what sort of meals to buy and prepare. Even when I return home, I will be a totally different person from who I was before because of this crucial talent that will aid me in my future. I can now make a wide range of meals and snacks, including chapati (pancakes)."* (IDI/ a female CDW in Ubungo, 13th February, 2022)

The researchers found that CDWs enjoy living in their employers' homes for a variety of reasons, such as having the chance to pick up life skills. They argue that discourses on children's participation in domestic work need to be re-examined as they tend to emphasize potential negative effects while ignoring positive ones. This has led to widespread presumptions that preventing children under the age of 18 from engaging in any type of job is necessary for their welfare. According to the CDWs' accounts provided for this study, many children of the 15 - 18 age group in Tanzania would theoretically be denied the opportunity to develop a variety of life skills through employment, if this supposition were to be true.

Although, in the Tanzanian context, much focus should be placed on improving the working conditions of these children, as long as they have completed primary education and are older than the legal minimum age for admitting children to the workforce, it is also important to pay close attention to their lived experiences in order to understand their challenges and concerns so that appropriate policies can be made to protect their rights, and act in their best interests. This means that the meanings that CDWs assign to their lived experiences, according to Schutz's phenomenological sociology, are not always what the prevailing discourses on child domestic work presume to be true.

It is worth noting here that domestic work is considered by the CDWs as a way for children to make a living and acquire life skills that are essential for

their present and future livelihoods. Therefore, denying children in this age group access to work may not necessarily improve their lives, but instead, make them worse. For example, when child garment factory employees were fired in Bangladesh, the children's struggles in life forced them to pursue jobs that were reportedly worse than making clothes or weaving carpets (Boyden, 1997). Child domestic work is seen as an integral part of a child's good upbringing and socialization. Thus, it is important to consider the sociocultural and political contexts in which children are born and raised (Miljeteig, 2000; Black, 2003; Okyere, 2013).

Experience of child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) among Child Domestic Workers

The findings from this study indicated that sexual abuse and exploitation were widely shared negative experiences among CDWs. The CDWs, particularly girls, were vulnerable to sexual assault in the homes of their employers. The CDWs' replies, however, suggested that the majority of sexual assault instances went unreported. The fact that these CDWs use their employers' residences as their place of residence may make this situation worse. When asked about their negative work experience with child domestic work, one of the CDWs stated explicitly that:

> *Of course, everything excellent also has a negative side. The fact that my boss' spouse wants to establish a sexual relationship with me is one of my work's toughest obstacles. He has been bothering me, especially while his wife is not at home. But I have been rejecting. He would sometimes call me into his room and try to touch me, but I would threaten him with telling his wife if he went ahead, so he would stop. I haven't reported it anywhere yet since I am aware that doing so would put my work in danger* (IDI/ a female CDW in Kigamboni, 17th February, 2022).

Another participant from Temeke supported the aforementioned statement by saying that:

> *My male employer wanted to be in a sexual relationship with me, which was another hurdle and something I'll never forget... He started to hate me when I refused. He repeatedly bothered me, particularly while his wife was away"* (IDI/ a female CDW in Temeke, 10th November, 2021).

According to the CDWs, everything good has a downside, as the aforementioned excerpts demonstrate. For instance, the CDW in the first statement notes that one of the greatest difficulties she faces at work is the disruption she experiences from her employer's spouse as he tries to develop a sexual connection with her. Although she uses intimidation as a defensive tactic, she exhibits perseverance by refusing to accept her efforts. For the purpose of keeping her employment, she also revealed why her incident hasn't yet been reported. This finding implies that these CDWs need protection and education to report sexual abuse, as well as mental health and psychosocial support to protect their mental health. Some CDWs, particularly girls, were vulnerable to sexual abuse by family members of their employers, such as the employers' sons. The CDWs admitted that they sometimes refused to go along with such customs, leading to males despising them.

According to data from previous literature, this type of violence may be destructive to the mental health and psychosocial functioning of CDWs. Thus, they may engage in additional hazardous activities like commercial sex work to make a livelihood in an effort to avoid sexual violence that is incorporated into domestic work (Matheka et al., 2020). Also, child domestic workers are most vulnerable to sexual abuse due to the social stigma associated with it and the financial pressure to continue working, regardless of what happens. They often do their work in the employer's home's private space, making it difficult for them to report incidents. Moreover, female bosses have sometimes condemned CDWs who had been subjected to sexual abuse for wooing male household members (Patil & Moses, 1999).

Child domestic workers' experiences with abuse and harassment

Consistently, CDWs complained of being mistreated by their employers and other members of the employers' families. They expressed anxiety over experiencing various sorts of violence, including physical and verbal harassment. Nevertheless, it was noticed that the many of abusive incidents that the CDWs disclosed went unreported because they were nervous about being fired. For example, participants claimed to have received verbal abuse or physical violence for failing to do certain activities as instructed or when they performed those activities below the desired levels. A 17-year-old CDW from Ilala described how she felt about being pressured to do her tasks more quickly than she was capable of in the following way:

> *I personally despise how they continuously pressurize me to do tasks as quickly as possible, even when I lack the necessary skills and am unable to do so. I have to complete the tasks at my own pace; it's not that I don't prefer to get them done on time"* (IDI/ a female CDW in Ilala, 9th September, 2021).

Similarly, another participant from Temeke emphasized being overworked as a challenge to her, as she stated:

> *As I have said, there are certain problems with our work. While other family members are at work or away on business, we perform a variety of activities, including cooking, cleaning clothes and dishes, and caring for the children. As a result, there are a lot of tasks to complete. Almost every day of the week is a call for us.* (IDI/ a female CDW in Temeke, 13th September, 2021)

As the aforementioned extracts show, CDWs in some households were subjected to severe treatment from either their employers' family members or their employers' employers, or both. Maltreatment took many different forms, including being overworked and having unreasonable demands made of them by their employers, especially on job fulfilment, regardless of their ability to work. Overworking is likely to jeopardize the CDWs' physical and mental health, and this seems to be contrary to the standard stipulated by the ILO for

maximum working hours of forty-eight hours a week, at an average of eight hours a day, with at least two days off per week (Mramba & Mhando, 2020).

In her study, D'Souza (2010) noted that physical aggression, such as slaps, hair pulling or cutting, severe beatings, or scalding with irons or hot water, is a frequent response of irate employers whenever the CDW follows instructions too slowly or inadequately, forgets tasks, or wrecks property in the home. Similar to this, Namuggala (2015) noted in her research in Uganda that because CDWs are socialized and trained to keep family affairs private, it is difficult for them to speak up on concerns of exploitation and abuse. As a result, CDWs frequently refer to their employers in the Tanzanian setting as moms, dads, aunts, sisters, uncles, and brothers, which fosters a feeling of familial solidarity. As a result, it is to be expected that CDWs frequently view themselves as members of the employer's family and, as a result, frequently suffer in silence.

However, it is crucial to note that the study found that abuse and harassment were experienced alongside other positive work-related experiences such as being treated like family, learning new life skills, and being a source of income for the CDWs and their families. Therefore, it makes sense that CDWs frequently view themselves as members of the employer's family and frequently endure their suffering in silence. To address this, it is important to enable CDWs to be candid and speak up in the event of any abuse or harassment, as long as they are older than the minimum age for entrance to work (15-18 years old).

Experience of a sense of isolation in child domestic work

Findings demonstrate that many CDWs moved to Dar es Salaam from their areas as domestic workers, which caused them to be separated from their families. The CDWs cited "missing home" as one of the obstacles they faced in domestic work as a result of working far from their home villages and being separated from their parents, guardians, and other relatives. Further, the nature of their work necessitated that they spend much of their time alone and with little freedom of movement in the residences of their employers. As a result, CDWs felt lonely, as demonstrated by the comment made by a male CDW in Ilala below:

> *The main problem I have is that I really miss home. But when I consider the state of our family and the life I had after completing primary school, I get perplexed. For instance, I'd like to go to my aunt's wedding, but when I consider the lifestyle my parents lead at home, I feel ashamed. Consequently, I'm planning to bring a bed and mattress home with me on the day I decide to return, so that even my parents will be proud of the years they went without seeing their son* (IDI/ a male CDW in Ilala, 17th January, 2022).

This participant was worried about how he handled the conflict between yearning for home and returning there with just his bare hands. This is what many CDWs remarked, since they frequently stated that they would go for a few years without returning to their homes and that this was brought on by either a pressing need to keep their jobs or a lack of authorization to return home. Due to comparisons they drew with other children of their age (their peers), particularly those who did not perform domestic work, other CDWs felt unhappy with their lives. According to a participant from Temeke:

> *I have absolutely no happiness in my life because I observe how other children are distinct from me, and I feel resentful of them... Can you imagine how some people live with their parents, family members, and other loved ones, go to school, and have all of their needs met, while I work as a domestic servant and spend a lot of my time at work?* (IDI/ a female CDW in Temeke, 10th February, 2022)

As the aforementioned excerpt illustrates, children may be more vulnerable than adults due to their age when dealing with a new work environment and new responsibilities. In general, the proportion of children between the ages of 15-18 who are NEETs (not in employment, education, or training) as well as those who live in working-class circumstances throughout the world is rising rapidly (with Africa having the highest rate). While the extent of child labor in domestic work has been properly examined in international discourses

and studies, raising doubts about children's participation in domestic work, the reality in Africa is still up for debate.

In Tanzania, for example, most children begin primary school at the age of 6 or 7 and complete the level at age 13 or 14. Due to their lack of formal education and training, those who do not succeed in formal schooling or other vocational training find themselves unemployed and unprepared to deal with child poverty and employment market challenges. They choose jobs that are easy to reach as a result, with domestic work being one of them. On this foundation, the study presents the two facets of child domestic work, encompassing both positive and negative work experiences.

According to D'Souza (2010), domestic work provides impoverished, rural youngsters with little access to school with an easy path to employment, despite having low employability. Domestic labor is traditionally the most popular method of transferring wealth from the wealthy to the poor, and it might significantly aid in the fight against poverty if it were done under fair and humane working conditions. It is a rare chance for many children, especially young girls, to make money in an acceptable way and obtain some control over their financial resources. However, due to their lack of success in the formal educational system, they have few job prospects, leaving them unsettled and dependent on their clients (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007).

Consequently, the "good" and "bad" employers are the ones who draw a distinction between CDWs who have positive experiences with domestic work and those who have negative ones. Nevertheless, Tanzania's Law of the Child Act, 2009, notes that children have the right to light work and that the minimum age for employment or engagement for a child is 14 years. According to the law, "light work" is defined as work that is not expected to be detrimental to a child's health or development and that does not interfere with a child's ability to attend school, participate in training programs for a particular career, or benefit from schoolwork. In addition, the law forbids anyone from employing or using a minor in any form of exploitative work (The Law of the Child Act, 2009). This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on child domestic employment, usually muddled in the idea of

"child labor," by utilizing empirical evidence from a phenomenological study done in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Conclusion

According to this study, CDWs aged between 15 and 18 in Dar es Salaam have a variety of work-related experiences, both positive and negative. The adoption of domestic work as a source of income and sustenance, the treatment of child domestic workers as "fictive kin" in employers' households, and the development of new life skills are examples of positive experiences. Negative experiences included loneliness, harsh treatment from employers, trouble adjusting to new sociocultural environments, and child sexual exploitation and abuse. The aforementioned findings imply that child domestic workers' (CDW) lived experiences—both positive and negative—are unavoidable, as would be expected in any kind of formal or informal employment. Since most CDWs come from low-income rural households, finding domestic employment for disadvantaged children from rural areas may be preferable to other survival strategies like theft, begging, "*panya road*" (children's criminal gangs), and commercial sex work. Finding someone from the city to take the child was viewed as an opportunity for the children to avoid being idle and for the parents to gain financial support. An additional concern that frequently surfaced was the issue of staying idle at home after completing or dropping out of primary school.

It is crucial to consider the circumstances of Tanzanian children between the ages of 15 and 18 who are pushed into domestic work because they lack formal schooling or vocational training. Research and government initiatives should concentrate on influencing laws that guarantee children above the legal minimum age for admission into work have decent employment opportunities within or outside domestic work, such as those that require formal contracts, a minimum living wage, safe workplaces, pensions, and social security. Family hardship is a significant barrier for some CDWs, who may not want to quit their current work. Children's engagement in work differs depending on socio-cultural situations; thus, policymakers should pay attention to these children's best interests, socio-cultural realities, their perspectives and concerns; address poverty and other issues that push them into unfavorable conditions in domestic work, control their employment, and

be aware of the reality that socio-cultural context matters in social structures; thus, what is suitable in the western context might not be necessarily suitable in the African context, and vice versa.

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