

## **Are Child Domestic Workers Key Ingredients in Employers' Households? Employers' Perceptions Towards Child Domestic Workers in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania**

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### **Abstract**

This study explored employers' perceptions towards child domestic workers in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Data from 15 employers was gathered through key informant interviews and field observations and analysed thematically between August 2021 and February 2022. The findings indicate that child domestic workers (15–18 years old) are culturally acceptable in the name of work socialisation, are often perceived and treated as fictive kin, and are a key ingredient in employers' households. However, some employers had negative perceptions of child domestic workers and described them as stubborn, witchy, and lazy. It is therefore concluded that in the context of developing and mid-income countries like Tanzania, where most people, including the elite, consider child domestic work as a charity, socially and culturally acceptable, removing children, particularly those aged between 15 and 18, from domestic work is not enough and may leave them more vulnerable to other dangerous forms of work within or outside their biological homes. Hence, the study recommends that as long as children at this age are above the national and international legal minimum age for admission into work, their human rights – like their right to light work, their best interests, and their voices and those of their employers – remain vital aspects of policies affecting child domestic workers. Again, in line with the current International Labour Organization's emphasis on making domestic work decent, there is a need to implement strategies to promote positive work experiences among child domestic workers (15–18 years old) and regulate their employment across Tanzania.

**Keywords:** *child, child domestic workers, domestic work, employers, perceptions*

### **1. Introduction**

Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals aims at eradicating children's engagement in work in all of its forms by 2025. Few years before this timeline, this goal is far from being achieved, as about one-in-ten children (152 million children) aged between 5 and 17 are engaged in work globally (Thevenon & Edmonds, 2019). Alongside this reality, domestic work remains a major source of employment for many children in developing countries (Black, 2002; Villiers & Taylor, 2019). The exponential growth of child domestic work as a preferred service is fuelled by

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various factors such as the supply and demand factor, challenges of work-life balance, and increased women's participation in the labour force (D'Souza, 2010; Singh & Pattanaik, 2020). For instance, existing literature indicates that there has been a growing number of women joining the labour force in many countries globally over the past few decades (Maeda et al., 2019).

In Tanzania, women's participation in the labour force is reported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to increase up to 80% in 2019, and this is rooted in the social norms that currently expect women to work and support their participation in income-generating activities under the control of men (ILO, 2020). Very little is known about the overall nature of child domestic work (CDW) in Tanzania, as there are very few studies available and the reports published by the ILO and UNICEF focus on domestic work more broadly, regardless of age (Caroline et al., 2020). In the context of this study, child domestic work refers to children's work in the domestic sector in the household of a third-party or employer, while child domestic workers refer to children aged between 15 and 18 who live and work in their employer's households, whether paid or unpaid (Boateng & West, 2017). It comprises both permissible (light work) and non-permissible (non-light work) circumstances of child work.

Nevertheless, children doing household activities in their own households, and children in domestic work might perform similar tasks, except that, in the first case, the employment element is missing. For instance, some household activities like cooking and childcare undertaken by children in their own households, in reasonable conditions, and under the supervision of those close to them are often considered part and parcel of family life and therefore permissible. Hence, the ILO recommends avoiding referring to those situations as domestic work (ILO, 2013b, 2016, 2017, 2018). Thus, child domestic work is one of the oldest phenomena in our society, is still an ongoing topic of research (Radfar et al., 2018), and remains one of the most common traditional forms of work for children, especially girls (ILO, 2003; 2016). Hence, in many countries, globally, child domestic work is not only socially and culturally acceptable, but at times viewed in a positive light as a protected and non-stigmatized type of work and preferred to other forms of employment – especially for girls (Boateng & West, 2017). Despite that, Kwele et al. (2015) contend that research into this specific workforce has been negligible.

Whereas precise figures on child domestic workers (CDWs) are based on estimations, the literature reveals that middle- and upper-class households – especially in urban areas – are increasingly seeking children, particularly young girls, for domestic work (Svensson, 2018). About 17.2 million children globally work as domestic workers, and about 11.2 million of these are aged between 5 and 14 years (Pocock, 2019; ILO-IPEAC, 2013). Africa alone has an estimated 5.2 million child domestic workers with a 70% female composition. However, it is also made clear that in regions where almost everyone has a domestic worker,

that total is probably underestimated (ILO, 2013; Namuggala, 2015). On its part, Tanzania harbours an estimated 1 million child domestic workers (ILO, 2016; Anti-Slavery Organisation, 2019; Mpango, 2020).

Nevertheless, as Vamborg (2013) postulated, child work still exists due to particular social conditions that require them to work, like to support families' survival and the recognition that some work has the potential to benefit the child. Therefore, instead of prohibiting all work done by children, international bodies – particularly the ILO – regulate the circumstances under which children are allowed to work and the permissible age for employment and work (Human Rights Watch, 2004). In this vein, the 1973 ILO Convention C138 (the Minimum Age Convention), which has been ratified by 171-member states, offers a framework for a minimum age of 15 years for admission into employment. According to this Convention, children aged between 13 and 15 (or even between 12 and 14 in some countries) can be employed in 'light work'. The present study, therefore, uses this as a benchmark to focus on CDWs aged between 15 and 18 years in the Tanzanian context.

While many previous studies and human rights activists hold a relatively negative attitude towards the involvement of children in domestic work, existing literature indicates that domestic work has been a main source of (informal) employment for many children globally, with high prevalence in mid- and low-income countries (Jacquemin, 2004; Bhat, 2005; Blagbrough, 2008; Jensen, 2014; Gamlin et al., 2015). Consequently, the debate on CDWs among scholars is still open and needs more empirical evidence, especially that is informed by relevant socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, in this study, it is argued that there is a need to explore employers' perceptions towards CDW in the Tanzanian context, where most children complete their primary school education when they are around 13 to 14 years old, and for those who, for various reasons (e.g., failure to advance into secondary school education because of performance in Standard VII national examinations), opt for easily accessible work like domestic work (Mpango, 2020). Therefore, it is precisely in this context that this study was conducted to explore employers' perceptions towards child domestic work as, these employers are likely to fuel the demand and supply of CDWs in Tanzania.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on the psychosocial theory of human development as advocated by stage psychologist Erik Erikson (1902-1994), with emphasis on two major psychosocial identities: emotions (psycho) and circumstances (social). This theory was influenced by Freud's psychoanalytic theory of human development. Nevertheless, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development added emphasis on describing the influence of social experiences across an individual's lifespan. Hence, the central focus of this theory is on the nature of

self-understanding, mental processes, and social relationships, and particularly on their influence on the linkage between an individual and their social world (Newman & Newman, 2018). The theory was deemed appropriate for this study because employers are likely to be dictated by the socio-cultural context in Tanzania. Therefore, the social experience of engaging children in home chores is likely to influence employers' perceptions, mindsets, and realities, and it tends to influence their thoughts and actions towards child domestic workers.

### **3. Methods**

#### ***3.1 Location of the Study***

This study was conducted in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Dar es Salaam is located on the east coast of Tanzania, and it borders the Indian Ocean to the east and the Coast Region to the north, west, and south. Again, it has been the main manufacturing and commercial city in the country since time immemorial (Todd et al., 2019). This region was chosen among other regions in Tanzania because it is reported to be the main recipient of domestic workers in Tanzania (ILO, 2012); thus, it served as a representative of other regions in Tanzania. The city is one of the fastest-growing cities in Tanzania and the world; hence, it is likely to guide the urban future in Tanzania. As the former capital city of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam is inhabited by people of diverse socio-economic statuses (Todd et al., 2019).

#### ***3.2 Research Design***

The study adopted a phenomenological research design. Epistemologically, this design is based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, with an emphasis on the importance of personal perspective and conceptualization (Lester, 1999). Hence, the adoption of this design allowed for an understanding of the subjective experience; and gained insights into employers' motivations and actions towards CDWs. So, the researcher was able to bring to the fore employers' own perceptions towards CDWs.

#### ***3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures***

The study targeted employers of CDWs in the Dar es Salaam Region, and it involved a total of 15 participants recruited purposefully from the five (5) municipalities of the Dar es Salaam Region. Of the 15 employers, 11 (73.3%) were female, and 4 (26.7%) were male. Both purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit the sample. Purposive sampling was used to identify the households where the participants were recruited. The researchers focused on theoretical saturation and the deliberate choice of study participants due to the attributes they possess, which ensured potential learning about the perception of employers who are actors and well-informed on a phenomenon of interest (Etikan, 2016).

Moreover, snowball sampling was used to locate households with employers of child domestic workers. Mia et al. (2016) argued that child domestic work is one of the most common forms of child work, but child domestic workers are relatively hidden and hard to reach. Therefore, it was practically difficult to locate the exact households that employed child domestic workers. Consequently, the snowballing technique had to be used, with initial contact established through informal conversational interviews with local leaders in each area covered by the study.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Key informant interviews (KIIs) and field observations were conducted with all 15 employers to generate data from the study participants. The KIIs were used to elicit detailed information about the employers' attitudes and behaviour towards child domestic work. Moreover, this method enabled the researchers to capture in-depth responses, with fine distinction and contradiction based on what each employer had experienced about child domestic workers. On the other hand, field observation was carried out, and the information obtained was used to triangulate the information obtained via KIIs. Again, observations were made to allow the researchers to immerse themselves in a social setting to learn, first-hand, if the actions of participants were compatible with their words by noting existing patterns of behaviour, expected and unexpected experiences; and the development of trust, relationships, and obligations with others (Glesne, 2006).

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Data management started in the field by ensuring the correct and appropriate recording of what was observed and reported by the participants, the right and valid assignment and valid identification of codes to the participants. A thematic analysis technique was adopted to draw meanings out of the data generated in the field. The data analysis was based on the research objectives and questions guiding this study.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

As stated earlier, this study explored employers' perceptions towards employing CDWs in their households. This part presents and discusses the findings based on the themes that emerged during data analysis.

### **4.1 Child Domestic Workers as Part of 'Work Socialisation'**

The findings of this study revealed that employers perceived child domestic work as a part of *work socialisation* during which children are subjected to work because of the socio-cultural practice of involving all family members in work for the welfare of the family. In this sense, children's engagement in domestic work was

perceived by employers as a normal part of children's upbringing, whether in or outside their family's context. For instance, all of the employers interviewed acknowledged that the children demonstrated the ability to perform domestic work, and attributed such ability to prior engagement in activities at their origin families. Home chores such as taking care of younger siblings, cleaning the house, helping to prepare meals, fetching water, washing clothes and dishes, helping in business, and gardening are familiar to children. Again, these chores were similar to the activities performed by children employed as DWs. Moreover, these activities are expected to be performed by all children, including those of the CDWs' employers. One of the participants from Temeke said: "I live with my three children after I was abandoned by my husband. So, my children have to work. They help me to wash dishes and clothes, especially after their school hours" (KII with a female employer in Temeke, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2021). Another employer from Ilala had a similar response as she said, "... they wash clothes, clean the house, prepare meals, and make sure that the home environment is clean" (KII with a female employer in Ilala, 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2021).

As the statements above indicate, the decision to engage children in domestic work is an outcome of social systems that reinforce this practice. This implies that the existence of child domestic workers mirrors what is happening in Tanzanian families, as children in or out of DW seem to be performing similar activities. This is what is referred to as socialisation in social science, whereby children are expected to learn the social norms and beliefs of their society from their earliest families and play activities. Through this, they are expected to internalise the societal values and expectations attached to work and its normative importance.

Therefore, the employers considered children's engagement in domestic work as part of *work socialisation*, which is an extension of what is being practised within their families. This is reflected in arguments postulated in the psychosocial theory of child development, the African culture of treating children, especially involving them in work as part of socialisation. It indicates a social formation that evolved through history and space. Therefore, this social formation is likely to create a sense of trust between CDWs and their employers and, eventually, trust between CDWs and society as a whole. Consequently, it is not surprising to see some Africans, even among the elite group, employing CDWs who are aged between 15 and 18 years.

#### **4.2 Like Family: Child Domestic Workers as Fictive Kin**

The term *fictive kin*, also referred to as *false kin*, is a term used by both sociologists and anthropologists to refer to social ties that are based neither on blood relations nor on marriage but are almost similar to these relationships (Anderson, 2016). Findings in this study indicate that the nature of the employer-employee relationship was more of "*helping*" rather than "*selling*" of

labour power. For instance, most of the employers were referring to their CDWs as *dada wa kazi* (house girl), *mdogo wangu* (my young brother/sister), *mwanangu* (my child) and *kijana wangu* (my child) instead of their actual names. These terms implied an idealized fictive kinship. Similarly, through field observations, it was noted that the employers' children (the ones who were being looked after by the CDWs) often referred to the CDWs as *sister*, *brother*, *auntie*, and *uncle*. This kind of address was encouraged by the way the employers and other members of the employer's family treated the CDWs: as part and parcel of the family.

Field observations also revealed that the families with CDWs engaged in communal meals, outings, shopping, and going outdoors. These shared activities were coupled with laughter, plays, and the sharing of stories about the children, work, and family plans. This was observed in many households visited during data generation. There seemed to be cohesion and mutual participation in various family matters, including assisting children with their homework or planning for a particular meal on a given day, to the extent that sometimes it was difficult to locate the CDWs in a group of children without the help of either a family member or the employer.

A female employer from Kinondoni revealed that CDWs preferred to be treated as relatives instead of workers. She gave the following comment:

*You know what! There is nothing these child domestic workers like more than having someone (an employer) who cares for them and treats them as their relatives, not as workers. They (CDWs) know exactly that they were taken from far away, say, Singida, and here in the city they have no other relatives. So, when you maltreat them, in return, they also tend to mistreat the children they are supposed to be taking care of. They even stop being efficient in the tasks they are expected to handle. But if you live with them as your relatives, they work beyond expectation (KII with a Female Employer in Kinondoni, 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2021).*

The employer quoted above indicates the way CDWs prefer to be treated as relatives instead of as workers. Hence, by treating them well, they are likely to do their work better and take care of the children more effectively. This claim supports the assumptions made in Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, which points out the fact that children at 15–18 years old are striving for identity formation. So, when they are treated well and guided appropriately, they tend to establish a clear identity and appropriately play the roles they are assigned within the domestic work sector. Again, according to Erickson, social interaction matters a lot for proper psychosocial development; hence, being treated as part of the family may act as a catalyst for meaningful social interaction in child domestic work, and the other way around; like mistreatment of the CDWs was likely to lead to the CDWs' psychosocial development.

Furthermore, some of the employers mentioned age as an important factor that influences employers to treat CDWs as relatives instead of workers. For

instance, Mama Natalya (a pseudonym) from Ubungo described the way she had been treating her 18-years old DW, who had lived with her for one year and three months by the day the KII was conducted. She said:

*...when you take her [sic DW], she is often not an adult hence, it is important that you stay with her and treat her as if she were your daughter, instead of a worker. It is not proper to force her to handle tasks that are beyond her age, knowledge, and skills. You shouldn't punish her when she fails to cook a certain meal that is unfamiliar to her. Instead, we as employers are supposed to accept her as she is, and guide her to learn the things that are new to her. There is no human being who is born perfect, and even as employers, we started learning a lot of things and lifestyles in the city till we mastered them and became the kind of people we are today. Sometimes, it is important to be kind to her, just like we do to our own children (KII with a Female Employer in Ubungo, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2021).*

This reflects a common trend of recruiting CDWs in Tanzania that often occurs through kinship networks. Most of the employers admitted that they had sourced their CDWs through their kinship networks in their villages. This fictive kinship, therefore, seemed to work well between the employer and the parents or relatives of the CDWs.

#### **4.3 Child Domestic Workers as a Necessity in the Employers' Household**

Findings further revealed that employers could not avoid employing CDWs. There was a high demand for CDWs in Dar es Salaam City, where a lot of families seemed to require the services of CDWs for various reasons. Through the KIIs, the employers acknowledged that they needed the services of CDWs to be able to engage actively in their daily work while the CDWs managed household chores. An employer from Kinondoni is quoted below:

*Yes, of course! There would be a lot of problems because I am an employee, and as such, I don't spend a lot of time at home. I have children, and I cannot take them to my workplace. Therefore, it would be a challenge if there was nobody to take care of the children at home...there would be no one to cook for them or feed them. This way, the children would be exposing themselves to all sorts of danger (KII with a Female Employer in Kinondoni, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2021).*

From the narrations above, this employer affirmed that without the support of a CDW, there would be a lot of problems as she did not spend the whole day at home; hence, the CDW covers the time and work of parents, helps to take care of the children, and cooks for the family while parents are away from the households. Therefore, it is evident that as more and more women join the workforce, as it is for men, families will increasingly rely on CDWs to take care of their homes and children. Therefore, as husbands and wives find themselves away from the house for long hours, employing a DW becomes necessary. As mentioned earlier, these workers take care of children, clean houses, prepare meals, wash dishes/utensils, wash clothes, take care of the elderly and the sick, help in business, tend gardens, and do general housekeeping.



Similar to what was described by the employers interviewed in this study, Mbatta (2022) reported that childcare arrangements for full-time employed mothers in Dar es Salaam depended upon securing a caregiver, preferably a female DW, especially in the absence of these mothers. Mbatta's study showed that 40 out of 42 working mothers had home-based non-related caregivers. Therefore, as reflected in the findings of this study, it is obvious that CDWs play a paramount role in supporting the labour market and the economy of families, and the nation at large by allowing their employers to fully engage in their daily activities. As stated earlier, the tasks assigned to CDWs were similar to what children had been doing in their biological families.

#### **4.4 Preference for Children (Below 18 Years) in the Domestic Work Sector**

When asked why they preferred hiring domestic workers who were under 18 years old, the majority of the employers claimed that it was better to employ individuals aged below 18 years, especially young girls, than employ adults as domestic workers. The reasons attributed to this were differences in the level of care and hard-work, an idle age after completion of primary school, managerial costs, and accessibility from the supplier communities. From the KIIs held, one of the employers from Ilala noted the following:

*It is the age at which a 'binti' (referring to a girl) has completed Standard VII, and it is the period when she has not yet started a luxurious life...cannot be easily deceived to engage in prostitution...Yes, it is an age where she can work effectively and efficiently, and with full respect and obedience to the employer (KII with a Male Employer in Ilala, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2022).*

The employer mentioned above further pointed out that a domestic worker at this age can work effectively and efficiently with full respect and obedience to the employer. This suggests an employer-employee power relationship, where the employee is often expected to obey the employer. In this case, age informed the employers' decision to hire a DW based on age stereotypes (ageism). Again, even the terms used to refer to CDWs show the implication of the vital role they play in the homes of their employers. Most of the employers referred to their child domestic workers as 'my young brother/sister', 'my friend', and 'my son/daughter', or addressed them by their names instead of workers.

The findings also revealed that all 15 employers preferred domestic workers under the age of 18 to avoid conflicts within their families. Again, the issues of 'easy to control', 'hard-working', and 'dedicated to work than other issues' were among the cited factors for preferring a CDW among employers. This finding was echoed by the UNICEF International Child Development Centre (1999) and ILO-IPEC (2004): that 90% of CDWs are young girls aged under 16 years. Other studies echoed this finding by arguing that young girls are usually preferred over boys because of the employers' perception that girl workers are hard-working, controllable, and cheaper (Bhat, 2005; Brown, 2007).

Moreover, some of the employers perceived that child domestic workers were advantageous over adult domestic workers in terms of the differences in how they handled responsibilities. Again, an employer from Kinondoni admitted the following:

*Mhh! The ages between 15-18 years are the ages during which these individuals have no major life responsibilities to fulfil. When you employ him/her and agree to pay him/her, say, TZS 50,000, still, s/he will have few life responsibilities, thereby making this wage more than enough for him/her. But, if you employ someone aged 20 or order, that amount of money will be too little...it is because, at that age, s/he may have a lot of life responsibilities to fulfil, some might have children to take care of already. Another thing is that at that age, I and most people (referring to employers) consider it to be the age with very few things for an individual to deal with; they have very little exposure and life experiences; therefore, they can settle in my household and assist me in performing my home tasks.... and I can live more comfortably than if I employed someone aged above 18 years... Above that age, any individual working as a domestic worker would consider it a prison where s/he lacks the freedom to enjoy life... (KII with a Female Employer in Kinondoni, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2021).*

From the statements above, it is clear that most employers find it easier and cheaper; and feel more comfortable employing a CDW instead of adult domestic workers. Although the reasons for that may vary, the 'ageism'<sup>1</sup> among employers as far as domestic work is concerned is alarming. Again, some employers considered the age range of 15 to 18 years to be the age at which an individual can be easily taught and learn how to take care of children without feeling bad. Nevertheless, the perpetuation of traditional female roles and responsibilities within and outside the family, and the perception of domestic service as part and parcel of women's preparation for adulthood and marriage may also contribute to the preferences of children aged below 18 as domestic workers (ILO, 2007; 2018).

#### **4.5 Child Domestic Work as an Opportunity for Children**

The majority of the employers interviewed in this study considered domestic workers as an opportunity for children. This practise culminated in a situation in which employers claimed that regardless of the low wages (ranging from TZS 40,000–100,000 per month) received by the child domestic workers, the work is an opportunity for children in several ways. For instance, employers had a consensual perception that through doing domestic work, children get exposure, acquire various life skills, enjoy better living conditions than what they experience in their biological families, and some get an opportunity to invest in their future lives. Consider the following quoted statements from the participants:

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<sup>1</sup> Ageism is manifested in the way a person thinks, feels, and behaves; towards age and ageing and it is usually directed towards individuals of any age group and can be both positive and negative (Ayalon & Tesch-Romer, 2018).

*Because I give her TZS50,000 as a salary and TZS50,000 as a bonus...First of all, she gets exposure, because she lives in a family full of learned people. Also, there are a lot of things she learns here, and she gets to know what is going on in the world compared to someone living in her biological family...Again, as I said earlier, here is like she is at school because she learns about life by observing, and, she also gets an opportunity to learn business, and through this, she will be able to use this experience in her future life (KII with a Female Employer in Ilala, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2022).*

As the quote above indicates, the employer pays TZS 50,000 as salary, and TZS50,000 as a bonus to her CDW, making a total of TZS 100,000. Provided that the majority of CDWs tend to come from families in hardship, particularly after completing their primary school education, where it may be difficult to get access to even TZS 50,000 in a month, this would be an opportunity for them to earn money, especially when other factors concerning their development and welfare remain constant. Again, through DWs, these children are perceived by the employers as getting exposure by living in families occupied by elites to learn other life skills, like business skills. One of the employers stated:

*Of course, there is nothing more important and enjoyable to a child domestic worker than when s/he gets a person who cares a lot about him/her and treats him/her like a relative. They know exactly that they have been taken from far away, say from Singida to here in town, they have no relatives, so when they get maltreated, they fail to work effectively. But when you treat them like family members, they usually work passionately and deliver beyond what is expected of them... (KII with a Male Employer in Kinondoni, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2022).*

The employer quoted above was concerned with the kind of care and treatment for CDWs to the extent that he perceived that caring a lot and treating a CDW like a relative is more important than anything. He adds that being treated well and with care makes them work passionately and deliver beyond what is expected of them. In line with what Bhat and Rather (2009) postulated, the notable reason for child domestic work is poverty, in which case, when the family lives below the poverty line, parents tend to see children as key contributors to their family's income. Similarly, Basu and Van (1998) reported that the only reason parents send their children to work is their low income. Because of low income, parents fail to send their children for further schooling.

A study carried out by Gamlin et al. (2015) in six countries, including Tanzania, echoed this finding; showing, however, that there was a dichotomy of views about child domestic work whereby, on the one hand, the work is thought to be 'safe' for children; and on the other hand, it is seen as 'unsafe'. Again, as Garnier and Benefice (2001) argued, these children may be better nourished while working away than while living in their family homes, particularly when their family homes are characterized by poverty and unstable economies.

#### 4.6 Negative Perceptions Towards Child Domestic Workers

However, some employers had negative views of their CDWs, describing them as stubborn, witches, thieves, and lazy, and that is why they kept hiring and firing them over time and space. Mr. Igwe (a pseudonym) from Kinondoni seemed to be worried about the kind of CDWs he used to employ by saying:

*I don't know why these child domestic workers are [.....] even if you treat them well, they will never stop surprising you. If I may recall, I and my wife have hired and fired several house girls in our home in just five months. Some are witches, some are thieves, some are lazy, and some are just stubborn and very unwilling to be taught anything regarding taking care of children and the house (KII with a male employer in Kinondoni, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021).*

Another female employer corroborated the quote above by complaining that some CDWs, especially girls, were witches and might have inherited witchcraft from their families. She desperately explained:

*Some of the house girls are witches and often have inherited witchcraft from their grandparents. Nowadays, it is important to find out about the background of a potential CDW before you decide to take her/him into your family as a domestic worker. It is worrying the way many people are employing unfamiliar house girls...we just take it for granted when everything goes well but when something bad happens, we usually end up with disappointment and regret... (KII, Female Employer in Kigamboni, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2021)*

Some, however few (2 out of the 15 employers) were concerned with the mental well-being of CDWs. A female employer from Temeke said:

*I think these 'wasichana wa kazi' (literally translated as house girls) ...some may be facing mental health problems that are not easily known to employers. How does a normal human being kill an innocent child? (KII, Female Employer in Temeke, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2021).*

Following from the above, it can be argued that as long as social phenomenologists strive for the social construction of reality, the unhealthy relationship between CDWs and their employers and the associated negative perception of some employers towards CDWs can be described as a creation of their everyday interaction that can usually be evident through the methods both employers and CDWs use to maintain their social relations (Novak, 2012). Again, some instances of inhumane acts performed by the CDWs in the homes of their employers, such as poisoning family members; and the maltreatment of CDWs by employers such as overworking these children: all these may imply the existence of what Alfred Schutz (1899-1959) termed the '*Lebenswelt*' (literally translated as 'lifeworld') (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973).

Therefore, the structures of the 'lifeworld' of employers and CDWs are formed through the subjectivity of their everyday interactions and experiences that would result from interacting with a variety of individual CDWs and employers, respectively. When they experience unhealthy interactions, employers and CDWs will keep forming a 'stock of knowledge' that will later come to be a point of reference when making interpretations of daily life.

The findings from field observations also indicated that many CDWs struggled to perform their activities because they were unfamiliar with some new experiences in their lives. For instance, most CDWs come from rural areas where the kinds of food and housing are different from those in Dar es Salaam. Sometimes, urban social values and norms, like table manners, are new to CDWs. In this sense, CDWs who had difficulty coping with new life demands found themselves making mistakes like breaking home utensils and misbehaving. As a result, some were frequently punished by their 'problematic employers'.

Therefore, training might reduce the knowledge and skill gap among CDWs as it would offer them the opportunity to learn various skills related to the tasks assigned. For instance, they would learn the desired ways of taking care of the children, learn how to handle and/or operate home appliances, and learn communication and organizational skills as a way to either minimize or eliminate conflicts.

## **5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, we can conclude that CDWs seem to be socio-culturally acceptable even among the elite in the name of 'work socialisation'. CDWs, as 'fictive kin' and as a key ingredient in their employers' households in Tanzania, are perceived by employers to have better prospects, especially for children from financially poor rural families. On the other side, some employers have a negative perception of CDWs, and consensually describe them as stubborn, witchy, and lazy; hence they keep hiring and firing them at will.

Moreover, in the context of developing and middle-income countries, most people—including the elite—consider child domestic work as a charity that is socially and culturally acceptable. We argue that the lack of essential services for children—such as childcare and protection services and universal education beyond the primary level—promotes the employment of children in domestic work. Unless the services are made accessible, removing children from domestic work is not sufficient and may leave them more vulnerable to other dangerous forms of work within or outside their biological homes. Moreover, efforts towards poverty eradication—especially in notorious CDW recruiting areas—must be enforced and implemented to achieve the 2030 agenda (especially agenda 1-5, 8, and 10), and, in doing so, reduce the number of children involved in DW.

Hence, the study recommends that the human rights of children—such as their right to light work, their best interests, and their voices and those of their employers—remain vital aspects of policies affecting children, particularly those in the domestic work sector. Likewise, in line with the current ILO's emphasis on descent in domestic work, there is a need to implement strategies to promote positive work experiences among CDWs and regulate their employment across Tanzania, specifically for the ones aged between 15 and 18 years, who most tend to join domestic work after completing their compulsory primary school education.

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