Young Women coping with Domestic Work: experiences from Kampala, Uganda

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to Bishop Francis Aquirinus Kibira - Bishop Kasese Diocese, Uganda who believed in me and inspired me to advance my academic career, and to all the domestic workers in Uganda who continue to face exploitation in their line of work.

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Contents

List of Acronyms

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
DOWA	Domestic Workers Association Uganda Limited
Dws	Domestic workers
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAE	Pacific Architects and Engineers
PLA	Platform for Labour Action
TA	Thematic Analysis
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UGX	Uganda Shillings
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Abstract

This dissertation is about the experiences of young women domestic workers in Uganda, in the capital city of Kampala. The study examines how they are organized and where they seek support or advice in case of any disputes with employers. Using remote on-line interviews with domestic workers and some organizations advocating for their social and economic rights. The interviews were semi-structured with one set of questions for the domestic workers and the organizations supporting them. Social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Zoom were used for the study, due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions. The research process was facilitated by two research assistants to access this group through snowball sampling, due to lockdown restrictions and difficulties in accessing this informal sector group of workers. Three main organizations were contacted and only two responded. The two organizations that responded were DOWA (Domestic Workers Association Uganda Limited) an NGO created in 2019 and PLA (Platform for Labour Action) which is a national civil society organization founded in 2000. These organizations are involved in promoting and protecting the social-economic rights of domestic workers through empowerment, training, advocacy, and resolving disputes between employers and domestic workers, including the provision of legal aid. Those contacted among the women domestic workers were 15 in total, five (5) working in-house, and ten (10) who worked in homes, on daily basis (work-out DWs) and they were between 18 and 35 years. The reason behind the criteria was to ensure that all the respondents had enough experiences to share and it also helped address those that started working as a child domestic worker before transitioning into adulthood. The key elements of exploitation were in long hours of work, overwork resulting in stress, delayed and very low wages, and examples of physical and sexual abuse. The workload was found to increase during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, but the pay remained the same. Those without employment contracts were more exploited and insecure as job losses were inevitable. Finally, the study suggests ways in which the sector can be improved in terms of formalizing some of the informal arrangements in existence. DOWA is not the only organization with informal sector workers, but protection through contracts depends on membership of one of these support organizations.

Relevance to Development Studies

This subject is of importance to the field of development because of the importance of advocating for the basic labour rights of informal sector workers, especially women and domestic workers. Organizing informal sector workers is a challenge and can be complicated by human rights abuses and invisible exploitation. The study seeks to open alternatives promoting advocacy for social and economic rights for an exploited and underprivileged group of young women. Young women doing domestic work are generally poor and cannot cope easily with economic shocks such as COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

Keywords

Domestic workers, exploitation of DWs, Kampala, women, advocacy, lockdown, poverty, labour rights

Chapter 1 Domestic Workers: Vital, yet Undervalued

1.1 Situating Domestic Workers in Uganda

For many decades, labour unions have emerged as a veritable channel for workers to collectively voice their concerns and challenge the exploitation of their labour from the employers (Lewin,2017; Hoque et al,2017; Troy, 2016). Unfortunately, this is not the case for Domestic Workers (DWs) who are largely in the informal sector of the economy. They are largely invincible as they are not usually captured in any collective system of organization. More so they are kept out from Labour legislation in various countries since they perform their duties in the realm of private homes (Chen, 2011:170; Oelz, 2014; Schwenken, 2017). What is available are rough estimates of the scale of Domestic workers. A report by the ILO (2017) estimated that there are about 67 million DWs worldwide. This scale has a disproportionate number of women (about 80%) while as many as 11.5 million are international migrants. They are mostly disadvantaged as they are drawn largely from the marginalized society.

These challenges have not deterred efforts at intervening in the conditions of DWs by trade unions (ITUC, 2016:7). There are cases of successful advocacy for the protection and rights similar to what is applicable in the formal sector. There are also cases where unions have evolved to cover these set of workers (Hobden, 2015; ITUC, 2016:7; ILO, 2017). DWs now enjoy rights through the collective unions that are far more potent in altering the oppressive status quo. As many as 15 million DWs worldwide are now captured under the umbrella of unionism. It is noted, "that 22 countries have ratified the ILO convention 189 which is about decent work just as 48 other countries have committed to addressing deficits of decent work" (ITUC, 2016:7).

Uganda that is the focus of this study is yet to ratify the ILO convention 189 which is important for DWs working conditions (ITUC, 2016:22). DWs in many countries across the world may be enjoying better conditions of work than Dws in Uganda. Hence progress needs to be made in Uganda and globally to reduce exploitation to the barest minimum.

According to Wilson (2010), the history of domestic work dates way back to ancient times as Africans who used to live in extended homes had lived a culture of sharing domestic work amongst men, women, and children.

In Uganda girls aged between 12-24years are the ones mostly used as housemaids and their working conditions are very demeaning. In Uganda, the domestic workers are socially, economically, statistically, and legally invisible because of the ill-defined of their nature of work which remains hidden from the public eye (Namara, 2001). The Employment Act (2006) of Uganda has a very narrow definition of domestic workers where it states that there is no permit requirement for one to recruit a domestic servant for employment. While the Employment Act 2006 recognizes "housemaids," the irony is that the act does not recognize the category of workers known as "domestic workers" because homes are considered private premises and therefore cannot be inspected by labour officers to enforce the act (Keene-Mugerwa, 2016). However, in 2019, the parliament of Uganda brought a bill purposely to set the minimum wage for domestic workers.

In 2019, the Ugandan government-appointed a committee and assigned it the mandate to determine the viability of setting up a national minimum wage. The committee recommended Shs 136,000 (approx. 33 euros) per month as the lowest pay to any worker, including domestic servants or housemaids employed in Uganda. although the Employment Act of Uganda 2006 provides for welfare schemes. According to the Employment Act 2006, the law provides that insurance, medical care, welfare, education, training, invalidity, retirement applies to all employees. DWs are not protected by the provisions, despite being workers. To try and include domestic workers, in 2018 the government made a provision that set the minimum wage for every worker including the domestic workers at 33 euros equivalent (136,000 Uganda shillings) per month. But even after that, the government did not put any measures into place to ensure that this minimum wage would be implemented. The nature of domestic workers' situation makes it very difficult for their wage conditions to be micromanaged or inspected by the government.

Today, the issue of exploitation of domestic workers has become a national issue because it seems the law does not account for them. However, ever since the law was enacted, no one knows whether all domestic workers are receiving the acceptable minimum wage or not. This paper intends to assess the progress of DWs ability to engage in collective action and to make sure that employers keep to the labour expectations mainly in wages and humane working condition

1.2 Domestic Workers: From Global to Local

According to the International Labour Organization, (2015) 67 million people are employed as domestic workers globally and this number continues to grow. These, 52.6 million of those working as domestic staff do not have labour rights (ILO 2015). This leaves a large group of people extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Although statistics of men, women, and children continue to vary with time, it has been noted that more women are working as domestic workers than men and children employed to work in private households around the globe. Although domestic workers are considered a necessity for the smooth running of most economies, they remain among the most exploited and the most vulnerable group of workers globally (Lutz 2016).

Among them are those who are subjected to modern-day slavery, involving loss of identity documents, non-payment of wages, often along with violence, beatings, and sexual abuse. According to the International Domestic Workers Federation, employers who exploit domestic workers through underpayment make around $8bn (£5.1bn) annually in illegal profits resulting from unpaid wages (Dupont, & Anderson, (2018). He adds to say that not only do employers of domestic workers make abnormal and exploitative profits, through forced labour and long working hours without rest, they also victimize domestic workers through sexual abuse and physical violence. In this way, the health and well-being, and even the lives of domestic workers are threatened, and their vulnerability increased. Given the position of domestic workers, it remains a global challenge to identify and assist this category of workers. Their exploitation is rooted in the 'private' nature of their work, on top of their tasks being considered low status. The way domestic work takes place behind closed doors in private homes means mistreatment mostly takes place out of sight of wider communities. In

countries like the UK or Dubai, domestic workers' situation is worsened by their being bound contractually to their employers through tied-visa systems (Demetriou,2015). This system prevents a worker from seeking alternative employment elsewhere, even when they are facing violence and exploitation from their current employers.

According to Saud (2020), the ILO Confederation approximates that 52.7 million Dws are in slavery_with no labour rights and most of these workers are migrants from poor countries like the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Africa, and Nepal, recruited to work in private homes in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. On arrival in these countries, many domestic workers fall into a trap. They can only leave their job, or the country, with the written consent of their 'sponsor' family i.e. their employers. Their passports and cell phones are usually taken away, and they cannot decide to leave if they face mistreatment or non-payment. International human rights organizations have received many complaints about such cases and have also documented horrendous abuses of domestic workers within private homes in different parts of the world. Confiscation of passports and non-payment of wages are routine and more or less normalized (Kershen 2012).

Kershen (2012) asserts that regarding NGO Migrant International if domestic workers who are unmarried become pregnant, they can face imprisonment in Oman and can be charged with illicit sexual relations. This can happen in cases where they have been raped by their employers. Referring to cases in Saudi Arabia in 2018, eight domestic workers were forced to seek protection from the Philippines Embassy after they gave birth to babies, following forced sexual abuse by their employers. Blofield, (2012) study carried out in 2013 revealed that 17% of child domestic workers face sexual abuse by their employers, in this case, the study took place in the capital city of Bangladesh, Dhaka, and a shocking 83% of these child domestic workers faced physical abuse.

In Nigeria also, Ngwamma (2018) reports that UNICEF, which is in charge of a children's fund, reports that hundreds of thousands of both Nigerians and migrants children continue to work as domestic workers, continually exposing these children to risks of exploitation, including through physical and sexual violence.

Although domestic workers in Kampala are a very important human resource for middle income and high-income earners (the employed class) for the smooth running of a home, domestic workers are still the lowest paid among all workers. Kampala being the capital city of Uganda, at least every middle income to the high-income household has one or two domestic workers. Better-off households will have more than two. Having been known as the uneducated from very poor backgrounds, many domestic servants, especially women, stay at their employers' place of residence. This puts them even more at the mercy of employers for their basic needs, something that also renders them vulnerable to other forms of exploitation, mistreatment, and even physical violence.

Namuggala (2016) reveals that in Kampala some people have formed groups known as "maid distribution groups", a form of human trafficking. Such individuals go to villages, lie to parents that they are offering scholarships for education for these kids, and with their parents' consent they take them only to sell them to private houses as domestic workers.

Some of these children are unable to trace back to their homes and due to mistreatment in those homes, they end up on the streets (Namuggala, 2016).

1.3. Domestic Workers Typology

Unarguably, DWs are categorized as workers vulnerable to habitual exploitation from the hands of the employers. Nevertheless, domestic workers all over the world including those in Uganda are not in any way homogenous. They are a group of workers with different characteristics even though the term domestic is constant to all of them. The categories are different, the challenges are not the same, the experiences are diverse, and they are exposed to different forms of vulnerability-based in their categories. The main factor that divided the DWs into different sub-groups is the form of employment contract or agreement they signed or agreed upon before they pick up the job. There are two main categories of DWs, the live-in and the live-out domestic workers.

The live-in are full-time domestic workers that reside with the employer in the same house while the live-out are domestic workers that reside outside the homes of the employers. The live-out can be full-time or part-time workers and can decide to work for multiple families in the same period as they can choose to work hourly (ILO, 2016:92). The live-out in most cases are older than the live-in, have children or dependents that they return to daily, there is some level of flexibility in their working arrangement.

While the live-out enjoy some kind of freedom, the live-in face greater challenges; they are isolated, work for longer hours because they cannot negotiate the working hours, movement restriction, most importantly are likely to pay lesser wages or in-kind since they are residing with the employers (ILO, 2016:92; Chen, 2011). As a result of all these challenges, the live-in are more vulnerable to precarious living conditions that include sexual and physical abuse from their employers (Chen, 2011:170).

Although the migrants DWs habitually used to dominate the population of the live-in DWs, however, the local young people, in particular, the teens and the early twenties most of the time opts for living with the employers (Chen, 2011:170). The reason for this is that the local young people in most cases are singles without children, and they could easily match up the requisite anticipated long working hours by the employers (ILO, 2013: 2). It is important to note that the live-in that are migrants encounter serious challenges and are more vulnerable to exploitation than the live-in local DWs because of the fear of deportation if the employers report them to the immigration departments (Chen, 2011:170).

The second factor that also contributes to the categories of DWs is the mode of employment. Some are employed through government registred "third party" agencies or through a referral from employer close associates or friends of the DWs working in another employer in the neighborhood. Others are employed by the employer directly or through extended family members of the employers. "As a result, the employer-employee relationship becomes tripartite, more formal, and less personal. In a few such cases, the agency or

contractor provides support services to the domestic worker" (Chen, 2011:172). The implication of this is that the mode of employment, either as a live-in or live-out DWs contributes to the level of protection against vulnerability and exploitation

1.4 Justification and relevance of this research

Very limited data has been documented on the exploitation of domestic workers in Kampala since they are working in the informal sector and in private. The findings of this study can be a resource for NGOs and governmental advocacy on domestic worker's rights to protect them from all forms of exploitation, violence, and all forms of abuse by their employers. Policymakers can use the results of this study to table related policies and programs that protect the rights of women domestic workers. The body of knowledge can use the study findings as a resource for future researchers that wish to carry out further research on a similar subject. The International and National labour unions can also use the findings of this study to get first-hand information on the challenges that domestic workers face and be able to set strategic plans on how they can be supported to claim their rights in the future.

1.5 Purpose of the study

To examine the exploitation of young women domestic workers aged from 18-30 years who work and live-in with their employers, and efforts made in advocating for their social, economic, and labour rights in, Kampala Uganda.

1.6 Positionality

My interest in this subject dates back to 2017 when I lost a close friend who lived in the slums of Kampala working as a domestic worker. She was just 20-years old, a beautiful girl, who succumbed to burns that resulted from her being pushed into boiling water, while she was preparing breakfast for the family. She had asked her boss to be paid the past 5 months' arrears in salary when she was pushed. She was kept in the house for a whole week with no treatment for her burns until she escaped to tell police what had happened and was rushed to the hospital. She died some months later.

As a social justice scholar at a master's degree level at ISS Rotterdam University in the Netherlands, I had some knowledge of Economics acquired during my bachelor's degree from Makerere University in Uganda, coupled with working experience as a community development officer supporting programs aimed at improving the lives of people in marginalized communities and hard to reach areas. I had also worked with PAE (Pacific Architects and Engineers) under UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in South Sudan. I found it made both personal and academic sense and would be enriching and empowering to examine and investigate the exploitation of domestic workers and if possible, establish an alliance with organizations or movements centered on protecting their rights against exploitative and violent employers. I also hope to be able to suggest ways that ILO Convention No. 189 on decent work for domestic workers can be ratified by Uganda so that

domestic workers have a better chance of the same labour rights and protections that other workers already have.

1.7 Objectives and Questions

i. To explore the experiences of young women domestic workers.

ii. To examine how young women domestic workers are organized.

iii. To explore the best way for improving advocacy for domestic workers' social-economic rights.

Main Question

In which ways have women domestic workers been socially and economically exploited while working in households in Kampala, Uganda?

Sub-Questions

i. What are the different forms of exploitation experiences of young women domestic workers in Uganda in their day-to-day work as a domestic worker?

ii. What are the factors that help sustain the different forms of exploitation that young women domestic workers encountered in their day-to-day work?

iii. What are the steps taken by the Domestic Worker Association (DOWA) and other labour organizations in Uganda to address the exploitation of women domestic workers?

1.8 Contents of Chapters

Chapter one states the background of the study, the research problem, main question and sub-questions, objectives, justification of the study, and positionality. Chapter two focuses on the research processes that details the data collection approach, ethical consideration, the field experiences regarding limitations and challenges. Chapter three expresses the theoretical framework with detailed attention to concepts of empowerment and power, solidarity, and agency as a panacea to the exploitation of the labour of DWs. Chapters four and five demonstrates the discussion of the findings and data analysis while chapter six comments on conclusions, generalization, summary, and recommendations of the research.

Chapter 2 The research processes

2.1 Introduction

The practicability of using information that is already there has was validated by different researchers (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009; Creswell, 2009:56). Also, sightseeing existing information or data suggests practical alternatives while researching in a short period with limited funds (Creswell, 2009:56). O'Leary (2010:222) notes that while exploring already established publications, the researcher must start with identifying the specifications of the relevant publication to find out the techniques of retrieving the script while being mindful of taking into consideration the matter of preconception and integrity in the script. O'Leary notes that the critical part of using the previous script is to help the data collector to clearly understand whatever he or she is researching within the script and find principle subjects that are essential in the scripts (O'Leary, 2010:222). Discovering previous scripts for this research depended largely on secondary and primary scripts from various papers, scholarly books, and authorized information from different administrations like ILO, UN, the media, publications, and movies.

The original qualitative information was gathered through an investigation conducted remotely in Kampala located in the central part of Uganda utilizing on-line interviews through phone calls and the use of different social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook messenger. The choice of conducting the qualitative investigation was possible because it answered the study's demands and was within my capacities. O'Leary's (2010:222) argues that the researcher should primarily contemplate

The practicability of the research and if the approaches are within his or her capacity. Essentially, the study technique implemented should be worthwhile in responding to the study inquiries. the qualitative method of scrutiny permitted the scholar to actively engage in the collection of the information that a survey could not have guaranteed and offered room for adjustments in the study proposal in the process of online interviewing. In this way, it was possible to accommodate unexpected circumstances. To answer the study inquiries or questions, dialogs were organized with domestic workers themselves, on-line, as well as for members of different trade unions, government, and NGO representatives in Uganda. A set of semi-structured interview questions were created for each group, as a guide. This helped ensure that the interview contributor stayed on the path and addressed the essential questions of the study. Semi-structured interviews also allowed respondents to express themselves more freely.

2.2 Data collection

The process of gathering primary data for this research involved three main stages. The first stage involved recruiting two research assistants that helped in identifying respondents to be interviewed, helped with follow up and the collation of data since I was unable to travel to

Uganda due to the COVID19 pandemic. The role of the research assistants in different ways had direct implications for the quality of the outcome of the research process due to their direct participation in finding people to interview (Stevano & Deane, 2017:1). This means the choice of research assistants was carefully considered in terms of the skills they possessed.

Apart from language interpretation skills, Stevano & Deane (2017:1) maintained that to acquire reliable data, research assistants must possess essential qualitative research skills. As suggested by Bujra (2006:177), the choice of a research assistant must not be limited to first-hand knowledge of the subject of research or the research environment. Basic competence such as "skill both in listening and in offering full accounts of what is said, but also the capacity to be self-effacing and to 'put their ego aside' so that they do not inhibit informants" (Bujra, 2006:177). In line with this, the two research assistants hired to assist in the data collection process were Ph.D. students at Makerere University. The lead assistant had 7 years of working experience with different International and Local NGOs as a research officer and is skilled in qualitative research.

After securing the services of the research assistants, a series of conference calls through ZOOM and WhatsApp were organized between the three of us to carve out a feasible plan for data collection. We agreed on the sample selection criteria, the number of work-in and work-out domestic workers to be interviewed, and the mode of interviews considering the challenges that COVID19 posed for the data collection process.

The second stage involved contacting relevant organizations that could facilitate access to domestic workers in Kampala through emails and WhatsApp messages. Three organizations were contacted: The Domestic workers Association Uganda Limited (DOWA), the Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism, Supermarkets, and Allied Workers Union (HTS-UNION), and Platform for Labour Action (PLA) in Uganda. HTS-UNION was contacted because of its affiliation with the International Domestic Worker Federation (IDWFED) and other international labour and workers organizations. DOWA is a new organization that was established in 2019 as an NGO through the concerted effort of PLA-Uganda, a National Civil Society Organization founded in 2000. PLA is focused on promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable and marginalized workers (domestic workers included) through the empowerment of economically marginalized communities and individuals in Uganda.

After two weeks of communication, both DOWA and PLA-Uganda agreed to participate in the study. Interview questions were sent to both organizations at their request and the answers were returned with all questions answered. Their caveat was that there was no further need for interviews through phone calls or ZOOM meetings. The researcher however then insisted on a further interview since there was a need to ask further follow-up questions to some of the answers provided in their initial responses. Therefore, a WhatsApp telephone call was scheduled for both representatives of DOWA and PLA-Uganda. The researcher ensured that the two researcher assistants were also on the calls to help take notes to make sure no key points raised were missed out.

The third stage of data collection involved conducting interviews for selected DWs. In the selection process of participants, both snowballing and purposive sampling techniques were adopted. The Snowball sample method was used in the selection of the work-in domestic workers. The research assistants identified a housemaid from Rubaga division in

Kampala who owns a Smartphone. Interviews with the domestic workers contacted through DOWA and PLA-Uganda followed a similar pattern to that with NGOs and involved the two researcher assistants being on the calls to help take notes or ask questions. In cases whereby the respondents spoke different languages that I am not fluent in, the research assistant with fluency took the lead in asking questions while I took notes. Due to COVID19, the interviews were conducted through telephone calls. Due to network problems, only five of the interviews were conducted via WhatsApp video calls. The research assistants through this domestic worker requested contact with other domestic workers with smartphones, and this process of 'snowballing' continued until we found five work-in domestic workers ready to participate in the study. For the work-out domestic workers, the researcher assistants scanned the register of DOWA that has 171 members to select some women domestic workers that fitted the age criteria (18-30 years), and with at least 4 years of employment as a domestic worker. The reason behind the criteria was to ensure that all the respondents had enough experiences to share and it also helped address those that started working as a child domestic worker before transitioning into adulthood. This age group is also highly engaged and more proactive on social media, and so more likely to agree to an on-line interview than older women, domestic workers. Sixty of the 171 registered members of DOWA fitted the criteria, and ten were found who were ready to participate in the study willingly and without financial inducement. In total, five (5) work-in domestic workers and ten (10) work-out domestic workers, and two (2) organizational representatives of DOWA and PLA-Uganda were interviewed, making a total of 17 respondents who participated in the interview process.

2.3 Data Analysis

Consequent to the collection of data to echo the prime objectives and purposes of this study, a Thematic Analytical (TA) approach was adopted as the tool for data analysis to find themes that could address the research questions proposed in Chapter 1 of this study. As posited by Braun & Clarke (2006:78), thematic analysis is useful for qualitative data because it tries to identify patterns in themes arising from the data. Besides, TA is flexible, and most importantly TA can be useful for both deductive studies (where researchers have a fairly clear idea of what they are looking for) and exploratory studies (where the researchers have little idea of what pattern they will find) (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 78). The adoption of TA for this study is also considered appropriate because there is no specific requirement in terms of the sample size; this depends on the size of the project as well as the nature of data collection and the question at hand. Most significantly, TA varies with the themes analyzed and reported (Guest et al., 2006; Emmel, 2013; Fugard et al., 2015). Thus, the most fascinating and vital themes were derived from looking at the data collected from semi-structured interview responses after review, along with relevant literature. These identified themes were then arranged according to the research sub-questions, into chapters. Themes such as poverty, exploitation, unemployment, solidarity, rule of law, and human rights were among those identified through data Thematic Analysis.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is one of the most important components of any sociological research that deals with human beings. When it comes to social research, ethics can be described as "moral deliberation, choice, and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process" (Erong, 2017: 12). The implication of this as accentuated by O'Leary (2014: 47), stresses that one needs to handle research with extreme care because the integrity of the research process should be the priority goal of any social researcher. This includes being honest during the transcribing process to avoiding a judgmental stance, depicting a single story, or taking sides in the presentation of controversial or contradictory findings (O'Leary, 2014:47).

According to Orb et al., (2001:93) the primary responsibility of the researcher is to capture something as close as possible to the truth, the experienced realities, and to avoid any conscious errors and biases. In the process of conducting this study, the ethical obligation to 'no harm' was adopted as the watchword through all stages of data collection and analysis. Therefore, domestic workers' identities were protected with pseudonyms to prevent any possibility of backlash from their employers. Information that could be used to identify them, such as their villages or family name, were omitted. Other relevant information that could reveal their real identity was also omitted from the presentation of data, such as where they worked. Only the identity of the Vice-President of DOWA and the Program Officer of PLA-Uganda are revealed in this study.

The issue of informed consent was also considered key to ethical data collection. In line with this, respondents were informed about the purposes of the study in the language they were most comfortable with and could fully understand. What was expected of them during the process was explained, as well as their rights not to answer any questions they were not comfortable with. It was made clear to them that they could leave and disengage from the interview and research process at any point. This choice was clearly stated and repeatedly at 15 minutes intervals during the interview process, to reassure them. This approach was adopted because sharing their history of exploitation could trigger traumatic experiences, as they recounted the pain and grief of their daily struggles. Therefore, it was decided to ensure that the young women domestic workers participating in the interviews did so in a fit emotional state, and with care for their feelings. A deliberate decision was also made to exclude domestic workers below the age of 18 as they are still considered children legally and interviewing them would require consent from an adult.

2.5 Limitations and challenges

Apart from challenges related to the COVID19, which restricted the movement of the research assistants, and prevented easy access to domestic workers because of lockdown, the primary challenge and limitation of this study was the inability to personally conduct a physical face to face interview with the selected domestic workers for interviews. Although the initial plan was to interview 10 live-in and 10 live-out domestic workers, to have a balanced account of both, in the end only three work-in domestic workers were able to fully participate in interviews through phone calls. Despite their readiness to participate in the process, it took almost three weeks before the interviews were completed as some of the interviews lasted 6

days before completion. This was because the DWs find it difficult to answer phone calls since their employers are indoor due to COVID19 and might question them why they are on phone for a very long time. While the live-out DWs were easy to access, a significant number of them demanded money, therefore, the research assistants had to continue searching for those that are ready to participate willingly without payment. This cost a lot of time and there were delays in transcribing and translating data collected through interviews in other languages, which by extension delayed the writing of the draft.

Another challenge was the failure to make contact directly with HTS-UNION, known as "Uganda Hotels and Domestic Workers' Union". Since this appears to be an organized body that addresses domestic workers' issues directly and is affiliated with the Uganda Labour Union, it was an important body to contact. However, their official reports about domestic workers in Uganda were consulted and the material around their annual organizing of a march and celebration of Domestic Workers Day. It was regrettable that the researcher and the research assistants could not manage to get a response from any of their representatives, a situation made understandable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This organization remains in a key position and would have been able to provide deeper insights into the historical antecedents of current struggles for domestic workers' rights and protections against exploitation. However, after building trust, PLA-Uganda and DOWA staff interviews were able to fill the gap in knowledge by providing relevant information about advocacy and campaigning for domestic workers' rights to decent work and fair wages.

Despite the limitations, remote on-line interviews presented some opportunities like it was less costly and time saving compared to traveling directly to the field. Also looking for a convenient and secure environment in the field where to conduct interviews would have been complex. by and large, it was so convenient doing the interviews on-line.

Chapter 3 Empowerment, Solidarity, and Agency

3.1 Introduction

The discussion in this chapter critically engages with various relevant concepts and theories that form the basis for data analysis in the next chapter. The theory of exploitation of labour, the concepts of empowerment, solidarity, and agency were selected as central components of the theoretical framework. The exploitation of labour as a concept helps to understand the different forms of exploitation domestic workers encounter daily. To address the problem of exploitation, the concepts of empowerment and bargaining power, and the nexus between the two. In this way, the discussion can help to demonstrate that domestic workers can fight back against exploitation by organizing themselves. They will need solidarity to stand the chance of realizing their goals, and their ability to successfully organize as a union will be closely related to their exercising of agency alongside their solidarity.

3.2 The exploitation of Labour.

When it comes to the ongoing debate of modern slavery across the world, labour exploitation involves people being forced or manipulated to work for little or no wages, which remains the most common form of modern slavery (Crane, 2013; Riley, 2019). According to the Merriam-webster dictionary, "exploitative behavior is defined as unfairly or cynically using another person or group for profit or advantage". The exploitation of workers is a lucrative venture mainly because workers are paid (too) little or nothing for working long hours (Ollus et al., 2016).

Labour exploitation can be said to be built around the objective of "maximizing profit through underpayment of wages" (Ollus et al., 2016). According to Dowding (2011), exploitation of labour can also be understood as the act of "using power to systematically extract more value from workers than is given to them". Exploitation involves a social relationship founded on an asymmetry of power between employers and workers. In terms of discussion about exploitation, there is an unswerving relationship with consumption in social theory, and traditionally this would label exploitation as fraudulently taking advantage of another person due to their inferior position, giving the exploiter power over the employee (Dowding, 2011).

While the history or origin of the concept of exploitation of labour can be traced back to the work of Karl Marx, in analyzing exploitation, economists are divided on the explanations offered by Marx and Adam Smith. Although Smith did not see exploitation as an intrinsic systematic phenomenon in specific economic systems as Marx did, he saw it as an optional moral injustice (Ukpere, 2010). Others have argued that exploitation is wrong because it is coercive, degrading, and fails to protect the vulnerable (Wertheimer, 1999; Sample, 2003).

Exploitation is one species of wrongful gain, and exploiters tend to gain at the expense of the exploited by inflicting relative losses on disadvantaged parties. They harm their victims, even when their interactions are to some extent mutually advantageous (Mayer, 2007).

3.3 Empowerment and Bargaining Power

Various studies over the years have shown that domestic workers lack the required bargaining power that will enable them to dictate the terms and conditions of their employment as an employee with the employers (Mousaid et al., 2017:2). Mousaid et al. (2017: 2), described bargaining power as "the ability of domestic workers to enforce their rights and influence their quality of work". Hence, without bargaining power, domestic workers are put in a vulnerable position in society as one of the most vulnerable groups (Schwenken, 2017). However, empowerment has been suggested as the ultimate goal for marginalized groups in society, by various scholars (Zhongxuan, 2018; Kiss & Zimmerman, 2019), and is viewed as essential in addressing the extra-economic exploitation of domestic workers, for example. Empowering people simply means making them conscious of their fundamental rights and showing them the best way to defend and protect such rights through solidarity and agency (UN, 2014:51).

One of the main approaches to empower domestic workers is to agitate for better wages and improved working conditions, through organizing themselves as a union thus giving them a collective voice to make up for their lack of bargaining power as individuals concerning employers. Nonetheless, the concept of empowerment is not immune from contestation as regards definition, interpretation, application, and measurement by the various school of thought (Gibson 1991). Regardless of the contestation and complexity of the concept of empowerment, Parpart et al. (2003:4) have reasoned that it is a vain attempt to focus all one's energy on agreeing with a specific definition of the concept of empowerment. Instead, they suggest that the best approach is to understand empowerment as a multi-dimensional social process (psychological, political, economic, sociological) that helps individuals take control over their lives, individually and collectively (Parpart 2003: 4). The same study further elucidated that empowerment means an ability to exercise (collectively) power over any situation.

The concepts of empowerment and bargaining power can be likened to Siamese twins since empowerment both allows people to exercise their power and allows them to enthusiastically contribute and partake in social activities and actions (UN, 2014:10). Therefore, for domestic workers in Uganda to acquire bargaining power must get involved in activities aimed at achieving significant social transformation, by actively participating to address vital problems detrimental to their well-being. Empowerment can take many different forms; it can be about developing consciousness, acquisition of vocational skills, involvement in decision-making, or a better living standard. Of course, all empowerment process is situated within the structural restrictions of both formal and informal institutions in society, as well as conventional practices entrenched in social, economic, and political structures (Parpart et al., 2003:3). Despite this, there is as this study will show, always some room for exercising bargaining power collectively.

In some conceptualizations, the concept of power is conceived as the capability of making others realize one's desires and goals regardless of what the others themselves need or

desire. Page and Czuba (1999) argued that this conceptualization of power implies that power is a zero-sum game. Although some domestic workers in Uganda also adopt this perspective and understanding of power, it turns out to be a narrow and constrictive narrative, even if it can appear a valid one, since it limits power to ideas of control and domination and takes little account of bargaining power, negotiation and the possibility of transforming power relationships in a positive-sum manner (Page & Czuba, 1999).

If a narrow, zero-sum understanding of power is adopted then DWs in Uganda trying to organize into a union to collectively bargain with the employers for better working terms and conditions are wasting their time because this is tantamount to an exercise in futility, because those with power will be unwilling to yield it. However, there is a need to reject such a zero-sum conceptualization of power which excludes the possibility of empowerment through transforming relationships of domination and subordination in mutually advantageous ways. Since bargaining power exists, relations of power can change, as can the social and economic relationships through which forms of power are expressed (Page & Czuba, 1999). The power relations and bargaining power between employers and domestic workers as employees can be altered if domestic workers can organize themselves to increase their bargaining power by speaking with one voice. This possibility is now explored through the concepts of solidarity and agency.

3.4 Solidarity

The foundation of labour unions and collective bargaining organizations such as those of work with domestic workers is deeply rooted in the concept of solidarity. The effectiveness of different unions and workers organizations in mobilizing vulnerable workers who engage in precarious employment hinges on their understanding and conceptualization of this concept (Steinvorth, 1999). As with empowerment, it can be difficult to pinpoint and describe precisely what "solidarity" means across different contexts (Steinvorth, 1999).

Solidarity is close to other concepts such as fraternity and community, all crucial for those organizing labour unions, the concept of solidarity appeals more to those wishing to transform existing and unequal social relations (Steinvorth, 1999:29). Solidarity is always relational, like power, since solidarity "conjures up positive images of the strength of togetherness and community, but in practice, it is experienced by groups when confronted by the real or perceived threat from other groups" (Wilde, 2004:1). For domestic workers in Uganda to successfully organize in a way that is strong enough to challenge the status quo of their precarious working conditions, solidarity is a crucial goal so that other workers through labour unions and similar associations (like NGOs) can exercise collective bargaining that includes domestic workers. Solidarity is also vital to ensuring that domestic workers share sympathy for one another's struggles and can support one another in their common cause for improved working conditions, and an end to forced labour and extra-economic exploitation.

3.5 Agency

The mobilization of domestic workers into forming an organization or coming together in solidarity to tackle extra-economic and wage exploitation and precarious working condition

depends mostly on whether domestic workers decide to get involved in a relevant union and seek to speak through the union, with one voice. This decision of speaking out against exploitation is closely connected to the concept of agency. The concept can be understood as the individual capability to make free choices and take independent and collective actions that have the potential for a significant impact on their lives and the lives of others (Kristiansen, 2014; Bandura 2006). According to Hewson (2010:10), intentionality, rationality, and power are the three principal features of human beings that combine to produce agency. Although human beings tend to be goal-oriented and act intentionally, Hewson maintained that the ability to act differs due to power disparities that in turn mean some individuals possess the greater capability to exercise agency (Hewson, 2010:10).

On the other hand, some believe that the notion of free choice is a facade since choices and intentions are shaped by institutions and limited by customs, gender, class, religion, and other social structures and cultural attitudes that hinder an agent from making their own decisions freely (Kristiansen, 2014:4). Therefore, one can argue that even the establishment of the sole agency is sited inside societal surroundings, which implies the two prospects for, and restraints on free choices being made by individuals (Hitlin and Elder, 2006). This implies that the opportunity for domestic workers in Uganda to exert their agency at the workplace will differ because the situations and environments they work in are different, and so do their capacities to speak out and make demands. These variations might by extension affect their decisions to partake in – or not take part in – trade unions or other organizations that aim to secure collective bargaining power for their members, including domestic workers.

While social structures can limit individuals' ability to act intentionally, Hewson (2010) elucidates further that agency is not limited to individual agency and includes collective and proxy agency as well (Hewson, 2010:13-17). The implication of this is that individuals can act together and can also act in proxy or on behalf of others. The agency can occur because of the act of people coming together in solidarity e.g. in a social movement, or through a collective court case or class action. Given these different types of agency that Hewson has outlined, it is not surprising that domestic workers' organizations and other labour organizations that seek to mobilize domestic workers in the struggle against forced labour and labour exploitation, sometimes have difficulties in organizing in the informal sector. The concept of agency is important, both as a sign of inhibitors on collective solidarity and as a catalyst that can encourage individuals to contribute to the organizing of domestic workers themselves into trade unions and other support organizations that can in turn exercise collective agency on domestic workers' behalf (Connor, 2011:3).

Chapter 4 Experiences of Exploitation: Young Women Domestic Workers

4.1. Introduction

The discussion in this chapter centres on the analysis of data that seek to answer the research question 1 and 2 concerning exploring the different forms of exploitation experienced by young women domestic workers in Uganda in their day-to-day work as a domestic worker as well as the different contributing factors to the exploitation. Partially structured questions were posed to the respondents to share their experience, and the findings are presented in 2 main parts of this chapter, sections 4.2 and 4.3. The first part contains 5 sub-sections with the first focusing on low wages and long working hours, and the second discussing physical and mental torture experiences of the DWs. Analysis in the third sub-section is based on deprivation of religious freedom, a fundamental civil right to be enjoyed by all. In the fourth sub-section, the impact of COVID19 on DWs vulnerability to exploitative behavior from their employers was analyzed. The second major part is in Section 4.3 which is sub-divided into two further sections. These consider factors such as easy access to alternatives that can be used in replacing domestic workers due to the high level of unemployment, traditional beliefs, and gender-assigned roles of girl children as housekeeping workers. Also, the role of family and cultural background that does not offer girl children much of a voice or the right to an opinion about how to live their lives. All these factors have kept young women DWs in perpetual conformity with the exploitative behaviors of their employers.

4.2. Experiences of Exploitation

4.2.1 Low Wages and Long Working Hours.

The most prominent form of exploitation that the DWs in Uganda encounter is low and ridiculous wages as well as long working hours that does not commensurate with the wages their employers pay them. In Uganda, no law stipulates minimum wage specifically for DWs; as a result, the wages of each DW depends on personal agreement with the employer. Although the Uganda parliament recently in 2019 passed the national minimum wage for labour at UGX136,000 (33 euros) per month. However, the findings of this study show that some of the DWs earn as less as UGX60,000 (approx. 15 euros). The highest earner among the DWs that were interviewed during the process of data collection for this study earn UGX100,000 (approx. 24 euros), and it took her five years of working before her salary was increased. All the respondents lamented on how their work is not appreciated and commensurate with the level of stress and energy they put into their work. Jane, who is a live-in DW, expressed her disappointment with her income compared to the working hours. She explains the typical work routine for a live-in DW. According to her, she only manages 4 hours of

sleep daily, and yet she is being paid UGX60,000 (approx. 15 euros) per month for all the work she does in the house. She had this to say.

> "My daily routine starts between 4 am, and 5 am, I am the first to wake up and the last to go to bed around midnight, and sometimes if instructed by my Madam to mop all the floors and do some cleaning I sleep around 1 am. After getting out of bed in the morning, I prepare breakfast for the whole family because both my Madam and her husband take food to their work. I will bathe the children and prepare them for school. After the children leave for school by 8 am between 9 am, and 12 noon, I wash all the dirty clothes, and because we do not have a washing machine, I am already tired. Immediately after washing clothes, I am already preparing lunch because the children normally come back from school by 3 pm and by 5 pm. All the dishes used for lunch must be clean because Madam must not meet the kitchen dirty. At the same time, I start the preparation of dinner, which must be ready latest by 7 pm. Between 7 pm and 10 pm that everybody will be going to bed, a series of errands, and going up and down. Besides, I must clean the kitchen and all the dishes before I go to bed. All these stress for UGX60,000 (approx. 15 euros) per month, I am tired but do not have a choice" (Jane, Live-in DW, Female, age 25, Interviews, September 2020).

The experience of Jane is similar to other live-in DWs that were interviewed; they all shared how they are working for longer hours with meager wages. Nevertheless, their response led to my curiosity to ask if they do not consider taking break-time to rest? The responses got from them indicate that resting time depends on their employer. The resting time depends on the mood of the employer; if the employer is not in a good mood, there is no rest throughout the day until she goes to bed. Annet, a live-in DW position corroborated Jane's experience of working hours and wages. She said that.

> "When it comes to taking out some resting hours or a nap to relax my brain, it is the Madam that decides what time I should take a break and my sleeping time. Even on weekends, there is no break, although if I am sick to the extent that I cannot work, Madam will buy medicine for me, I must work the following day. I work like a donkey; the workload in the house is a job for like 2 or 3 maids because the house is massive". (Annet, age 19, Live-in DW, Interview, September 2020).

The situation of low wages and longer working hours for domestic workers, as highlighted by the respondents is not limited to Uganda. It is a well-documented experience in many developing countries, in particular African countries where no legislation or law stipulates minimum wages for DWs. The main reason for such experience as documented by various studies (Grant, 1997; Souza,2010; Budlender, 2011; Bosman et al., 2016; Palumbo, 2016) is because of the lesser value attached to domestic work, and as a result, the need to formalize domestic work is habitually ignored or overlooked by the government policymakers. In some cases, the government does formalize domestic work as formal employment covered by minimum wage law. In a situation where the government does this, it means that the government attached significant value to the work done by domestic workers (Budlender, 2011). The government of Uganda's lack of legislation on minimum wage for DWs is not the only reason responsible for low wages and the undervalue of domestic work. This was evident from the responses of some of the news that was interviewed. For instance, Mabel

who is a live-out DW said that the employers always emphasized on the fact that the work they are asking the DW to do for them is not something they (employers) cannot do because as a woman they were taught how to do household chores. Therefore, the work they are asking the DWs to do is not a big deal, and nothing spectacular that warrant them paying more money for wages. She explains further:

> "When you are about to get the job, the first thing the Madam will tell you is that you are not doing anything different from what you do at home helping your parents without being paid. But in this place, you are getting paid for work done. You can imagine the thought of going back home and continue working day and night taking care of your home in the village and also helping at the farm free of charge or getting some money that you can save and send home. Although as one grows older, the thought of quantifying working as a house girl in the city with the work done as a daughter in the household starts to diminish". (Mabel, Female, Live-out DW, age 27, Interview on August 2020)

Without a doubt, societal gender assigned a role that has subjected girls and female to be the sole custodian of household chores play an essential role is a value attached to the work done in the household by the DWs. According to Souza (2010), the discrimination against women's domestic workers concerning wages or appreciation for the work done is deeply rooted in how women do unpaid work in the home (Souza, 2010). This explains why many employers considered paying for doing house chores that their wives or daughters can do is a favor to the employees hired to do the chores.

4.2.2. Physical and Mental Abuse

Physical abuse such as flogging, sexual harassment, and violence, rape, labeling as a witch as all sorts of abuse has become a regular testimony of the vast majority of women DWs all over the world. Although none of the DWs that participated in this study revealed that they were subjected to sexual violence by their current employers, three of the DWs confirmed that they left their previous employers because of sexual violence and rape. According to Mabel.

> "I was raped by my former employer's eldest son, and when I reported him to his mother, I was accused of trying to ruin the reputation of their family as a mode of getting back at them for scolding me for stealing in the house. I was sent packing without paying me the three months' salaries I was owed under the guise of a false accusation that I stole a gold chain that worth my two years' salaries. I am just happy that I have not encountered such experience in my present workplace" (Mabel, Female, Live-out DW, age 27, Interview in August 2020)

While the cases of sexual violence is not a dominant occurrence from the experiences shared by the respondents that were interviewed, the findings of this study has revealed that the most common form of abuses the DWs encountered in their workplace are frequent slapping and serving of punishment for broken plates or lost items in the house. According to Annet, a live-in DW that was interviewed,

"it doesn't matter if a house girl is the one responsible for the lost items or broken plates, anything that goes wrong in the house, you become the culprit by default. On many occasions, I was denied food as a punishment for something I did not do" (Annet, age 19, Live-in DW, Interview, September 2020

Apart from beating and flogging, non-physical punishment according to the findings of this study is deprivation of food, sleeping outside the house in the cold and exposure to mosquitoes, and deduction from salaries or absolute forfeiting of the monthly wages.

4.2.3. Stripped of Religious Rights

Freedom of religion is a fundamental human and socio right that is guaranteed by the Uganda Constitution and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1945. According to the UDHR Article 18 of UDHR, "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance". Unfortunately, this right is a luxury for most of the DWs that were interviewed for this study. Except for three DWs, all other respondents shared their concerns about their inability to practice their religion. It was discovered during the discussion with the DWs that most employers considered themselves as all-knowing and avow that their religious views and philosophies are superior to those of the house girls they employed. Harriet, 21 years old live-in DW of Catholic faith said since she arrived at her employer's house, she was forbidden to attend Catholic church or practice her religion along with the Catholic doctrine. According to her.

"Sundays remain the most troubling day for me in all the days of the week. We spend the whole day at the Pentecostal church, unlike my church that you go early in the morning and you are back from the morning Mass. Unfortunately, my employer banned me from going to the Catholic church. She constantly says series of unprintable and awful things about the Catholic faith and gave me the option to choose between working for them and abide by their religion or I choose my faith and go back to the village. I don't have any other option than to convert to her faith by going to Pentecostal and pray in their ways too." (Harriet, 21 years old live-in DW, Interview, August 2020).

The forceful conversion is not limited to live-in DW; the live-out DWs also corroborated the striping of religious rights of DWs by most employers. Betty, who is a Seventh-day Adventist, claimed she left her previous employer because she insisted that she must become an Anglican if she still desires to be working with them. Therefore, she had to lie about her religious faith to her new employer to have the opportunity to practice her faith in secrecy.

"As an Adventist, we go to church on Saturdays and not Sundays like other Christian denominations. The moment I told my previous employer that I would be taking some hours to attend church on Saturdays, my request was denied outrightly, she claimed I could only take Sundays off which is meant for church. Although I do manage to attend church occasionally, it always comes at a cost. I am always accused of the bad things happening to their family. I

can say that I left the place because I could not practice my religious faith freely and not because of my wages" (Betty, 28 years old live-out DW, Interview, August 2020).

In addition to employers making attempts to convert their house girls to follow their religious faith, two of the DWs complained about their employers making it challenging to be a practicing Muslim and, in some cases, forced them to do things that are against their Islamic faith. Both lamented that their employers do not allow them to put on hijab which is fundamental to their Muslim faith. For instance, Aishat, who is a Muslim by faith, said that her employer does not care whether the activities she is asking her do violate her religious beliefs or not. According to her words.

"Eating or touching of pork is haram for Muslims, and my employer is aware of this fact, and yet she will buy pork meat and expect me to cook it. There are times that the pork soup in the house, so I have two options, either I go hungry without food, or I eat it. I am tired; I am not the type that gives up quickly, but, on this issue, it is too much for me to handle, and I am already looking for another job (Aishat, age 25 Live-out DW, Interviews August 2020)

Restriction of religious freedom can aggravate the power imbalances between the employee and employer (Namuggala, 2015:572). Religion is something that is regarded with high esteem by many people because it is an integral part of not only their sense of belonging and worldview but also has their identity. Noticeably, Africans have been described as "notoriously religious", with each society having a specific "set of beliefs and practices" (Mbiti, 1990:3). The experience shared by both Christians, and Muslims DWs can be better understood by the argument of Namuggala (2015), that suggest that forcing of house girls by employers to adopt another religion is tantamount to disrespect, failure to appreciate differences, domination, and humiliation (Namuggala, 2015:572).

4.2.4. Exploitation Worsens with COVID 19

Several Studies (Al-Ali, 2020; Casale & Posel, 2020; Amdeselassie et al., 2020; Chulov, 2020) have shown that DWs are among the groups that are highly susceptible to contracting COVID-19 because working from home is not an option for them. This is because they frequent public transport and come in contact with people on their way to work. Some of the live-out DWs that were interviewed expressed their disappointment towards their employer taking advantage of them for their benefits. For example, Elizabeth, a 29-year-old DW said that her employers did not agree to her demands to cut the working days even if it means that the days that she did not come to work would be removed from the monthly salaries. For her coming to work every day put her at risk of contracting COVID19, in a country where many people did not believe that the disease is real and as a result, the majority of the population don't wear a mask or take precautions. According to her words.

"I felt exploited when my employer told me that it is either I quit or come to work for the seven days a week we agreed upon before I was hired. Yet, my workloads increased because everybody is at home, nobody goes to work or school, so there are more dishes and dirty clothes to wash, the house is dirtier, so I have to clean the whole house thrice a day" (Elizabeth, age 29, Live-out DW, Interview, August 2020).

While Elizabeth's employer rejected a restructure working days arrangement to reduce the risk of contracting COVID19, there are those that their employers insisted that they must agree to stay in a shelter arranged for them at the employer house or else they will be fired. The option of living with the employer did not give room to bring in their children to stay with them, and this conditions the single mothers among the DWs in a serious dilemma. This was the case of Mabel, a single mother of two.

> "My employer gave me two options, it is either I relocate to the house, or they fire me and look for another house girl. I have a four-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son, leaving them behind to save my job is a tough decision. I was told they could not risk me bringing corona-virus into their house; all my plea fell onto deaf ears. Thank God I have a friend that volunteers to help me look after my children until I get back. You can imagine I left my children for complete eight weeks not seeing them" (Mabel, Female, Live-out DW, age 27, Interview in August 2020).

Apart from employers pressuring the DWs to work during COVID19 or lose their jobs, some of the DWs that were interviewed complained about the employers not paying them their salaries or cut their salaries into half for the same amount of work they do. In some cases that the workload increases, the salaries are either not paid, delayed, or cut in half. This phenomenon is shared among the live-in DWs. According to a live-in DW, she was told point-blank that she must sacrifice her salary because COVID19 has affected everybody and she continues working since she has nowhere to go even if she wants to leave.

> "My boss told me that covid 19 is political, so I do my work usually, but the workload has increased since the whole family now stays at home. Yet, my boss withheld my payments under the guise of delays in his salaries. This quite disturbing not getting my salary because COVID19 did not stop me from working (Annet, age 19, Live-in DW, Interview, September 2020).

As suggested by Al-Ali (2020:334), working in an exploitative environment, most especially living under lockdown can have a disturbing and devastating bearing on the DWs mental health (Al-Ali, 2020:334). With many of them far away from their families, they are subjected to long working hours which includes intense labour such as demand from employers for rigorous and obsessive disinfecting and cleaning of the homes (Chulov, 2020).

4.3. Why Exploitation of DWs Continues.

4.3.1. Surplus of Alternatives to Domestic Workers Value

From the findings, it was discovered that the ease at which the employers can get a replacement for DWs if they complain about maltreatment or demand for an increase in wages that commensurate with the level of work they are subjected to by the employers is one of the significant reasons that exploitation of DWs remains pervasive in Uganda. The DWs that were interviewed expressed concerns about the teeming population of unemployed youths in Uganda that are ready to take over their place if the employer decided to fire them because of their demand for better wages. Mabel (not real name), 27 years old single mother that has

been working as a domestic worker for seven years believed that, for every DW that quit his or her job, ten people are willing and ready to replace him or her for a lesser wage because there are lots of people struggling for the limited employment space in the domestic work sector. Mabel gave an example of an event that happened to her to elaborate on her position.

> "Early this year before the COVID19 pandemic, I went to the market with my employer to buy foodstuff and other things needed at home. Then two young girls approached my employer begging her to help them by allowing them to do domestic chores for her, and she can pay them anything she wants. One of the girls even said she does not mind food in exchange for work; they were so desperate. My employer declined their request and gave them money to buy something to eat. She looked at me and shook her head. For me, I got the message because earlier in the week I was complaining that my wage is too small and the look means you can see that people are ready to do your work in exchange for food. Many of us are in this type of situation, and we have to accept whatever life is dishing out to us unless we want to go back to our village" (Mabel, Female, Live-out DW, age 27, Interview on August 2020).

Mabel's experience, as highlighted above, is not a case in isolation. Nearly all the DWs that shared their experiences with us during the interviews fear losing their jobs to others in the effort of challenging their employer of exploitative behaviors. Even in situations whereby the employers deducted from their wages for frivolous offences and excuses, from the findings it was detected that most of the DWs opted for the silence option because they considered themselves lucky even to have a job. Janet, a 25-year-old DW, shared her experience on how easy for someone to lose her job even in a situation where there is no complaint of maltreatment to the employer or DOWA. She maintained that complaining to unemployed friends or neighbors can as well put your job in jeopardy.

> "I cannot forget the day I opened my mouth to complain about the stress I am passing through in my previous workplace and how I am contemplating leaving the job to a so-called friend in my neighborhood. Regrettably, this same friend of mine went behind my back to meet my employer and shared with them that I am not reliable that she is ready to work for them and will appreciate whatsoever they offer her. I was fired by my employer that I was exposing their secret to a stranger, but to my surprise, the same stranger was employed as my replacement. I have learned my lessons to always keep my problems with me because you don't know who is who that is interested in your job" (Jane, Live-in DW, Female, age 25, Interviews, September 2020).

From the responses from Jane, Mabel, and other DWs that were interviewed, it was clear that the high level of jobless is a potent danger to a job guarantee, particularly for those that are employed in the private sectors of the labour market (Luechinger et al., 2010:1). Studies have shown that the threat to DWs job contributed immensely to the culture of silence in the face of exploitation and harsh working conditions (Thobejane and Khosa, 2016; Hobden, 2015; ILO, 2012). However, the high rate of jobless is not the only danger to the job guarantee of the DWs that forced them to put up with their employer exploitative behaviors. The prevalent use of children from extended family members as domestic help is a crucial threat to DWs job security. According to the respondents, they are aware that it is easy for the employer to travel back to the village and come back with two or three 12 to 13 years old children to replace them if they try to claim some kind of rights. Nassali, 23 years

old who started working as a DW 5 years ago explained the effect of child domestic help on the exploitation of DW in general. According to her:

> "Many of us are working with the knowledge that our employer can decide to terminate our appointments anytime. For example, my former employer just called me one day and said to me by next week we are no longer in need of your service. My cousin is bringing one of his daughters to stay with us here. I am certain that they took the decision because they observed that I am becoming more vocal as regards to my working conditions in the house" (Nassali, Live-in DW, Interview, August 2020).

Annet, age 19 who started working as a child domestic worker at the age of 14 years corroborated Nassali's position on the role that child domestic work plays in the exploitation process of the domestic worker. According to Annet, her employer frequently reminds her that she could have used the money she is paying her to train a distant family member in the school, and she will be glad to take care of the housework for them in return. She gave the example of hurtful words that have been said to her.

> "When the employers tell you that, I don't want you and your family to go hungry that is why I retain your service because I am under pressure from my village to take two girls with me and train them. Then nobody needs to tell you that whatever grievances you might have must be buried die immediately as your leg is shaking and at any time you can be dismissed. So, for every day that passes, it is a privilege that you still have a job" (Annet, age 19, Live-in DW, Interview, September 2020)

For instance, Elizabeth was brought to the city 15 years ago at the age of 14 by the son of her father's friends working in a bank to replace a domestic worker he claimed has become problematic for him to handle. During the interview session she explained that as a child, she did not consider working in her new home in the city without pay as exploitation because she was thrilled to be in the city and away from poverty. However, as she was getting older, she started having the sense of earning money so that she can take care of her siblings back in the village still struggling. As a result, she demanded payment from her employer, and this got her into trouble and out of the house which has made her adopt the strategy of keeping silent in her work since her first experience. According to her.

> "Many of us started working as a house girl with kinsmen from the same village from a very young age, and in most cases, we were used as a replacement for the older house girls. So, we are aware that the chance of being replaced by another younger house girl is very high if we give the employer any form of signal that we might start to challenge some of the maltreatment we encounter" (Elizabeth, age 29, Live-out DW, Interview, August 2020).

What I can deduce from the responses of the DWs is that they are not ready to compete with somebody ready to do their job without any charges because she has been taught by the society and culture to see doing domestic chores at home as part of the contribution to the household and training of becoming a virtues woman as suggested by White (1999:133). The position of all the respondents was in agreement with Bourdillon (2009:1) argument that using children for domestic work is not something that is considered in traditional society

such as Uganda to be illegal or morally wrong because many of the respondents themselves start working as domestic worker as a child helping to do the household chores.

4.3.2. Family and Cultural Background.

Another factor that contributed to the exploitation of DWs by employers based on the findings of this study is closely linked to the family and cultural background connection. It was discovered from the interaction with the respondents that many of them started working as a domestic worker due to family pressure. Some of them were sent to the city to work as a house girl based on the family decision and as a result leaving the job of house girl must be decided by the family. Grace, a 22-year-old girl explained how she complained to her parents about the need to stop working as a house girl in her employer's house, but such thought was frown at by her parents. She had this to say.

> "I wanted to leave my former employer after eight months, but I have to consider what my father will say to me if I leave the place. After two years of hardship, I decided to run away from my employer due to the unfavorable working condition, but my parents did not take such a decision lightly with me because I was considered a disappointment. When I went back home to visit them, I was scolded by my parent and some members of the community that my action might block the opportunity for other girls from the village to be considered for house girl job by other rich people from the city" (Grace, age 22, Live-out DW, Interview, August 2020).

Other respondents buttressed the points raised by Grace on the impact of family and cultural background on most DWs to accommodate being violated or exploited for long. For instance, Nansamba, who has been working as a house girl for four years said that most of the house girls in the city are recruited informally through their families, only a few and those that came from other countries get to be recruited through a recruitment agency. Therefore, it is difficult for those that came to the city through their families to resist their employer's exploitative behavior because coming to the city to do house girl work is beyond their interest. She had this to say:

> "My coming to the city was facilitated by my cousin working as a house girl in the city, so I have it at the back of my mind that I have to create a pathway for my siblings to join me in the city. I have been told by my cousin and parents that I must endure whatever challenges I encounter because nothing good comes without difficulties. So, anytime I felt bad when been maltreated, I always remember that I am not here for myself, I am here because of my family" (Nansamba, age 25, Live-out DW, Interview, August 2020).

According to Namuggla (2015:570), typically, it involves family decision before a girl will get involved in domestic work, and the vast majority of employer's favours making use of girls they are familiar with their families. The reason for this is that it protects the employer from ill-fated incidents such as theft and negligence of the children left in the care of the house girls (Namuggala, 2015: 570). The notion of "collectivism" as regards individuals take centre stage both in the process of identification and hiring DWs (Wane, 2011). Some of the African feminists such as Nnaemeka (2004) and Chilisa (2012) argued that, as a result of

collectivism, the group interest takes precedence over the individual's interest which makes the community decisions to have a significant effect on the individual. This was evident from the responses we got from the DWs that attached importance to getting approval from their parents and family members before they can take action against exploitation.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter addresses the various forms of exploitation that DWs in Kampala encountered daily in the cause of doing their job. It was discovered that due to the low value attached to domestic work, those working as domestic staff are paid ridiculous amounts that are not close to the national minimum wage. Apart from the low wages, DWs are subjected to long working hours without compensation. The condition of the live-in DWs is worse than that of live-out when it comes to working hours. Also, it has been established that DWs religious rights are subjected to the approval of the employer as in most cases employers either compel the DWs to convert to their religious faith or forced them to hide their religious beliefs and practice in secrecy. However, these violations, abuses, and exploitation were possible because of the fear of losing jobs. An attempt to speak up and resist means outright termination of employment since it is effortless to secure alternatives to replace the fired DWs. Two factors contributed to this, one high rate of unemployment and traditional child domestic work practices. Also, the cultural and family background that shapes girls and women lives to the degree that they need permission from the Male figure in their households before taking any decision concerning their life choices.

Chapter 5 Domestic Workers Efforts to Tackle Exploitation at Workplace

5.1. Introduction

This chapter's primary focus is to critically investigate how the Domestic Worker Association and other labour organizations in Uganda responded to the exploitation of domestic workers in the country. The challenges encountered in organizing domestic workers to fights against exploitation of domestic workers and how those challenges were addressed to ensure the rights of DWs in the country are respected. The discussion in this chapter is organized into three major sections. The section focuses on the process that led to the emergence and registration of the Domestic Workers Association of Uganda (DOWA) as a legal entity and the role not only organize to speak out against injustice but also to be able to improve. The first section investigates the different steps taken by the domestic workers Association and PLA-Uganda to ensure that the DWs in Uganda are no longer exploited by the employers.

5.2. Organizing Domestic Workers for Collective Voices

The first visible step taken by the DWs in Uganda is to come together to form an association known as DOWA as the mouthpiece that will see to the welfare of DWs in the country. Before the registration of DOWA as a legal entity in 2019, the association was first founded in 2016 by a male DW named John Ssemuganyi. He later invited eight other women DWs to join the association and where he occupies the position of the Vice-President. According to Mr. Ssemuganyi, the establishment of DOWA has helped hundreds of DWs that would have remain trapped in precarious working conditions and continue being exploited. He highlighted some of the activities of DOWA further.

> "We do a lot of things to advocate for the rights of the domestic workers. This includes the offering of legal aid through our partners such as PLA-Uganda, act as a consultative institution on the matters concerning domestic workers in Uganda, make sure that every domestic worker is not exploited at the place of work, and to teach domestic workers about their rights. We go from door to door to check on the welfare of the live-in domestic workers and in some cases, we help them to secure a new job with the better working condition if we discover that her place work is exploiting her" (Ssemuganyi, DOWA Representative, Interview, August 2020).

The social relationship that exists between DWs and their employers is usually uneven. It has been documented that DWs lack significant control of the employment relationship and as such, they are largely unable to effectively bargain to their advantage (Mousaid et al,2017). An effective instrument for the enforcement of the rights of workers and protection of their rights is the ability to organize collectively into unions. It is through unions that the collective voice of the group can prove an effective bargaining tool in the social relationship between the employee and the employed. Some of the DWs that are members of DOWA explained how the association has helped them and to give them hope. Aliyah, a 20-year-old live-in DW explained how DOWA knocked on the door of her former employer in one of

their door-to-door outreaches which happened to be the day she was liberated from the servitude like employment. According to her words.

> "Without DOWA, I would not be at my present place of work because my employer is sending me to school for practical skills in catering. DOWA has helped many people and I blessed the day they came to our place. I was the one that opened the gate for them, and one of the DOWA members called the attention of other members to different torture marks on my body. They asked me some questions and they proceeded to my madam. They shouted at each other for a few minutes before my madam agreed to an amicable settlement that she does not want DOWA to involve the police. So she paid me my salaries and some compensation, and DOWA within 2 weeks helped to secure my current place of work where I am paid UGX100,000" (Aliyah, a 20-year-old live-in DW, Interview, August 20202).

Ever since the industrial revolution, when people began to work in groups within large scale organizations, Labour unions emerged as a conduit for the collective voicing of grievances and a veritable avenue for reaching milestones in the decency of working conditions (Lewin,2017; Hoque et al,2017; Troy, 2016). Hobden (2015) held the view that the collective organizing of workers proved helpful in altering the balance of power in the employee-employer relationship. Hobden (2015; 2) noted that the obligations of employers armed with an entitlement to hire and fire were effectively checked by the entitlement of employees to freely withhold or engage their services as well as counterbalance infractions on workers' rights by employers who do not meet up to the obligations of work.

5.3. Empowerment Programs for Alternative Source of Income

One of the practical steps taken by DOWA and PLA-Uganda to address the challenges that DWs encounter, is taking proactive steps against exploitative behaviors of employers is to empower DWs with vocational skills that could help them in making additional income elsewhere. According to the representative of DOWA, the vast majority of the DWs are uneducated and without skills that they can fall back on if they lose their jobs to start making money. Therefore, the idea of asking them to join the union or report their employers did not produce tangible results not until DOWA introduced vocational training in Handcrafts such as beads, handbags, shoemaking, etc. He explained further that.

> "Poverty is a strong determinant factor that hindered DWs ability to take cogent steps in challenging their employers of unfair treatment, but at DOWA, many of our members that have been trained in various craftworks now make additional income from selling of ladies' handbags, beads, necklaces, and sandals. With this empowerment, they now have confidence that if they speak out, they are not going to suffer even if they lose their jobs" (Ssemuganyi, DOWA Representative, Interview, August 2020).

Various studies (Beck, 2001; Boris;2008; Shah & Seville, 2011) have documented how addressing poverty, and the multidimensional aspect of empowerment can help to facilitate building a strong organized union for domestic workers. The more the union shows concerns on the different aspects of their member's vulnerability to exploitation of labour, the more the membership base continues to expand to the level that it becomes a threat to the

stubborn employers. Be that as it may, the representative of PLA-Uganda supported the representative of the DOWA position on the importance of skills acquisition by DWs in the fight against the exploitation of DWs labour. She believed that on many occasions, DWs that have come to them to report unfair treatment by their employers have backed down from pursuing the case after few days based on the excuse of not having any other alternative source of income. However, she emphasized that those with an alternative source of income among the DWs that approach their office to report the employers are always ready to fight to the end. According to her.

> "There is a stark difference between DWs with an alternative source of income to those without an alternative source of income in their approach to the unjust treatment they received from their employers. It was based on this experience that we decided to collaborate with DOWA to start training DWs in a different kind of art and craftwork. This yielded positive results because we now have more DWs reporting their employers and are determined to get Justice" (Lydia, PLA-Uganda Representative, Interview, September 2020).

The basic understanding of the PLA-Uganda and DOWA representative statements is that the empowerment initiative through vocational training is to establish a balance that can call into question the dominance relations linking the employer and employee. though the employer dominates to lay off DWs at will since they have options for replacement, addressing poverty also allows DWs to have different sources of income and this is fundamental for marketplace bargain power. As a result, the Dws will be in a better position to stand against the employer threats to their primary source of income because they can be able to survive off the earnings from their employers if they decide to withdraw their services. However, few of the DWs that have received training on vocational skills from DOWA explained how the programs have helped them secure a better working environment with their employers. They believed that producing and selling their handcraft products through the skills acquired from the DOWA program is very critical to their survival. Elizabeth, one of the DWs cannot hide her optimism of a better future as an entrepreneur as she has already set for herself a target to retire from housemaid work in the next five years to face the business of bead making squarely. She had this to say.

> "Since I started producing handmade waist and wrist beads last year, I have rejected four housemaid jobs that I considered to be slavery because the employers would not agree to sign a contract that pays the minimum wage of UGX136,000 as stated by the government for all workers. My products sell for a price range between UGX10,000 and UGX20,000, and in a month I make between UGX90,000 and UGX120,000 in total income from selling of handcraft. I give some of the products to supermarkets and stores in my area to help me sell, and I sell some on the Taxi and at the Taxi-stops on my way to work. My employer knows that she cannot threaten me with a sack because I am not at her mercy to feed my family. Therefore, it was easy to dictate my terms and condition of working for her" (Elizabeth, age 29, Live-out DW, Interview, August 2020).

The responses of the DWs, the officials of DOWA, and PLA-Uganda representatives were in agreement with the argument of Silver (2003) that, employees that would challenge the employer's exploitative behavior must be able to survive on other sources of livelihood

while they take the huge decision to withdraw their services. Silver maintained that the workers must possess skills that can help them to secure employment elsewhere or become self-employed. Therefore, the fear of losing their jobs will not shut them up from speaking against oppression and joining organized unions (Silver, 2003:13).

5.4. Lawmakers' Engage: Formalizing Domestic Work

Domestic workers are mainly in the informal sector of the economy. They are mostly invincible as they are not usually captured in any collective system of organization. They are kept out of Labour legislation in various countries since they perform their duties in the realm of private homes (Chen, 2011; Oelz, 2014; Schwenken, 2017). The situation of DWs in Uganda is not different from other countries that DWs were not covered by legislation as the findings of this study shows. It was discovered that because there is no specific law that classifies domestic workers as part of the recognized regulated formal employment sector. Therefore, employers have the temerity and audacity to maltreat DWs working for them. From the discussion with PLA-Uganda and DOWA, it was discovered that the need to engage the Uganda members of parliament is key since the majority of DWs working in homes don't have employment contracts with stipulated wages that align with the national minimum wage standard for other workers in the country. The PLA-Uganda representative madam Lydia explained further that.

> "The lack of legislation that backs the employment of DWs in Uganda like that of South Africa and Namibia make DWs in Uganda extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Therefore, at PLA-Uganda, advocacy towards the passing of the Domestic Worker Bill and the ratification of ILO Convention C189 for Domestic Workers is our top priority. We are presently pushing for the passage of the Bill and the ratification at the parliament through some of the MPs that identify with our cause. With the passage of the Bill, it will become a criminal offence to maltreat DWs or pay them below the national minimum wage" (Lydia, PLA-Uganda Representative, Interview, September 2020).

In support of Madam Lydia the PLA-Uganda representative, Mr. Ssemuganyi of DOWA said that on many occasions they have reported cases to the police stations but could not press further because no law stipulates the exact amount to be paid for domestic workers. This experience strengthens their resolve to continue engaging with lawmakers and policymakers at the Ministry of Gender and Labour of Uganda, which has started to yield positive outcomes. The Ministry now recognizes DOWA as a body that engages in issues that are related to DWs in Uganda. He explained further that due to DOWA relentless agitation, DWs minimum wage is now considered at the Uganda parliament for discussion. He had this to say:

> "last year, we were at the parliament of Uganda to present our position paper and recommendation on the issue of the minimum wage. The Speaker of the parliament gave us the floor to address the members of parliament. We sat with different policymakers to make them know why we are asking for a minimum wage and the need to formalize domestic work. We have been in several meetings with honourable Agnes Kunihira, who is the MP heading worker's issue. I can confidently say that we have made a lot of progress, and I am sure that something

positive will come out of our engagement" (Mr. Ssemuganyi, DOWA Representative, Interview, August 2020).

Protecting the rights of DWs is deeply connected to legislation that criminalizes all forms of discrimination and abuses. As suggested by Pape (2016), pushing for the ratification of the ILO Convention C189 is a good start towards the realization of the protection of DWs. While Uganda has ratified 31 ILO Conventions in which 26 of them are in force, Uganda is yet to ratify ILO Convention C189 for Domestic Workers. The steps taken by both PLA-Uganda and DOWA is the right step in the right direction to ensure that the domestic worker sectors of the Uganda economy are regulated. By recognizing and regulating domestic workers by law, exploitative behaviors of employers such as low wages, physical, mental and sexual abuse, long working hours, and precarious working conditions can be challenged with the legal tools that law provided (Chen, 2011; Pape, 2016; Demarso & Abba, 2020). As accentuated by the DOWA and PLA-Uganda representatives in the previous chapter, many of the DWs are uneducated, comes from villages to urban areas, and have no other choice than to end up as domestic workers living under exploitative conditions.

5.3.2. Solidarity with Civil Society organizations

However, DOWA has made it a top priority to show Solidarity to different organizations that share similar goals such as women groups, child rights groups, and some other organizations that are advocating on different social issues that affected DWs directly. According to the DOWA representative.

"The decision to support different groups in Solidarity paid off for our struggle. For example, many of our members are women, so they are affected by all issues that affect women that are not DWs. So, in solidarity, we joined them in marches and awareness campaigns, and when we want to march, they also join us in Solidarity. The day we went to the parliament, we were about 500 in number, but only 80 of us are DWs, we had women from groups fighting against gender violence and for gender pay equality. All these issues are related to us, we suffer sexual violence at work, and we are paid a ridiculous amount as wages". (Ssemuganyi, DOWA Representative, Interview, August 2020)

The actions of different NGOs and civil society organizations that join DOWA in their advocacy is what Émile Durkheim described as "organic solidarity" that was discussed earlier in chapter 3 of this study. This type of Solidarity attaches the utmost value to equal opportunity, individual dignity, and social justice (Thijssen, 2012). This helps explains why various NGOs fighting for women's rights are so keen on the rights of DWs in Uganda. The type of Solidarity that DOWA enjoys echoes Pope Francis words when addressing the Catholic faithful's……, "Never tire of working for a more just world, marked by greater solidarity! No one can remain insensitive to the inequalities that persist in the world!" (Tornielli & Galeazzi, 2015: 29). From the interaction with DOWA and PLA-Uganda representatives, it was discovered that the formation of DOWA gives the most vulnerable DWs in Uganda the opportunity to become visible to the Uganda Labour Union, and a result has joined in Solidarity to push for the ratification of the C189 ILO Convention on Domestic Workers. According to the representative of PLA-Uganda.

> "There is a strong relationship between DOWA and the Uganda Labour Union, and the union plays a significant role in helping to push the Domestic Workers Bill in the house. The positive results we see today is a result of Solidarity that the association enjoys from different quarters" (Lydia, PLA-Uganda Representative, Interview, September 2020)

According to Patrias and Savage (2012:4), the power embedded in the collective voices of workers did not only have the enormous potential of shaping their employment conditions if they band together to form a union. Coming together as a union also has a significant effect on the wide-ranging economic, social, and political spheres in which their employment dealings are rooted. Patrias and Savage's argument implies that the notion or idea of Solidarity is the main crux of any organizing union that seeks to effect a social change.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has been able to show the different steps taken by the DWs in Uganda to ensure that the precarious working conditions that they are subjected to are addressed by the government. These efforts are possible due to the various supports that the DWs got from different NGOs, PLA-Uganda to help in implementing programs that can empower the DWs in Uganda to have a voice. The first step taken is to organize and register DOWA as a legal entity that can represent the interest of DWs with employers as well as the government. However, training of DWs to possess skills that can be used to engage in alternative income activities helped to lessen the vulnerability of DWs that are under constant threats of losing their jobs if they speak out. In general, the solidarity support from different women groups proven to be advantageous to the DWs in their engagement with the lawmakers at the Uganda parliament in their effort to formalize domestic work in Uganda just like other forms of employment in the formal sector.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Reflections on Future Research

6.1. Introduction

This paper has examined the exploitation of young women domestic workers of 18-30 years old, focusing on experiences in Kampala, Uganda. It has reviewed the efforts of women domestic workers to fight for the realization of their social, economic, and labour rights. This was done through the proposal of three research questions that helped understand how young women domestic workers have been socially and economically exploited while working in households in Kampala, Uganda. These questions were (I) What are the different forms of exploitation experiences of young women domestic workers in Uganda in their day-to-day work as a domestic worker? (II) What are the factors that help sustain the different forms of exploitation that young women domestic workers encountered in their day-to-day work as a domestic worker? (III) What are the steps taken by the Domestic Worker Association (DOWA) and other labour organizations in Uganda to address the exploitation of domestic workers? To answer the three proposed research questions, primary qualitative data was collected through fieldwork carried out remotely in Kampala, Uganda through on-line interviews due to the movement restriction of the COVID19 pandemic. In all, 15 domestic workers (ten live-out and five live-in), one DOWA representative, and one PLA-Uganda representative were interviewed in semi-structured interviews.

6.2. Findings Summary

The findings for the first questions that seek to explore the different forms of exploitation that the DWs encounter in their cause of work with their employers revealed that there is a low value attached to domestic work, those working as domestic staff are paid ridiculous amounts that are not close to the national minimum wage. Besides, the majority of the DWs are subjected to working long hours without days off or compensation for the overtime. However, the exploitation experiences of the live-in are worse when compared to those that fall under the category of live-out in terms of wages and working hours. The findings also show that religious rights are something that the DWs do not enjoy; there is no freedom of religious practices in particular when it is different from the employer's religious beliefs. In most cases, employers either compel the DWs to convert to their religious faith or forced them to hide their religious beliefs and practice in secrecy. The exploitation of the DWs is worsened by the COVID19 pandemic as many live-out DWs were threatened to either leave their family and moved in with the employers or lose their jobs. Non-payment of wages in the name of the COVID19 is a common phenomenon to the DWs and they are expected to continue working with the increase in workload.

However, the findings on the second research question revealed that all these violations, abuses, and exploitation were possible because of the fear of losing jobs. An attempt to speak up and resist means outright termination of employment since it is effortless to secure

alternatives to replace the fired DWs. Two factors contributed to this, (1) the high rate of unemployment and traditional child domestic work practices. Also, the cultural and family background that shapes girls and women lives to the degree that they need permission from the male figure in their households before taking any decision concerning their life choices. As a result, they continue to endure the precarious working conditions with the hope that they would find a better job in the future.

Be that as it may, the findings of the third research question show that the DWs have taken several steps to empower the DWs in Uganda to start speaking out against the exploitation of their labour. With the support of NGOs such as PLA-Uganda, the DWs in Uganda formed a domestic workers association known as DOWA as the official representative of the DWs with government and employers. DOWA was later registered and designed empowerment programs to train DWs in different vocational skills in hand art craft so that they could earn alternative income to support what they are earning from their domestic work. The idea behind this was based on the fact that DWs would no longer be scared of losing a job or taking jobs that offer demining wages because they do not have alternative sources of income. These approaches helped lessen the vulnerability of DWs that are under constant threats of losing their jobs if they speak out. In general, the solidarity support from different women groups proven to be advantageous to the DWs in their engagement with the lawmakers at the Uganda parliament in their effort to formalize domestic work in Uganda just like other forms of employment in the formal sector.

6.3. Personal Reflections

By and large, the findings of this study have shown that there are no clear regulations for domestic work as a form of employment in Uganda because it is the most undervalued human activity while labour laws do not apply to domestic workers in Uganda. Domestic work is done by people who perform such works as ironing, cooking, security guards, gardening, driving, childcare/babysitting, elder care, cleaning, taking care of ill persons or persons with disabilities, taking care of animals and pets, and assistance in other household daily chores, for pay and to earn a living. As the findings revealed, hiring a domestic worker is one of the worst paid forms of employment employing all categories of people irrespective of age, sex, race, and religion. However, it is likely a high percentage of these domestic workers are children, although the precise number of children engaged in domestic work is unknown.

People who take on such jobs have a little educational background and are poorly paid. However, domestic workers perform a multitude of essential tasks and work for low monthly wages, often without a contract. In Uganda, most domestic workers are employed in urban centers. Most of these domestic workers live at their employer's homes, and this makes them more dependent on the employer for their basic needs, although as they become of age, they tend to move out and become independent by becoming a live-out worker. It is also important to note that this group of people are either uneducated or have attained the lowest form of education and are subjected to poverty, and based on this background, domestic workers are always paid lowly. This dependence makes domestic workers extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Therefore, the Uganda National Labour union must step up the advocacy in solidarity with the DOWA to ensure that the domestic work section is formalized so that recalcitrant employers can be held accountable legally when they fail to respect the legal rights of the DWs as stated by law.

Lastly, Uganda needs to ratify C189 and embrace extensive reforms in the section of the labour code for the domestic workers' sector. The Uganda labour union can promote and implement the adopted domestic workers' legislative reforms at the national level. domestic workers' organizations need to be supported by the government in their work in fighting against the exploitation of DWs by some employers and improving DWs' working conditions.

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Map 0.1

Map of Uganda

Picture 0.2

Some members of DOWA signing attendance list after attending the training

Picture 0.2

Some members of DOWA attending awareness training

Appendices 1: Respondents Profile

Participant Name	Gender	Age	Live-in DW/Live-out DW	Years of working Experience
Jane	F	25	Live-in DW	5
Annet	F	19	Live-in DW	4
Mabel	F	27	Live-out DW	7
Harriet	F	21	Live-out DW	4
Betty	F	28	Live-out DW	6
Aishat	F	25	Live-out DW	5
Elizabeth	F	29	Live-out DW	4
Janet	F	25	Live-in DW	4
Nassali	F	23	Live-in DW	5

Grace	F	22	Live-out DW	4
Nansamba	F	25	Live-out DW	4
Aliya	F	20	Live-in DW	4
Debra	F	26	Live-out DW	6
Joyce	F	28	Live-out DW	7
Lillian	F	30	Live-out DW	5

NGO Representatives.

Participant Name	NGO Name	Position
John Ssemuganyi	Domestic workers Association Uganda Limited (DOWA)	Vice-Chairperson
Lydia Bwiite	Platform for Labour Action (PLA) in Uganda	Manager programs