

The Emerging Trends On The Girl-Child Urban Domestic Service In Eldoret, Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract: One in six children aged 5 to 14 years old which is about 16 percent of all children in this age group is involved in child labor in developing countries. In the least developed countries, 30 percent of all children are engaged in child labor. In Kenya, the Central Bureau of Statistics reports that 1.9 million children aged 5-17 years are working for pay or family gain. In recognition of the adverse effects of child labour and abuse, international and national efforts have been made to control it. Nevertheless child labour persists as several surveys conducted in Kenya indicate. This paper therefore sought to understand the emerging trends and challenges facing the girl child in urban domestic service in Eldoret town. The paper adopted exploratory research design for an in-depth and holistic understanding of the child labour dynamics. A sample of 253 girls working in the domestic service was used. Purposive as well as convenience sampling were utilized for selecting study participants. Data for the study was collected using un-structured questionnaire, in-depth interviews and observation techniques. A qualitative method was used to analyze data through thematic approach. The paper found that apart from friends, relatives and self being responsible for girl-child entry into domestic child labour, bureaus have been established as an emerging trend where employers get children to work for them. In addition, too much work, misunderstanding between employer and employees; very little pay; delayed payment; working for long hours; and verbal, physical and sexual violence were the major problems and hardships that girl-child workers go through while providing domestic services to their bosses. The study recommends the need for provision of economic opportunities to young girls; promotion of girl child education and sensitisation of parents and guardians on the risks of child labour in domestic service.

Index Terms: emerging trends; challenges; girl-child; domestic service

1. Introduction

Child labour is a global problem with regional, sub-regional, national and local variations. The [1] has recently estimated that some 246 million children aged 5-17 years are engaged in child labour around the world. Of these, some 179 million are caught in the worst forms of child labour. Roughly 2.5 million children are economically active in the developed economies, 2.4 million in the transition countries, 127.3 million in Asia and the Pacific, 17.4 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, 48 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and 13.4 million in the Middle East and North Africa. Workers under 18 face particular hazards. For example, in the US, the rate of injury per hour worked appears to be nearly twice as high for children and adolescents as adults [1]. With African cities growing at a very fast rate, demand for cheap domestic servants is also on the increase. Working parents and professionals working in urban centres require domestic servants so as to have time for their work. Deteriorating economic and health (HIV/AIDS) conditions combine with rapid urbanisation to force children particularly girls into work as domestic service workers. HIV/AIDS has left many children orphans forcing them to take on adult roles early in order to survive. Children are forced by circumstances to work for payment at a tender age. In Sub Saharan African 1 in 4 children aged 5-17 work, compared to 1 in 8 in Asia Pacific and 1 in 10 in Latin America [1].

Although aggregate numbers suggest that more boys than girls are involved in child labour, many of the types of work girls are involved in are invisible. It is estimated that roughly 90 per cent of children involved in domestic labour are girls [2]. Even though the prevalence of child labour has been falling in recent years everywhere apart from Sub Saharan Africa where it is actually increasing with regard to children aged 5-14 [1], it continues to harm the physical and mental development of children and adolescents and interfere with their education [2]. Throughout the world and Africa in particular, child labour continues to be a major issue of concern. In recognition of the adverse effects of child labour and abuse, international and national efforts have been made to control it. Among the most notable measures include the ILO conventions (No 138) abolishing child labour, which Kenya has since ratified and numerous local legislations and policies aimed at reducing and ultimately eliminate child labour and exploitation. Nevertheless child labour persists as several surveys conducted in Kenya indicate (UNICEF 1998, Republic of Kenya [3], [4], [5], [6]. In view of the persistence of child labour despite efforts to curb it, there is need for sector specific research. Child labour and other related exploitations are inadequately addressed not only in practice but also in research [3]. Even more lacking is research that focus on the emerging trends in girl-child urban domestic child labour.

2. Methodology

This paper adopted exploratory approach. This approach facilitated an in-depth and holistic understanding of the dynamics of the girl child labour in the domestic service. This design clarifies problems, gathers data and creates initial hypothesis and theories about subjects. In addition, the design allowed the use of qualitative analysis which was as a result of data collection through un-structured questionnaire which permitted the respondents to provide an in-depth response of their opinions, feelings and interests in relation to the factors influencing girl-child in

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urban domestic service. The study was conducted in eleven estates found in Eldoret. Eldoret is a town in western Kenya and the administrative centre of Uasin Gishu County. The girl child working as a domestic worker for wages was the study's central focus. However, provincial administration and labour department officials were involved in the study as key informants. The population for the study constituted all domestic house girls working within the environs of Eldoret town who are less than 18 years. The accessible population of domestic house girls from eleven estates of Eldoret is estimated to be 700. As a result therefore, the study used a desired sample size of 253 participants. The study interviewed 253 girls working in the domestic sector in Eldoret town. The study used multi-stage sampling technique, which involved the use of various sampling techniques at various stages. First, the entire town was stratified into the eleven estates according to social classes. These estates includes: Pioneer; Langas; Huruma; Kapsoya; Mwanzo; Kimumu; Hawaii; Race Course; Elgon View; Kahoya and Maili Nne. These estates were purposively chosen first; for their social class and second; for the economic activities that go on in some of these estates (for instance; Langas) which highly induce the use of female child in the provision of domestic labour. Having identified a sample size of 253 participants, proportionate sampling technique was applied where every estate produced 23 respondents (See Table 1). Furthermore, convenience sampling method was then used to pick 23 respondents from each estate to participate in the study. Convenience and snowball sampling were used because it was hard to identify which household had a female child domestic worker. In order to apply convenient sampling the research had to walk from one house to another while requesting the employer to talk to their workers. In other instance, some of the interviewees referred the researcher to other house-helps who were below 18 years.

Table 1: Sample Size

Estate Name	No. of House Girl sampled
Elgon View	23
Pioneer	23
Hawaii	23
Huruma	23
Kapsoya	23
Kimumu	23
Kahoya	23
Langas	23
Maili Nne	23
Mwanzo	23
Race Course	23
Total	253

In-depth interviews were adopted for a more comprehensive view and a great depth of responses. The researcher assisted respondents in interpreting and filling the questions as some of them were illiterate and were therefore unable to read and write. The interviews produced only qualitative data. In addition, key informant interviews was used to solicit important information from key informants who among them included; two Children Protection Officers from Eldoret, two Labour Ministry Officers from Eldoret branch, two Sub-County children's Officers from Eldoret and one bureau manager. Interview tool was very vital as it provided in-depth data that was

relevant in meeting the requirements of the study objectives. Data analysis methods were both qualitative and quantitative. At one point frequencies and percentages were adopted in data description and interpretation while on the other hand data analysis involved selecting the common themes that were given by the respondents in relation to the study objectives. Qualitative data was presented in form of direct quotations from the respondents as well as indirect quotations as formatted by the researcher without altering the meaning. Quantitative data on the other hand was presented using Tables and Figures.

3. Findings

Findings on emerging four sections; these include, methods of entry into domestic service, category of house helps, other benefits and number of employers that respondents have worked for.

a. Methods of Entry into Domestic Labour Service

When asked how they arrived at their places of work, majority (53.8%) said they were brought by their relatives, 28.1% said they came to work through their friends, 14.6% said that they came to work on their own, while 3.5% said that they came through bureaus. It might be interesting to note that relatives including mothers, uncles, brothers, sisters among others play a very big role in introducing children to domestic labour service. For instance when asked how she landed her domestic service job, one girl from Pioneer said; 'mimi niliitiwa hii job na my sis ambaye pia anafanya hii kazi Kapsoya' that I was brought to work by my sister who is also doing the same job (house-help) in Kapsoya estate. Though not very significant, bureaus have emerged as the newest forms of selling labour services especially to those clients who request that their house-helps goes through a proper vetting procedure for safety and security reasons. House help bureaus appear to play convenient role in proving people who seek employment such as house-helps. In Eldoret, house help bureaus are not common however, they are up coming. Walking in various estates for instance Kapsoya, you will see adverts such as this; 'DO YOU WANT A HOUSE GIRL!! CALL THIS NUMBER XXXXX'. During the time of data collection, there was only one bureau which was on social media (face book) called Eldoret House-help Bureau (EHHB). In case one needed a house help, then he/she has to communicate via the face book account. Nevertheless, an increasing number of employees will prefer to get workers from bureaus who are registered due to the fact that most workers are not trustworthy but if they are registered then it is easier to do a follow-up in case of any problem. Bureaus also prove training services to the workers and therefore they are aware of their responsibilities ahead. The study found that at least nine respondents who were working as domestic servants came through bureaus. A 15 year old girl from Elgon view said that ever since her parents died, she moved to stay with her aunt who was also living from hand to mouth. After a year, she was informed of a certain bureau in Eldoret town which was not far from her auntie's place that admits house-girls and connects them to various employers. Due to hardships that she was going through at her auntie's place she decided to join the bureau. After one and a half months of training, she got employment at Elgon

view as a domestic worker. Another very important factor that was noted was the fact that clients who visit these bureaus will want to employ a person who has acquired basic education. The study found out that an house-help who has basic educational foundation can be able to help children of their employers with homework like doing Mathematics, English or Kiswahili assignments or even engage them in reading and writing skills before they are introduced to formal education. In an interview with the District Children's Officer, over the issue of bureaus and whether they engage in child labour, he said,

"I am not aware of bureaus having underage and selling them for services, but what I do know is that bureaus are coming up very fast here in Eldoret because I know that in Nairobi they are very many. Some people prefer hiring house-helps from bureaus than from their relatives or friends because of minimal disturbances. Secondly, these bureaus enter into a contact with a person before they give him/her to the employer. So if anything goes wrong, the organization assumes the responsibility. Third, is that obtaining house-help from bureaus is advantageous because of the training that they undergo on hygiene and home safety guidelines. Thus, an employer feels safe with a house-help from a bureau"

It is clear that bureaus are emerging with the changing world. Homes nowadays require house helpers who are equipped with skills of using modern home appliances like fridges, micro-wave, electric kettle, blenders, washing machines among other appliance. These are appliances that a house helper interacts frequently with and therefore skills for their operation are necessary. Moreover, the main agents of linking up the house-helps to their prospective employers are their parents in need of extra income to meet their household basic needs or close relatives wanting to benefit for the girl's labour directly or indirectly. In most cases, it is the parents or relatives who decide on the usage of the salary paid to these house-helps. With the participation of either the family members or close relatives in supporting the girl child urban domestic labour service is indeed a form of modern day family slavery.

b. Category of House-Help

When respondents were asked whether they were boarders or day scholars, majority (78%) stayed with their employers while 22% were day scholars. The study found that unlike in the past where almost all house helpers stayed with their employers, day scholar's house helps are on the increase where house helps leave to their work every day very early in the morning and come back in the evening. The study further established that Elgon view, Kapsoya and Pioneer has a big number of house-girls who are boarders while Langas, Kimumu, Hawaii, Huruma and Maili Nne has a slightly high numbers of day scholars compared to other estates. These findings show that there is a variation between estates and the categories of house helps such that in high income estates such as Elgon View and Pioneer most of the house helps are boarders while in low income estates such as Langas most of them are non-boarders. These variations could be attributed to various factors such as space for accommodation, family size,

marital status of house-helps and to avoid deductions for upkeep.

c. Other Benefits

It emerged from the study that some employers use motivation as one of the key and crucial elements towards job satisfaction. When respondents were asked to state other benefits received apart from being paid the monthly salary; for those who work in high income estates, 32.2% mentioned food, 29.5% mentioned medical care, 19.6% mentioned clothing, while 10.1% stated that they were given resting days. Few however, mentioned travelling with their employer(s) (6.3%) and being given airtime for their mobile phones (2.3%). However, for those who were working in low income estates mentioned food as the only incentive that they benefit from the employer. It can be deduced that additional benefits on salary of the house help vary across income groups.

d. Number of Employers Worked for

The number of years that respondents have worked for an employer may depend on the working conditions and environment. Favourable working conditions may induce house helper to work for many years and vice-versa for an employer. As a result, when respondents were asked to state the number of employers that they have worked for since they started their work, it was established that 65% have worked for more than one employer, and 35% have worked for only one employer. From the study findings the rate at which house helps move from one employer to another at Eldoret town is on the rise. This could be attributed to a myriad of factors ranging from poor working conditions, low pay, peer pressure and the like. This high turnover of house helps especially among girl children may be an indication of mistreatment on the part of the employer or high number of children seeking for domestic service related employment.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Although an increasing number of children from poor families are joining the informal and domestic sectors as workers and continue to be exposed to various forms of exploitation, the emerging trend established was the modern day slavery where parents, relatives and friends are highly involved in girl-child labour through social networking. In addition, bureaus in Eldoret town have also emerged as a way of helping employers to obtain quick services of domestic workers. Furthermore, as an ingenious way of retaining child domestic workers, employers have come up with benefits such as providing free food and clothes, medical care, hand set airtime among others. Poverty is one of the major factors underpinning domestic child labour. Efforts to improve the access of households to economic resources should focus on expanding employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Micro-credit programs provide women and girls with the basic economic opportunities they often lack and a social support network that promotes changes in attitudes and behaviour.

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