Factors Influencing The Girl Child In Urban Domestic Service Labour In Eldoret, Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

Sutter Paul Chebet, Jamin R. M. Masinde And Joram Kareithi

Corresponding Author: Sutter Paul Chebet

Throughout the world and Africa in particular, child labour continues to be a major issue of concern. Working children are often engaged under exploitative conditions that are harmful to their moral, psychological, social, economic and physical development. While many think of children in domestic service as 'helping' (house helps), they in fact often carry out work that is way beyond their age. Despite national and international effort to curb the problem, child labour has persisted. As a result the paper sought to understand factors influencing the girl child in urban domestic service labour in Eldoret town. The paper used exploratory research design for an in-depth and holistic understanding of the child labour dynamics. A sample of 253 girls working in the domestic service was used. Purposive and convenience sampling were the major sampling designs adopted to select the participants. Data for the study was collected using un-structured questionnaire, in-depth interviews and observation techniques. Qualitative method was used to analyze data where thematic approach was utilized. The study found that there were both push and pull factors influencing girl child in urban domestic service labour. On one hand, poverty; lack of education; gender discrimination; domestic violence; internal displacement due to post-election violence; and orphan-hood were the major push factors established during the study. On the other hand, availability of jobs; good pay and better working conditions were established as pull factors influencing girl child in urban domestic service labour. The paper recommended for policy response by the government to curb girl-child labour.
Key Terms*: Factors; girl-child; domestic service; labour*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world and Africa in particular, child labour continues to be a major issue of concern. Working children are often engaged under exploitative conditions that are harmful to their moral, psychological, social, economic and physical development. While many think of children in domestic service as 'helping' (house helps), they in fact often carry out work that is way beyond their age. Child labour and associated mistreatment has become a global problem. International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that about 250 million children aged 5-14 years old work. The majority of these children come from developing countries where it is estimated that one out of every four children is involved in child labour. In Africa alone, 25% of children aged 10-14 years from poor families are working (ILO 2002).

One in six children 5 to 14 years old which is about 16 percent of all children in this age group is involved in child labor in developing countries. In the least developed countries, 30 percent of all children are engaged in child labor (UNICEF, 2012). Worldwide, 126 million children work in hazardous conditions, often enduring beatings, humiliation and sexual violence by their employers. An estimated 1.2 million children — both boys and girls — are trafficked each year into exploitative work in agriculture, mining, factories, armed conflict or commercial sex work. The highest proportion of child laborers is in sub-Saharan Africa, where 26 percent of children (49 million) are involved in work (ILO, 2010).

Among the major causes of child labour, UNICEF insists poverty is the most important reason for child labour. Though children are not well paid they still serve as major contributors to family income (UNICEF, 2001). The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2008) spreading smiles through education Organisation (OSSE) suggests poverty is the greatest single force driving children into the workplace. UNICEF suggests poverty as biggest cause of child labour. Between boys and girls UNICEF finds girls are two times more likely to be out of school and working in a domestic role. Parents with limited resources have to choose whose school costs and fees they can afford when a school is available. Educating girls tends to be a lower priority across the world, including India. Girls are also harassed or bullied at schools, sidelined by prejudice or poor curricula, according to UNICEF. Solely because of their gender, therefore many girls are kept out of school or drop out, then provide child labour (UNICEF, 2001).

The United States Department of Labor estimated, in its 2010 report, about 32% (over 3 million) of all Kenyan children aged 5–14 are engaged in paid work. Domestic sector, agriculture and fishing are the predominant employers. The informal sectors witnessing the worst form of child labour include sugarcane plantations, pastoral ranches, tea, coffee, miraa (a stimulant plant), rice, sisal, tobacco, tilapia and sardines fishing. Other economic activities of children in Kenya include scavenging dumpsites, collecting and selling scrap materials, glass and metal, street vending, herding and begging. Forced exploitation of children in sex tourism, the report claims, is prevalent in major cities such as Nairobi, Kisumu, Eldoret and coastal cities of Kenya (ILO, 2010).

This study therefore derived from concerns over the increase in child labour despite the numerous local and international efforts to curb it. The fact that little has been achieved suggests that there is need to rethink the phenomenon of child labour so as to understand its dynamics in the rapidly changing socio-economic and cultural situations particularly in urban contexts. This paper therefore investigated on factors that influence a girl-child to engage in urban domestic services in Eldoret.

II. METHODOLOGY

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

The study was conducted in eleven estates found in Eldoret. Eldoret is a town in western Kenya and the administrative centre of Uasin Gishu County. The girl child working as a domestic worker for wages was the study's central focus. However, provincial administration and labour department officials were involved in the study as key informants.

The population for the study constituted all domestic house girls working within the environs of Eldoret town who are less than 18 years. The accessible population of domestic house girls from eleven estates of Eldoret is estimated to be 700. As a result therefore, the study used a desired sample size of 253 participants. The study interviewed 253 girls working in the domestic sector in Eldoret town.

The study used multi-stage sampling technique, which involved the use of various sampling techniques at various stages. First, the entire town was stratified into the eleven estates according to social classes. These estates includes: Pioneer; Langas; Huruma; Kapsoya; Mwanzo; Kimumu; Hawaii; Race Course; Elgon View; Kahoya and Maili Nne. These estates were purposively chosen first; for their social class and second; for the economic activities that go on in some of these estates (for instance; Langas) which highly induce the use of female child in the provision of domestic labour. Having identified a sample size of 253 participants, proportionate sampling technique was applied where every estate produced 23 respondents (See Table 3). Furthermore, convenience sampling method was then used to pick 23 respondents from each estate to participate in the study. Convenience and snowball sampling were used because it was hard to identify which household had a female child domestic worker. In order to apply convenient sampling the research had to walk from one house to another while requesting the employer to talk to their workers. In other instance, some of the interviewees referred the researcher to other house-helps who were below 18 years.

Table 3: Sample Size

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

In-depth interviews were adopted for a more comprehensive view and a great depth of responses. The researcher assisted respondents in interpreting and filling the questions as some of them were illiterate and were therefore unable to read and write. The interviews produced only qualitative data.

In addition, key informant interviews was used to solicit important information from key informants who among them included; two Children Protection Officers from Eldoret, two Labour Ministry Officers from Eldoret branch, two Sub-County children's Officers from Eldoret and one bureau manager. Interview tool was very vital as it provided in-depth data that was relevant in meeting the requirements of the study objectives.

Data analysis methods were mainly qualitative which was analysed by selecting the common themes that were given by the respondents in relation to the study objectives. Qualitative data was presented in form of direct quotations from the respondents as well as indirect quotations as formatted by the researcher without altering the meaning.

III. FINDINGS

After data had been collected, factors influencing girl-child in urban domestic labour services were divided into two: push as well as pull factors.

3.1 Push Factors Necessitating Girl-child Urban Domestic Labour Service

When the respondents were asked to state factors that made them to leave home and look for a job (push factors), it was established that the following were major factors: poverty; lack of education; gender discrimination where according to the responding boys were favoured than girls; domestic violence; internal displacement due to post-election violence; and orphan (due to loss of either one or both parents).

A. Poverty

The study found that quite a number (31.4%) of the children interviewed said that poverty in their families pushed them into child labour in order to work and supplement the meagre income of their parents/guardians. Various reactions were reported in relation to poverty factor; some interviewees said that their parents forced them to look for a job in order to sustain the family.

Most of the respondents claimed that poverty was the main cause of their involvement in house help work. Most of the respondents interviewed understood poverty as parents being unable to provide adequately daily basic needs. However, they further lamented that despite being employed as maids their salaries were too small to wipe out poverty from their families. One girl from Kapsoya estate said that due to high rate of poverty in their family back home, she dedicates all her salary of two thousand Kenya shillings every month to raise her family from the quagmire of poverty.

Poverty is one of the underlying causes of domestic child labour. Despite the impressive economic growth in the last two years, Kenya is among the world's 30 poorest countries, ranking 152 out of 177 countries on the 2006 Human Development Index. Inequalities are wide with the top 10 per cent of Kenyans earning 44 per cent of the national income, whilst the bottom 10 per cent earns less than one per cent. Kenya's poorest regions, including North Eastern Province, have twice the relative poverty headcount of its least poor regions. Years of drought in this region have had a serious impact on the well-being of children, increasing malnutrition rates, morbidity and mortality (ILO, 2010).

According to UNICEF (2001), in Kenya, poverty remains the major driving force behind child labour particularly in domestic arena. It is an issue of survival, where children sell labour in exchange for money, food, clothing or school fees. In majority of cases, children drop out of school due to lack of school fees. In addition, a survey by ILO (2006) on 'the end of child labour', established additional factors such as physical, verbal or sexual abuses force children to drop out of school. Beatings by teachers as a form of punishment, fetching water, or cleaning the school compound/teachers house force children to drop out of school even after the school fees have been paid. In addition, the culture aspect also affects the girl child education where boys are given priority in education over girls who are seen as sources of wealth (bride price) by some communities.

According to Oyaide (2000), female children are often considered burdensome and an economic liability. Many traditional cultures consider spending precious resources on a girl child a bad investment, especially when they are required to marry into their husband's family. Gender roles often affect parents' decisions on whether children should continue their schooling or go out to work. In families where resources are scarce, the girl child is often placed in a disadvantaged position compared to the boy child and her education is often sacrificed at the altar of her brother's education. This necessitates girl children to venture into domestic labour services. This was revealed by one girl during an interview in Huruma estate who said that she was forcefully taken to work as a house help in order to assist paying school fees of her elder brother who was in secondary school form two.

B. Gender Discrimination

The study found a sizeable group of the interviewees (20.3%) said that gender discrimination made them to engage in child labour. According to them, their parents and guardians preferred that boys continue with education than girls. Some of the interviewees said that their parents told them not to bother going to school because they will soon get married. Furthermore, in extreme situations, some parents marry off their daughters at a very young age due to not only poverty but also the social status of women in the society.

This implies that some communities still treat women and girls unfairly as compared to men and boys. Women are considered to have their place in kitchen and therefore it is better for girls to be involved in domestic service labour than being educated. A survey by ILO (2010) showed that over 360 million children worldwide are engaged in work; which means that over one fifth of the world's children aged 5-17 years are exploited by child labour in its different forms. Of these, a large percentage work as domestic servants. The survey further revealed that although boys do work as domestic servants, domestic service is primarily carried out by girls and has different implications in terms of girls' heath and development. Child domestic work is a clear example of how gender identity contributes to the shaping of the different kinds of labour. Child domestic labour patterns correspond to deep-seated, sex-based divisions of labour.

Furthermore, literature indicates the relationship between poverty, gender discrimination and child labour. It is evident that poverty exacerbates gender discrimination where parents demand that their daughters should get married for them to access bride prize which may lift them out of poverty. According to UNICEF (2001), poverty is one of the major factors underpinning early marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden where one less daughter is one less mouth to feed. Parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children in hope that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family. The marriage to a much older sometimes even elderly man is practice common in some societies. In traditional societies in Sub-Saharan Africa, the bride's family may receive cattle from the groom, or the groom's family, as the bride price for their daughter, (UNICEF 2001).

C. Lack of Education
Education is a crucial component of any effective effort to eliminate child labour. The study further found a good number of interviewees (20%) who acknowledged that lack of education pushed them to domestic child labour services. Education is very paramount in shaping the lives of children. However, the interviewees reiterated that despite primary education being free, their parents and guardians could not allow them to benefit from it because they wanted them to be productive in terms being employed either as house girls or house boys. As a matter of fact, it is estimated that about 1 out of 3 children aged between 5-14 years in Sub-Saharan Africa have dropped out of school and are in employment compared to Central and Eastern European/Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region where only 1 out of 20 are employed. In absolute numbers, 69 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is 35% of its child population, are engaged in child labour (ILO, 2006).

One girl who was working as a domestic service provider in Kapsoya when asked why she is not in school but working at a very tender age said that her parents saw no value to send her to school since she was a girl. The decision was arrived at when her elder sister got pregnant while in form one and from there her parents vowed not to educate any of their girls. As a result, the girl sought to engage in domestic labour where she is hopeful that her employer will take her to school.

D. Domestic Violence
Domestic violence (12.7%) was also established as one of the push factor for children to move out of their families and seek employment. Domestic violence is a devastating social problem that affects every segment of the population. Families that are constantly involved in domestic violence pose a threat to their members and particularly children some of whom move out as a result of being troubled.
According to Kohl, Edleson, English, and Barth, (2005), families with co-occurring domestic violence and child maltreatment often have high levels of cumulative risk, and children in families with the highest level of cumulative risk are 10 times more likely to move into child labour and foster care families.

E. Orphan-hood
The study further established that 11.3% of the interviewees said that they were in domestic service labour because their parents passed away. According to some of the interviewees, after their parents had passed away, they had nobody to take care of them and thus were forced to domestic labour service. One of the respondents reiterated the death of her both parents through HIV/AIDS was the genesis of her problem. She said that she used to stay with her paternal uncle but barely a year, things started taking different direction. Her uncle forced her to get married at the age of 12 because he was not going to pay school fees for her when she joins secondary school. Furthermore, she said that her uncle's children were well taken care of while she was mistreated together with her siblings. As a result, she looked for employment as a house help in order to take

care of her siblings as she is the first born. These findings imply that children who are orphans especially girls are vulnerable to child labour.

According to the ILO report of 2006, a high orphan hood rate and low investments in children's human capital accumulation are two main characteristics of many African countries. In particular, Sub-Saharan Africa countries face the most important orphan crisis in the developing world. Approximately 12 percent of children are orphans in the region, which is highly related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In addition, Sub-Saharan African countries share the highest incidence of child labour worldwide. Twenty six percent of children (aged 5-14) in the region were classified as economically active in 2004 (ILO, 2006).

F. Internal Displacement

The study also established some of the interviewees (4.3%) said that the post-election violence cause internal displacement of their families which made them to search for jobs to support their families. According to them after they were displaced, it was very difficult for these families to sustain themselves thus, some children had to look for immediate employment which was domestic labour.

In an interviewee with one of the respondent over the issue of internal displacement said that her father was killed during the post-election violence in January 2008. As a result, they ran for their lives without collecting anything from their house. They relocated to one camp in Eldoret. According to her, life in the camp was not easy at all and thus, they were forced to look for employment together with her mother. She was later employed as a house girl while her mother was employed as a cook in a nearby primary school.

Another interviewee argued that they were displaced after the place they used to call home was reclaimed by a certain businessman who claimed ownership of the land. As a result, they had to move out with no place to stay. That is what instigated her to look for employment in Kimumu estate as a babysitter at an age of 12 years. She said that their houses were demolished because they were squatters and therefore had to look for other options. Her other family members live on the street of Eldoret town and survive on well-wishers. Thus, it is evident that most of the victims of post-election violence were left poor with little or nothing to sustain their members which forced some of the affected children to venture into child labouring.

3.2 Pull Factors Necessitating Girl-child Urban Domestic Labour

Investigations into the factors necessitating girl child entry into domestic labour service are complex and varied. When the respondents were asked to state the factors that attracted them to go and work in Eldoret, the following were some of the major factors; availability of jobs; good pay and better working conditions.

The study results shows that majority of the respondents (54.1%) were attracted to work in town because of availability of jobs, good pay (35.2%) and better working conditions (10.7%). Working in town is advantageous compared to rural setting because in town; jobs opportunities are high such that when you lose one chances of securing another job are high and salary is high compared to those who work in rural setting. Others said that working in town is better due to exposure and change of environment.

A study conducted by Nyambari (1998) on the factors that attracts girl child into urban domestic labour found that the root causes are multiple and multi-faceted. Poverty and its feminization, social exclusion, lack of education, gender and ethnic discrimination, domestic violence, displacement, rural-urban migration and loss of parents due to conflicts and diseases, are just some of the multiple "push factors" for child domestic workers worldwide. Increasing social and economic disparities, debt bondage, the perception that the employer is simply an extended "family" and protected environment for the child, the increasing need for the women of the household to have a "replacement" at home that will enable more and more of them to enter the labour market, and the illusion that domestic service gives the child worker an opportunity for education, are some of its "pull factors".

Children enter domestic work for a variety of reasons. Poverty and promise of a better future sometimes lead parents to send their children into domestic work or children to decide to enter it of their own accord. Despite widespread abuse and exploitation enduring myths prevail. Employers often take girls in their house as a 'favour', thinking that they are protecting them and providing opportunities but fail to recognize the level of exploitation and abuse they submit them to. According to Anandharajakumar (2004) parents send their children to work with a rich family thinking that it will bring them new opportunities. Domestic work is also widely perceived as a less dangerous type of employment than others, hence making it more suitable for girls. It is also sometimes the only way girls can continue their schooling.

Providing accommodation, food and clothes to house help employees enable them to work more effectively while saving much of their pay because they will have little or no expenses to incur. Furthermore, a humane employer should make sure that the working conditions of his/her employee are satisfactory in order to motivate the worker.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The root causes of child domestic labour are multiple and multi-faceted. On one hand, poverty and its feminization, lack of education, gender and ethnic discrimination, domestic violence, displacement and internal displacement due to conflicts are just some of the multiple "push factors" for child domestic workers in Eldoret. On the other hand job availability, good pay and working conditions are pull factors for girl-child involvement in urban domestic services.

Educating girls seems to be the ideal solution since, if sufficiently prolonged; it helps to reduce domestic labour, and confers other benefits as well. Education is a crucial component of an effective strategy to eliminate child labour. Experience shows that a combination of economic growth, respect for labour standards, universal education and social protection, together with a better understanding of the needs and rights of children, can bring about a significant reduction in child labour. Compulsory school attendance up to the minimum age of employment is particularly important.

References

[1]. ILO (2002). *Conventions 138 and 182 on Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour*. Geneva: ILO
[2]. ILO (2006) Peter Hurst Tackling hazardous child labour in agriculture: Guidance on policy and practice. ILO IPEC, Geneva, 2006; Guidebook 2, section 1.7. ILOIPEC Geneva.
[3]. ILO (2008). *Child Labour: Targeting the Intolerable*, ILO, Geneva,November.
[4]. ILO, (2010). Accelerating action against Child Labour, *Report to the International Labour Conference*, 99th Session 2010. ISBN: 978-92-2-121873-9ORK
[5]. ILO, (2010), *Facts on Child Labor*. ILO, Geneva. 2011.
[6]. Nyambari, S.T. (1998). *Child Labour: The Invisible Child Worker*. Paper Presented at the National Conference on Child Rights and Child Protection in Kenya. Organized by The Coalition of Child Rights nd Protection. Nairobi 9-10 September.
[7]. Oyaide, Omolara (2000) "Child Domestic Labour in Lusaka: A Gender Perspective," UNICEF, Zambia.
[8]. UNICEF (2001a). *Child Workers in the Shadow of AIDS, Listening to the Children*. Nairobi: UNICEF, Eastern and Southern Africa Region office.
[9]. UNICEF, (2012). *The State of the World's Children*. UNICEF and Oxford University Press, New York.