

The Informal Labour Sector in Contemporary Urban Society: The Case of Domestic Workers in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana

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Abstract

The engagement of the services of domestic workers is not a new phenomenon in Ghana. There have however been changes in their engagement over the years particularly in recent times. The study adopts the case study approach to interview 89 employers of domestic workers and 100 domestic workers in Kumasi. This is to ascertain their cultural background and explore their working relations and conditions and nature as well as the extent of change in their engagement. The study also examined the effects of these changes in their engagement on their socio-economic wellbeing and their overall contribution to national development. The sample of domestic workers and their employers were obtained in selected communities where there is a high concentration of the working class. The study revealed that in spite of the changing trends in their engagement such as the involvement of the labour department in the recruitment of some of them, majority of domestic workers, were exploited, lacked good contractual agreement and expressed dissatisfaction about their work. Thus it is recommended that there should be a legislation to guide a regulation of this category of employment in the country. The formation of domestic workers association in the metropolis as well as the introduction of mandatory contractual arrangements should be monitored jointly by the Labour department of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and NGOs who are interested in labour issues in order to raise domestic workers to an acceptable level within the social structure in the home environment.

Keywords: Domestic Workers, Contemporary Urban Society, Contractual Arrangements, Informal Labour Sector

1. Introduction

The active participation of domestic workers in the informal labour sector remains a major issue in the labour and development arena across the globe especially, within the contexts of employment, culture and livelihoods. Significant in these areas is the issue of domestic workers which has evolved from an earlier conception of servant-hood to a defined occupation or service. Home-based workers form a substantial part of the informal sector (Bergan, 2009; Global Network, 2010). Today, domestic service remains a dominant occupation among poor women and girls (Thomson, 2009) not only in Latin America and Europe, but also in Asia and Africa. Over the years, there have been significant changes in the occupation of domestic service in terms of its dimensions such as nature, duration, organization and even nomenclature.

In Latin America, the characteristics of domestic service which stem from the colonial period have changed from conditions akin to slavery (Thomson 2009) to an organized occupation with labour bargaining powers, even though in the Caribbean and other Latin American countries it still culturally conveys stigma and social prejudice (Sales and Santana, 2003). Home-based workers constitute about half of the female active population in India and even Asia (Carr et al, 1999) and mainly characterised by poor and less educated women with limited access to formal sector jobs (Basu and Thomas, 2009). There is however no value for working in this sector (Bergan, 2009). Aubert et al (1952) also indicate that domestic work in Europe is based on status-relationship and not one based on contract. The roles of domestic workers waver with no or very limited material conditions and legislative arrangements even though there have been a significant change from the feudal roles of the earliest periods to ascribed roles in recent times. In most instances, there is no integration of domestic workers in the social systems of employing households with great gap between the maid and the employer and no access to economic rights. Again, most home-based workers do not enjoy any extra benefits such as health insurance, pension relief and maternity leaves among others. They are also not able to demand any proper working conditions due to lack of documentation (Bergan, 2009).

Domestic service is not only an ethnic and simple occurrence in Africa but a complex phenomenon. Over the

past three decades, domestic service has been triggered by regional and income disparity that influenced internal migration among young males and females who end up as domestic service workers, popularly known as 'househelps' in urban households. The International Labour Organisation in 2013 estimated that Africa is the third largest employer of domestic workers (10 percent) after Asia (41 percent) and Latin America and Caribbean (37 percent). According to Jacquemine (2009) about 38 percent of females in the informal sector in Abidjan work in the domestic labour category. These workers are mainly young adult females who may or may not be related to their employers and are mostly supported by their families. In South Africa and Zimbabwe, domestic work is done by both men and women, although the nature of the tasks they perform are in some cases different (Pape, 1993). Arrangements are mainly informal if any, with no legal or contract negotiations which encourage exploitation of domestic workers and limit their labour rights.

In Ghana, both rural and urban households across a wide socio-economic spectrum employ the services of domestic workers. This has been attributed to urbanization and women working outside the home (LAWA-Ghana, 2003). Osei-Boateng and Apratwum (2011) assert that domestic workers (classified under the urban informal workers) are mainly women with minimal job security as well as minimal social protection. The informal economy employs 80 percent of the labour force. Domestic workers form about 0.2 percent of the economically active age group and are mostly young rural migrants who are women (Ghana Statistical Service, 2008). They are employed by many households in Ghana even though the terms and conditions of work depend largely on the poverty or income status of the employers. These domestic workers generally work for long and unspecified hours, performing a variety of tasks, including washing of clothes and utensils, cleaning, shopping, taking care of children, and caring for old or sick members of the household. Most domestic workers come from economically deprived households and work for a wide range of households, both rich and poor (Tsikata, 2009) and are mostly females (LAWA-Ghana, 2003). LAWA-Ghana (2003) asserts that the work of domestic workers is devalued economically and lacks many of the favourable rights and conditions of work and the women who perform domestic work are devalued socially. Guarantees such as fixed wages or salaries, rest periods, paid vacations, maternity leave with pay and social security are denied them. Like other workers who fall under the urban informal sector, domestic workers are not paid according to the national minimum wage, have no organised labour union and lose jobs as and when employers feel the services of the workers are no longer needed. In a similar vein, Osei-Boateng and Apratwum (2011) assert that employers of domestic workers do not contribute to employees' pension schemes.

According to the Global Network (2010), the recruitment of domestic workers is commonly spearheaded by relatives and friends of individuals and households. It is common to find verbal agreement establishing the engagement of the services of domestic workers when recommended by friends and relatives. Reciprocal obligation in the traditional setup in the African setting brings about the disregard for domestic work as a form of employment (International Labour Organisation, 2013). Abuses do not easily come to public notice for the appropriate bodies and agencies of government to take action (LAWA-Ghana, 2003). In spite of their contribution to households and the care given, they are vastly characterized by poor working conditions, exploitation and abuse which underpin the need for research to explore the labour and cultural issues surrounding this kind of undocumented but significant service; especially in the face of urbanization and renewed interest in global employment. Again, research work on the labour and issues pertaining to the engagement of domestic workers is limited. As such the present research seeks to fill this gap by exploring the above mentioned issues in the Ghanaian perspective. This article therefore investigates the socio-economic characteristics of domestic workers in Kumasi, focusing on the labour related issues as well as working conditions of domestic workers.

2. Research Method

2.1 Research Design

The case study approach was employed and required the collection of a range of indicators such as the characteristics of households that employ the services of domestic workers, labour issues in engaging the services of domestic workers, changing trends in their engagement in the Kumasi Metropolis. The sample of domestic workers and their employers were obtained in selected communities where there is a high concentration of the working class. This is because these communities serve as home to institutions like the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University College of Management Studies (UCOMS), Elite

College, various banks and other institutions as well as private enterprises. The purposive sampling method was used to collect data from households who engage the services of domestic workers to shed light on the issues of interest. The criterion for the selection of households that engage the services of domestic workers was their employment status. For this study, 89 employers and 100 domestic workers were interviewed with the help of interview guides. Two institutions; the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and the Labour department in the metropolis were interviewed. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Both quantitative and qualitative data was used for the study. Here, qualitative data was evaluated, edited and used while quantitative data was analysed using tables.

2.2 Profile of Kumasi Metropolis

Kumasi metropolis is located in the transitional forest zone and is about 270 km north of the national capital, Accra MTDP, 2010). The population of Kumasi Metropolis as at 2010 was 2,035, 064 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012) Kumasi's population is dominated by females constituting 52.3 percent. Kumasi is a cosmopolitan area with a mix of several ethnic groups with 34.3 per cent of the entire population being migrants (Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, 2010). However, the city is dominated by Asantes due to its location in the Ashanti Region.

According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2012) in 2010, 66.5 percent of the population was economically active. About 92.8percent of males as against 90.1 percent of the female counterparts within the economically active population were employed. Out of Kumasi's population of 2,035, 064 as of 2010, 703,273 (34.6percent) make up the employed population (15 years and older). There are 344,893 males and 358,380 female workers with the private informal sector being the highest absorber of workers for both sexes. The aforementioned sector employs 79.2 percent of the male employed population and 85percent of the female employed population. With respect to industry, wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles employed the highest for both sexes; 30.3percent and 46.1percent for males and females respectively. By occupation, craft and related trade works employs the highest of 32.9 percent of the males in the economically active population. However, services and sales workers employ the highest of 55.1 percent of the female economically active population (GSS, 2012).

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Characteristics of Employers of Domestic workers

The survey revealed that majority (69 percent) of employers as indicated in Table 1 of domestic workers were married. In terms of educational attainment, majority (50 percent) of the employers had tertiary education with basic and secondary level of education representing 29 and 21 percent respectively. From this it can be said that people with varied educational attainment patronize the services of domestic workers. Majority of them however have tertiary education and work in the formal sector.

In terms of occupation, the survey indicated that couples employing the services of domestic workers were economically active. Husbands in this category were mainly engaged in the private sector (56 percent) with 44 per cent working in the public sector. A similar situation was recorded for the wives in this category as private sector workers constituted 59 percent and 41 percent in the public sector. Further probing revealed that 91 percent of those in the public sector worked full time with the remaining 9 percent working part-time. This accounts for the engagement of domestic workers in their homes.

Income analysis of the employers ranged from below GH¢1000 to above GH¢5000 as shown in Table 1. A further analysis revealed that 50 percent received monthly incomes GH¢ 1000 while 9.2 percent earned monthly incomes of more than GH¢5000. This clearly shows that all income groups patronize the services of domestic workers and that the utilization of domestic service is not merely the preserve of high income earners.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Employers of Domestic Workers

Socio-Economic Characteristics	Percentage
Marital Status	
• <i>Married</i>	69
• <i>Single</i>	14
• <i>Separated</i>	8
• <i>Divorce</i>	7
• <i>Cohabitation</i>	2
Educational Attainment	
• <i>Basic</i>	29
• <i>Secondary</i>	21
• <i>Tertiary</i>	50
Occupation	
• <i>Full Time</i>	91
• <i>Part Time</i>	9
Monthly Income (GH¢)	
• <i>Below 1000</i>	19.8
• <i>1000-3000</i>	9.2
• <i>3001-5000</i>	
• <i>5001 and above</i>	3
Duration of Work at the primary work-place (Hrs)	
• <i>Below 8 hrs</i>	55
• <i>8hrs</i>	42
• <i>Above 8hrs</i>	

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

In relation to the daily number of hours spent at the workplace, 55 percent of employers worked for 8 hours per day while 42 percent worked for more than 8 hours per day. This indicates that they spent longer time of the day at work and do not have adequate time to combine domestic activities with income earning activities hence the engagement of the services of domestic workers. According to the survey, majority (68 percent) of them have engaged between 1 and 3 domestic workers in the past. It also came to light that the employers have engaged and disengaged domestic workers in times past due to several reasons. The reasons attributed to this trend were mainly based on the ages, marriage, attitudes and agreements on dates of end of service of domestic workers. In terms of the number of domestic workers presently employed by employers of domestic workers, 80 percent had one while 7 percent had 2 to 4 domestic workers. The remaining 13 percent though had previously engaged the services of domestic workers, had none at the time of the survey. The high engagement of these workers could be attributed to the fact that most of the employers were working and also stay longer periods at work as shown in Table 1.

On the duration of stay with domestic workers, the survey further indicated that 54 percent of employers had lived with the domestic workers for a period of 1 to 3 years while 16 percent had engaged their services for a period of 4 to 6 years. Employers who patronise the services of domestic workers did not identify specific time frame or the period of years they were willing to stay with them but emphasized that the duration of stay was highly dependent on factors which included the peculiar household circumstances such as the age of children, number of children in basic school, work circumstances, the behaviour of domestic workers, marriage and the future circumstance of domestic worker that may require reconsideration of service. This is an affirmation of the volatility of domestic service and the lack of explicit and binding contractual agreements which expose the service to abrupt termination.

The engagement of the services of the domestic workers was attributed to diverse issues. The basic underlying factors included the nature and duration of work, age of members of household, health condition of household members and the age and level of education of children of the employers. For instance, the survey indicated that most employers employed the services of domestic workers due to the number of hours they spend at work and hence required extra hands to assist them in basic housekeeping, especially in situations where they have more children. These employers normally leave for work as early as 6 a.m. and return after 5 p.m. Amidst the aforementioned factors, they implicitly identified the engagement of domestic workers as a means of supporting them to improve their living conditions. Generally, these factors could broadly be viewed in terms of physiological (physical state of members), psychological, demographic (health condition, age, etc.) and labour or

occupational (nature and duration of work) dimensions (what of the emotional).

The number and age of children in households of employers have often been identified as an important factor in determining the level of patronage of domestic services. The study sought to identify the number of children of the employers of domestic workers and their ages. As indicated in Table 2, 89 percent of the employers had more than 4 members in their households. This shows that the larger the household size, the higher the possibility of engaging the services of domestic workers, all other things being equal.

Even though the number of children in a household influences the decision to hire domestic workers, in most instances, it is the age of these children, their state and level of education that to a large extent determine domestic service scheduling and patronage. With regard to this, the study revealed that employers of domestic workers with children who were aged 0-5 years and 6-10 years constituted 20 and 33 percent respectively. The existence and frequency of young children substantiate the assertion by the employers that one of the reasons for employing domestic workers was to help take care of their children.

Table 2: Household Size of Employers of Domestic Workers

Size of households	Number of Domestic workers
1-3	10
4-6	54
6-8	14
8+	11
TOTAL	89

Source: Field Survey, 2015

3.2 Background of Domestic workers

Domestic work has been in existence in the Ghanaian society over the years in various forms. In the era preceding colonial rule and even after that, domestic workers who were mainly females were engaged by family members for various reasons ranging from domestic chores to apprenticeship. This was confirmed by 5 percent of the employers and 3 percent of the domestic workers whose parents had engaged the services of domestic worker or were domestic workers themselves. On the other, 7 percent of the domestic workers indicated that their parents had also worked as domestic workers.

With 87 percent of the sampled domestic workers being females, the study results is in line with the general perception that domestic service is largely the preserve of women. This trend has however not changed over the years. This may be attributed to the long held socio-cultural role assigned to women as managers of the home. The dominance of women in domestic service has been explained in recent studies as the de-professionalization of domestic service and its consideration as unskilled work which is performed largely by females of all ages (Tsikata, 2009); a post-colonial phenomenon contrary to the colonial situation which was male dominated. The domestic workers, who were men, performed strenuous chores which are considered to be the preserve of men. These were basically duties such as gardening, and in some cases, driving.

As indicated in Table 3, the study revealed that the ages of majority of the domestic workers (86 percent) ranged between 12 and 25 years. The remaining 14 percent were 26 years and above. This is an indication that unlike in the past where people engaged the services of younger people who were also in most cases their relative, domestic workers in contemporary times employ both the young and old and may not be necessarily related to their employers. From the study, it also came to light that even though young people constitute the majority, older people are now working as domestic servants in urban areas and these people see it as more of employment than service. They usually constitute the live-out domestic workers. This is so because such workers need to take care of their families and take care of other responsibilities after work.

Table 3: Background Characteristic of Domestic Workers

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Percentage
Sex	
• <i>Male</i>	13
• <i>Female</i>	87
Age	
• 12-18yrs	47
• 18-25yrs	39
• 25-35yrs	8
• 35-45yrs	5
• Above 45yrs	1
Marital Status	
• <i>Married</i>	11
• <i>Single</i>	86
• <i>Separated</i>	1
• <i>Divorce</i>	1
• <i>Cohabitation</i>	1
Educational Attainment	
• <i>Basic</i>	77
• <i>Secondary</i>	18
• <i>Vocational/informal</i>	4
• <i>Tertiary</i>	1
Ethnic Origin	
• <i>Akan</i>	79
• <i>Dagomba/Mossi/Hausa</i>	15
• <i>Ewe</i>	5
• <i>Ga</i>	1

Source: Field Survey, 2015

In terms of marital status, 86 percent of the domestic workers interviewed were single. This may be partly explained by the fact that majority of them were within the teenage group as indicated earlier. In terms of educational attainment, all the domestic workers were literate with majority, (77 percent) attaining basic education while 4 percent have had vocational/technical education as well as informal training or apprenticeship. This is affirmed by the studies of Basu and Thomas (2010) who indicated that domestic workers mostly have limited access to education and are privileged to have attained basic education. On the contrary this trend is different from the past where most of the domestic workers were illiterates. The study also revealed that majority (79 percent) of the domestic workers was Akans. The remaining 21 percent were from other ethnic groups as indicated in Table 3. The dominance of Akans may be attributed to the geographical scope of the study area which is an indigenous Akan settlement. Table 3 gives a summary of the background characteristics of the sampled domestic workers. .

3.3 Contractual Agreements

The nature of contracts is most often the bargaining power of organized labour and a major determinant of economic rights on the labour market. The study showed that all the employers had entered into a form of agreement with the domestic workers on the delivery of particular types of services. It was revealed that 99 percent had oral form of contractual agreement while only 1 percent had written contractual agreement. There has not been any significant change in the contractual agreements in the engagement of domestic workers over the years. In the past, with the exception of the colonial masters who engaged them as workers of their establishments, their engagement among Ghanaians in the various communities was done orally and was also seen as a means of helping the individuals involved. It was also revealed that this type of contractual agreement results in insecurity among domestic workers. This is in line with Tsikata, (2010) assertion that oral agreement has been identified as one of the main factors that influence the fragility and exploitative nature of domestic service. The mere oral agreement of working condition is therefore not binding enough on the both parties and allows for easy and unexpected abrogation of services or agreements at any point in time.

Informal mediations have persisted over the many years of domestic service worldwide especially in developing countries. These mediations normally centre on duties to be performed by prospective domestic workers and the arrangements concerning benefits. The negotiations are organized by mediators or ‘middlemen’ who may be related or otherwise to the domestic workers. The study revealed that negotiations on the conditions spelt out in the working agreements were influenced by parents, guardians, domestic workers and friends and relatives. Most of the respondents Majority (52 percent) indicated that negotiations were done by their parents. The employers attributed this to the fact that the domestic workers were teenagers. However this arrangement was not favorable to most of these domestic workers since they are not adequately informed about the nature of such negotiations until they start work. In view of these challenges associated with the engagement of house helps that has persisted over the years, an institutional survey with the labour department of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relation indicates that measures have been put in place to formalize the contractual agreement in the engagement of domestic workers. Personnel of the labour department in the Kumasi metropolis interviewed indicated that they serve as a third party or witness the agreement between the employers and employees. In addition the worker’s guarantor is also expected to sign as a witness. According to them, they also ensure that both parties (employer and employee) abide by the arrangements in the contract and also settle disputes that arise out of the contract. The contract document which is prepared by the Public employment Centre of the labour department is comprehensive and covers various areas such as; the particulars of employers and employees, date of first appointment, employee’s remuneration and mode of payment, hours of work, period of holidays and details of social security pension scheme, notice of termination of employment, procedure for addressing disputes or grievances and duties to be performed by the employee.

Even though this new approach in the contractual agreement initiated by the Labour department appears to be good and is likely to reduce the vulnerability of both employers and employees, very few people have patronized it. According to the Labour department, this was initiated in January 2013 and as at December 2015; only 31 domestic workers have gone through this process as indicated in Table 4. This low patronage could be attributed to lack of awareness by some of the employers and employees and the general public. Those who are aware are however unwilling to take advantage of it because they are more comfortable with the traditional process of contractual agreement which is informal and gives room for exploitation. This is because people are used to the traditional way of engaging the services of domestic workers directly with little or no documentation. In the past, recruitment of domestic workers was basically done through families and friends from rural communities. , In contemporary times however, even though families and friends are still used, employers also engage domestic workers from their work places religious organisations and other social networks. The labour department has also introduced a new dimension to the recruitment process where potential domestic workers register with their Public Employment Centre where they are linked up with employers. They are however not monitored and evaluated after the agreement and both employers and employees only contact the office of the labour department when there is dispute between the two parties. Even with this new dimension with the recruitment female dominance persist with 80.6 percent of those recruited through the labour department being females as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4 Recruitment of Domestic Workers through Labour Department in the Kumasi Metropolis

YEAR	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
2013	3	30	7	70	10	100
2014	3	30	7	70	10	100
2015	0	0	11	100	11	100
Total	6	19.4	25	80.6	31	100

Source; Labour Department, Kumasi, May 2016

4. Working Conditions and Remuneration for Domestic workers

The working conditions of the domestic workers were considered under the following areas:

4.1 Duration of Stay

The study revealed that 68 percent of the domestic workers have stayed with their employers for a period of 1 to 3 years; while 14 percent domestic workers had stayed with their employers for more than 6 years. On the issue of the number of years they are willing to stay with their employers, 76 percent indicated that the period of stay depended on several factors such as marriage, completion of school or apprenticeship and employment in other

productive activities. This implies that, they do not have fixed duration of stay.

4.2 Code of conduct

Domestic workers mostly work within the instructional frame of their employers and are often guided by codes of conduct delivered orally to them. These include certain work restrictions especially for those who live with their employers. Only 29 percent are given explicit restrictions which center on the use of fixed telephone lines, household gadgets and access to certain rooms. Most of the employers justified this on the premise of experience with previous domestic workers while others did that to prevent the interference of domestic workers in their family affairs.

4.3 Roles of Domestic workers

According to the study, 82 percent of the domestic workers live with their employers. They reported that they start their daily duties between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. while their closing time is also between 4 p.m. and 12 a midnight. The live-in workers were however quick to state that the time they start and close from work is not fixed and they could be called to work at any time. The average daily duration of work was 10 hours with intermittent breaks. Thus, 'live-in' domestic workers are most often susceptible to work exploitation and exposed to burdensome work for longer periods of time. Apt (2005) affirms this view by stating that domestic workers are most often subjected to long hours of work with little rest which is tantamount to severe labour exploitation and neglect of labour rights.

With respect to domestic workers living outside the house of their employers, it was revealed that they start work between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. They close from their daily work between 5 p.m. and 9 pm. Comparatively, the domestic workers who do not live with employers report later and close earlier than their live-in counterparts. The work of domestic workers lies within the purview of domestic responsibilities and hence has been defined amidst varying nomenclature as domestic service workers or simply domestic workers in areas such as Latin America and the Middle East. As the name suggests, their work centers on household duties even though there are occasional responsibilities outside the home. From the perspectives of both employers and domestic workers the study revealed that the work of domestic service borders on cleaning/laundry, taking care of children and the aged, cooking, gardening and security as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: Ranking of Household Responsibilities

Role of Domestic Worker	Percentage of Domestic workers Interviewed	Ranking
Cleaning/Laundry	87	1 st
Taking Care of Children	80	2 nd
Taking Care of Aged	78	3 rd
Gardening and Security	76	4 th
Cooking	74	5 th

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Beside these, other secondary duties such as shop attendants, farming and assisting their employers during weekends on site visits to clear undeveloped lands. These were identified as secondary duties since they were not part of duties assigned to them. Upon further enquiry on the importance of their services, 91 percent of the domestic workers identified their work as very significant. Majority of the domestic workers (90 percent) also felt that their work was appreciated by their employers. Contrary to recent developments in Mexico and India on the organization of domestic work as employment avenues, 56 percent did not see their work as any form of employment. However, 24 percent saw their work as employment while the remaining 20 percent were not sure of their status. This classification of their employment status may stem from the conditions and nature of domestic service and its organization which disoriented the recognition of household service as a means of employment. Unlike in the past, domestic work is considered as a form of employment.

4.4 Remuneration of domestic workers

The remuneration given by 39 percent of the employers is in cash and the remaining 61 percent are paid in kind. Those who were paid in cash were mainly 'live-out' domestic workers and were not closely related to their employers. On the contrary, some of the live-in workers received clothing, food, shelter and apprenticeship or

skill training as their remunerations. It is however worth noting that there are occasional situations where they were paid in cash and also given gifts. Interestingly, about 95 percent of the payments were made to them directly even though a majority of the negotiations were done by parents and guardians. This is contrary to the past where remunerations were given directly to the parents and guardians. About 2.4 and 2.5 percent of parents and guardians respectively received payment for the engagement of the services of domestic workers. Domestic workers in this category usually lived with their employers. This trend is similar to the trends in Mexico and Latin America where most urban employers of domestic workers periodically support them and even their dependents in both cash and kind (Thomson (2009)). The dominance of gift as a type of remuneration is explained by the recognition of domestic service as help and not necessarily employment and hence cash payments are seen as acts of benevolence. This is, however, contrary to the studies of Basu and Thomas (2009) within communities in India where cash was the main form of remuneration. The lack of regular payment for service in cash is also underpinned by the cultural practice of kinship in which domestic workers are in one way or the other related to the employers.

The study indicated that 54 percent of the domestic workers were paid below GH¢100 per month. (ref, Table 6) This indicates that more than half of them were paid below the daily minimum wage of GH¢7.50. This shows that majority of them are underpaid. It also conforms to the work of LAWA (2003) which states that ‘although there is great demand for their services, they can be procured on unfavourable terms’. The domestic workers confirmed that their incomes were inadequate and could not support their monthly expenditure. This could be attributed to the adoption of secondary economic activities such as; food vending and petty trading among the ‘live-out’ workers. About 95 percent, were paid monthly while 5 percent were paid weekly. The ILO (2002b) writes in its observation that while working in the informal economy provides much-needed income, the many millions of workers in the informal economy lack secured contracts, worker benefits and social protection.

Table 6: Payments to Domestic Workers

Amount Paid (GH¢ Per Month)	Number of Respondents	Percentage of total
Below 100	54	54
100.00-200	36	36
Above 200	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

4.5 Association of Domestic workers

The study revealed that domestic workers do not belong to any home-based work association. This implies that the merits of organizing informal sector workers and its associated benefits on enforcing laws and minimum standards as well as the existence and recognition of these workers remains a distant dream in home-based work. This is also a fertile ground for the perpetuation of labour exploitation and abuse in the domestic service. Bergan (2009) observes that domestic work remains invisible due to lack of organization and that it consistently faces no recognition by government or public sector institutions. This in effect stifles their ability to speak out as an organized body, make claims for their rights or negotiate with employers.

5. Challenges and Aspirations of Domestic workers

Domestic workers have various challenges and aspirations.

5.1 Challenges of Domestic workers

Domestic work is bedeviled with challenges over the years. As indicated in Table 7, 41 percent of domestic workers indicated that remuneration was their major problem. Wages paid are negligible in relation to the work they do and this has forced most of the live-out workers to resort to secondary economic activities. Another challenge was the duration of work, 34 percent of the workers revealed that they worked long hours with little rest. It also came out that they could sometimes be sacked with no compensation.

Table 7: Challenges Confronting Domestic Workers

Challenges	Number of Domestic workers	Percentage of Total number of Domestic workers
Low remuneration	41	41
Poor relationship with employers	21	21
Long duration at work of work	34	34
Others	4	4
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Approximately 21 percent also identified poor relationship with employers and mode of payment. The workers explained that they were sometimes insulted and reprimanded as if they were less human causing other younger members of the households to disrespect them. Moreover, the mode of payment was not regular and could be forfeited for no valid reason under the guise of support or in kind payment.

5.2 Challenges of Employers

The employers on the other hand also indicated that they faced certain challenges which include change in behaviour or conduct of the workers. They asserted that after few months of work, the workers could change their conducts by reporting to work late, ignoring or refusing to perform assigned duties, showing disrespect, laziness, stealing and immoral conducts. This according to the employers forced them to sometimes abrogate their services abruptly.

5.3 Aspiration of Domestic workers

In terms of social aspirations, 36 percent of the workers affirmed that they would want to get married in the near future. The other social aspirations include formal education and social work as shown in Table 8. In relation to their economic aspirations, 65 percent want to learn a trade; while only 2 percent want to own businesses. This implies that majority of the workers do not consider their jobs as permanent and sustainable and therefore have aspirations for more sustainable jobs.

Table 8: Aspiration of Domestic Workers

Aspiration		Percentage of Domestic workers
Social	Marriage	36
	Cater for Family/Dependents	22
	Social Work	6
	Education	36
	Total	100
Economic	Better Jobs	27
	Apprenticeship	65
	Entrepreneurship/Own a Business	2
	Savings/Investment	6
	Total	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

6. Policy Recommendations

The study revealed that domestic workers encounter numerous problems such as; low remuneration, poor relationship with employers and long duration at work. In order to improve the working conditions of domestic workers in Kumasi and in the country as a whole, the following recommendations could be adopted.

6.1 Legislation and regulation on domestic work

The study shows that there is no legislation on the work provided by domestic workers. There is no legal instrument under which they could negotiate for better working conditions. The labour department in Kumasi has indicated that they have come up with regulations for the engagement of domestic workers who are employed through their department. It is however recommended that the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations should mainstream domestic service into the national labour laws such as the Labour Act, 2003 Act 651. Again, regulations on the minimum wage should be extended to domestic services in the country and

enforced.

6.2 Awareness Creation for the Recruitment of Domestic Workers

The labour departments of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations should be encouraged to create awareness of the recruitment of Domestic workers through their office. This should be done through the medium such as local radio/television stations, the print and social media, information centers and public fora. Domestic workers and employers should be made to register with the labour departments to aid effective monitoring and evaluation of their working conditions.

6.3 Establishment of Domestic Solidarity Groups

The idea of workers' associations is to ensure the common good of all. It is also aimed at the protection and negotiation for better working conditions for its members. The study revealed that domestic workers in the study do not belong to association. This implies that they do not enjoy the numerous benefits of solidarity by belonging to these associations. It is recommended that domestic workers associations be established in Kumasi through the collaborative efforts of the labour department, Non-Governmental Organisations who are interested in labour issues and human rights and the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly.

6.4 Favourable contractual arrangements

The contractual arrangements binding domestic workers and their employers have been unfavourable for the former. This could be attributed to the fact that majority of them have oral agreements and are not privy to the arrangements or negotiations. It is recommended that the contractual processes used by labour department where there is a written agreement between the employer and the domestic worker with a family member or guardian as a witness should be adopted by all stakeholders in the recruitment of domestic workers. It should also be ensured that the domestic workers are party to the signatories in the contract.

7. Conclusion

The article sought to highlight the socio-economic issues regarding the engagement of domestic workers in selected communities in the Kumasi Metropolis. The study revealed that domestic workers are mainly engaged to help households manage their domestic chores. Domestic work in Kumasi is dominated by females with majority of them having only basic education.

The study also revealed that domestic workers in Kumasi are faced with many challenges. Due to lack of proper documentation, organisation and government intervention, these workers do not enjoy good working conditions and appropriate remunerations. The aspirations of the domestic worker as revealed by the study indicated that they are generally dissatisfied with their current jobs. They would rather opt for formal education and better jobs, or learn trade. It is obvious from these that policies should be formulated and enforced in the direction of providing formal education and sustainable livelihoods, better living conditions for domestic workers to "formalise" their economic lives.

Recommendations have been proposed to enhance the working conditions of domestic workers. These include legislation to regulate their engagement, work environment, and remuneration, formation of domestic workers' associations and favorable contractual arrangements. It is also recommended that all stakeholders such as the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, NGOs and other development partners collaborate to ensure the sustainability of domestic work as a source of livelihood.

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