

ATTITUDES OF CIVIL SERVANTS TO THE USE OF DOMESTIC HELPERS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The issue of child labour has been a matter of concern across the globe. Several children in some parts of the world have become victims of various abuses such as rape, trafficking, oppression and even death. In response to this, several concerned bodies and groups both at governmental and non-governmental levels have risen to this challenge. In spite of these efforts, one of the areas that pose a challenge is domestic child labour for which eradication and documentation have become problematic. Equally, studies have not paid attention on the employers of these domestic helpers. This study therefore seeks to understand the attitude of employers to domestic helpers, using some civil servants in the six states that constitute southwest Nigeria. Two hundred and twenty-nine (229) copies of questionnaire were purposively distributed among the respondents who engage the services of domestic helpers in the six states. For qualitative data, a total of 30 in-depth interviews were conducted to complement the quantitative data collected. Findings revealed that the employers of domestic helpers were indifferent to efforts made to reduce child labour. Attempts made at curbing domestic child labour may be difficult at the moment. The study suggests how domestic child labour could be reduced, and in the meantime, ameliorate the challenges faced by the domestic helpers.

Keywords: Domestic, Helper, Victims, Nigeria, Challenges.

INTRODUCTION AND THE PROBLEM

Globally, it is no longer news that children suffer a great deal in the hands of certain individuals who use them to do certain illegal activities. This form of exploitation is often referred to as child labour. These children are made to do all sorts of illegal work; some are trafficked and even abused. Findings have revealed that no fewer than 250 million children are experiencing abuse and child labour. At least 120 million children are engaged in full time work; and about 80 million are involved in hazardous work (ILO, 2006). In sub-Saharan Africa, studies have revealed that 49 million children are involved in child labour. In Nigeria, studies have further showed that close to 26 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 years are involved in the trade (ILO, 1990; Bass, 2004; World Bank, 2006). Empirical studies further revealed that most of these children are engaged in retail and domestic duties unlike their counterparts in other continents that are employed in industries and agriculture (Hassan and Debnath, 2000; Aderinto, 2000; Francavilla and Lyon 2002; and Robson, 2004). In response to this challenge, several organizations have taken steps to curb the menace of child labour through awareness programmes, action calls, and prosecution of offenders, to mention a few (Aderinto, 2000, Francavilla and Lyon 2002; and Robson, 2004).

Surprisingly, in spite of the efforts by all the bodies involved, it appears that the trade in this part of the continent has not stopped. Several newspaper reports and empirical studies attest to the fact that child labour is still a problem in Nigeria. Recently, a set of children working in quarry firms were repatriated to their countries. Several individuals found engaging these children in these trades have also been dealt with within the ambit of the law. One must appreciate the efforts of these bodies; yet a lot appears need to be done in this area. For example, one of the areas that remain a challenge is domestic child labour often referred to as 'house helpers'. It has become a common phenomenon among middle class and upper class members of the society to engage the services of these under-age children to carry out duties in the home front. Several indigent children remain in this area unnoticed and they suffer exploitation under their masters or employers in the process of performing their 'duties'. This activity has become rampant, yet facts and figures regarding the number of children involved in domestic child labour are usually difficult to come by (UNICEF, 2006). Studies have further revealed that domestic child labour remains one of the biggest challenges in child labour (UNICEF, 2006).

Several studies undertaken in the area of child labour (Aderinto, 2000, Francavilla and Lyon 2002, and Robson, 2004) have often focused on the victims (children) alone without a thorough and genuine consideration of other players, usually the employers and traffickers or intermediaries. It becomes important to understand the attitude of the people towards domestic child labour. Any move to stop this practice must identify all the lapses and at the same time incorporate all the parties concerned. This study therefore seeks to understand the attitude and practice of the people to domestic helpers with a focus on some civil servants, in South west Nigeria.

THE METHOD

This study was conducted at the government secretariats in Ado-Ekiti, Osogbo, Akure, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ikeja, that is, the administrative headquarters of Ekiti, Osun, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun and Lagos states respectively, all in South west Nigeria. A total of two hundred and ninety-nine males and females working in different states within the zone were selected. The criterion for selection was whether they had domestic helper(s) at home. In all, thirty six ministries were selected within the zone. From these ministries, a total of one hundred and sixty eight female respondents were purposively selected for interview in this study. Purposive sampling was adopted in selecting the sample based on the fact that the researchers wanted to include only respondents who had domestic helper at home. The method thus enabled the researchers to select only the relevant subjects for the study.

Quantitative and qualitative data methods were adopted as instruments of data collection for this study. Quantitative method in form of structured questionnaire was used in eliciting relevant information from the respondents. The questionnaire contained open-end and closed-end questions to enable the researchers get their views and opinions about the focus of the study. In all, 299 copies of the questionnaires were found useful for analysis in this study. Qualitative data in form of in-depth interview was also used to complement the quantitative data. A total of thirty (30) respondents were also purposively selected across all the ministries for in-depth interview.

In analysing the data, univariate and bivariate analysis were employed. As regards the quantitative data gathered in the study, frequency distribution tables, percentages and chi-square statistical techniques were adopted through the use of Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS software). For qualitative data, content analysis was adopted in analysing the data and verbatim quotations of the responses were done where necessary to buttress the quantitative data.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Selected Socio-economic Characteristics

Age	Frequency	Percentage
26-35 years	66	22.0
36-45 years	173	58.0
46-56 years	45	15.0
56 years and above	15	5
Total	299	100.0
Sex		
Male	131	43.8
Female	168	56.2
Total	299	100
Education		
No Education	9	3.0
Primary	21	7.0
Secondary	60	20
Tertiary	209	70
Total	299	100.0
Ministry/Department		
Education	30	10
Agriculture	18	6.0
Justice	78	26.1
Commerce	76	25.3
Health	79	26.6
Civil Service Commission	18	6.0
Total	299	100
Monthly Income		
Below N20,000.00	18	6.0
N20,001-N40,000.00	82	27.4
N40,001-N60,000.00	90	30.2
N60,001-N80,000.00	69	23.0
N80,000 and above	40	13.4
Total	299	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

The table above describes the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (58.0 percent) were between the ages of 36 and 45 years. The least respondents on the table were aged 56 years and above. Equally, the study was dominated by females as they constituted 56.2 percent of the study. Data on the respondents' educational qualifications showed that seventy percent of the respondents had one form of tertiary education or the other, while 3.0 percent of the respondents claimed that they did not have formal education. This might not be strange as the zone is renowned for its high level of educational attainment in the country. The respondents selected for the study

were spread over different ministries as reflected in the table above. In all, thirty six government ministries and departments within the various state secretariats were represented in the study. On the monthly income, data above revealed that majority of the respondents earned N20, 000.00 and above while only 6.0 percent earned below N20, 000.00 in a month. This shows that the respondents are fairly well paid hence their ability to secure the services of domestic helpers.

Percentage Distribution of Respondents and their Domestic Helpers

How long have you been engaging the services of	Frequency	Percentage
House helpers		
Below 1 year	30	10
1-3 years	141	47
4-6 years	50	17
7-9 years	63	21
10 years and above	15	5
Total	299	100
What type of work do they do for you		
House chores	173	58.0
Farmland	30	10.0
Baby sit	49	17
Laundry	28	9.5
Others	16	5.5
Total	299	100
Why do you think the helpers engage in the business?		
To assist parents	96	32
To sponsor self	138	46
They could not cope in school	65	22
Total	299	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

This section makes a presentation on how long the respondents have been engaging the services of house helpers for their domestic use. Data revealed that about 50 percent of the respondents have been engaging the services of these helpers for a period of 1 to 3 years. Summarily, most respondents that participated in the study have been engaging the services of these helpers for not more than 10 years. The age of the respondents might be responsible for this finding. A majority of the respondents are still young. Findings on age distribution showed that a majority of the respondents in this study were below 45 years. On the type of services the domestic helpers rendered for them, data revealed that 58 percent claimed that they assisted them in house chores like cleaning, grass-cutting, and mowing. Another 10.0 percent of the respondents claimed that they engaged the services of these helpers for farming purposes. In the IDI conducted, some of these respondents posited that they have farms they cultivate for business purposes, and that these domestic helpers are used to work on these farmlands.

Data further revealed that 17 percent of the respondents engaged the services of these helpers for baby-sitting. Some of the respondents claimed that their children need somebody to stay with after they close from school. Findings on what the respondents perceived as the reasons why domestic helpers engage in such jobs revealed that poverty may be the major reason. For instance, 32 percent of the respondents argued that their domestic helpers claimed that they do such jobs because of the need to assist their parents as they need to survive and take care of their younger ones. Also, 46 percent opined that the domestic helpers are there to sponsor themselves. The rest of the respondents (22 percent) said they perceived that their domestic helpers cannot cope in school based on financial challenges they encounter and this may be responsible for their involvement in the trade.

Frequency Distribution on Respondents Degree of Agreement on Attitude towards Domestic Helper

Variables	I don't see anything wrong in having house helps	
Degree of Agreement	Frequency N= 763	Percentage
Agree	105	35
Strongly Agree	30	10
Undecided	0	0
Disagree	126	42
Strongly Disagree	38	13
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	Having domestic helper is to render assistance to the children and their parents.	
Agree	19	6
Strongly Agree	139	46
Undecided	19	6
Disagree	36	13
Strongly Disagree	86	29
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	I don't think there can be any form of domestic helper abuse	
Agree	97	32
Strongly Agree	104	35
Undecided	20	7
Disagree	39	13
Strongly Disagree	39	13
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	Domestic helper should be abolished in our society	
Agree	17	6
Strongly Agree	108	36
Undecided	19	6.4
Disagree	58	19.3
Strongly Disagree	97	32.3
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	I can't see any sense 'in government's effort in curbing child labour	
Agree	138	46
Strongly Agree	65	22

Undecided	36	12
Disagree	41	14
Strongly Disagree	19	6
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	The move to abolish child labour can't work in Nigeria	
Agree	67	22
Strongly Agree	40	13
Undecided	21	7.0
Disagree	93	32.0
Strongly Disagree	78	26
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	Domestic helper are very useful in our society	
Agree	40	13
Strongly Agree	52	17
Undecided	21	7
Disagree	97	33
Strongly Disagree	89	30
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	I don't believe that my house helper can be abused in any way	
Agree	20	6.7
Strongly Agree	87	29.0
Undecided	14	4.8
Disagree	87	29.0
Strongly Disagree	91	30.5
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	I can send/assign my house helper any errand/duties at any time	
Agree	40	13.3
Strongly Agree	98	33.0
Undecided	81	27
Disagree	68	22.7
Strongly Disagree	12	4.0
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	My responsibility is to provide food, shelter and salary/wages to my domestic helper and nothing more	
Agree	112	38
Strongly Agree	47	15
Undecided	18	6.
Disagree	30	10
Strongly Disagree	92	31
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	If I send my domestic helper to school, I am only doing him/her a favour	
Agree	58	19
Strongly Agree	144	49
Undecided	12	4
Disagree	33	11

Strongly Disagree	52	17
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	I can't do without a domestic helper	
Agree	36	12
Strongly Agree	36	12
Undecided	36	12
Disagree	105	35.5
Strongly Disagree	86	28.5
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	I treat my house helper like my children	
Agree	46	15
Strongly Agree	72	24
Undecided	14	5
Disagree	53	18
Strongly Disagree	114	38
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	How I treat my house helper is nobody's business	
Agree	52	18
Strongly Agree	60	20
Undecided	27	9
Disagree	84	28
Strongly Disagree	76	25
Total	299	100
Degree of Agreement	I employed domestic helper because I can't cope with my career and home keeping	
Agree	36	12
Strongly Agree	59	19
Undecided	18	6
Disagree	66	22
Strongly Disagree	120	41
Total	299	100

Summary of respondents' attitude regarding domestic helper

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	132	44
Indifferent	167	56
Total	299	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

This section discusses the respondents' degree of agreement as regard their attitude to the use of domestic helpers. Findings above revealed that majority of the respondents were somehow indifferent in their attitude to the use of domestic helpers. For instance, 46 percent and 22 percent 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed', respectively, that they can't see any meaningful result in the efforts of the government in reducing child labour. Also, 22 percent and 13 percent 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' respectively, that the move to abolish child labour cannot work in the country. Further, 38 percent and 15 percent of the respondents 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' respectively, to the statement that the only responsibility they had to the domestic helper was "to provide food, shelter and salary/wages to my domestic help and nothing

more". While surprisingly, 19 percent and 49 percent also 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' respectively, that if they send domestic helpers to school at all, they were only doing them "a favour". Further, 15 percent and 24 percent 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' respectively that they treat house helpers like their children. These findings may indicate an unfavourable attitude to efforts of the government to eradicate child labour in the country.

Percentage Distribution of Factors Predisposing the Respondents to Engaging the Services of Domestic Helpers

What prompted you to engage the services of house helpers?	Frequency	Percentage
For cleaning/chores purposes	135	45
My way of assisting them	69	23
To enable me face my career properly	95	32
Total	299	100
How did you get these domestic helpers?	Frequency	Percentage
Through friends/ colleagues/relations	156	52
Through their parents	48	16
Others	95	32
Total	299	100
Do you think you can do without them?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	135	45
No	164	55
Total	299	100
If yes why	Frequency	Percentage
I have relations that can assist	48	37
I can handle my chores myself	33	24
There is nothing special about them	33	24
They can be unreliable	21	15
Total	135	100
If no, why not?	Frequency	Percentage
The nature of my job is demanding	69	42
I am used to their services	44	27
I need somebody to stay with my kids	51	31
Total	164	100

This section examines factors that motivate the respondents into engaging the services of house helpers. It also seeks to understand how the respondents got their domestic helpers. Findings showed that over half (52 percent) of the total population got them through friends, colleagues and relations. Further, 16 percent and 32 percent also claimed that they got their helpers through parents and other sources, respectively.

Data further revealed that 45 percent of the respondents engaged services of domestic helper in order to assist them with house chores. While 23 percent argued that they engaged their services as a form of assistance to them, the remaining respondents (32 percent) claimed that the major reason for engaging their services is to enable them concentrate on their career and other important areas of life. Further, 55 percent of the respondents claimed that they cannot

do without the services of the domestic helper. Several reasons were attributed to this. For instance, 42 percent claimed that the nature of their job is demanding; 27 percent argued that they are used to their services while 31 percent claimed that they needed somebody to stay with their children. For the respondents who felt they do not engage the services of domestic helpers, some of them attributed the reasons to the fact that they have other relatives to assist (28 percent), some also claimed that they can do their domestic chores without any form of assistance (24 percent). Others claimed that there is nothing special about the helper (24 percent) while 15 percent of the respondent opined that they are sometimes unreliable,

Chi Square Relationship between Level of Education and Why Respondents Keep Domestic Helper

Variables	Level of education								Total	
	No education		Primary		Secondary		Tertiary			
Why do you keep house helps?										
For cleaning purposes	1	25.0	2	40.0	4	25.0	4	5.5	11	11.1
As a form of assistance	2	50.0	-	-	2	12.5	5	6.7	9	9.1
Nature of my job	1	25.0	3	60.0	10	62.5	65	87.8	79	79.8
Total	4	100.0	5	100.0	16	100.0	74	100.0	99	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2013

Findings on Chi-square relationship between "why respondents keep house helpers and level of education" showed that a significant relationship exist between the variables. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents that secured the services of domestic helpers had one form of tertiary education or the other. Furthermore, a majority of primary school certificate holders engaged the services of domestic helpers based on the nature of their jobs while majority of secondary school certificate holders engaged their services mainly for cleaning purposes. Respondents with tertiary education engaged the services of house helpers as a result of the nature of job they do.

Chi Square Relationship between Level of Income and Why Respondents Keep Domestic Help

Variables	Level of income: Nigeria Naira (₦)											
	Below 20,000		20,001-40,000		40,001-60,000		60,001-80,000		80,001 and above		Total	
Why do you keep house helps?	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
For cleaning purposes	2	66.7	10	37.0	15	42.9	6	25.0	3	30.0	36	36.4

As a form of assistance	1	33.3	4	14.8	14	40.0	16	66.7	2	20.0	37	37.4
Nature of my job	-		13	48.2	6	17.1	2	8.3	5	50.0	26	26.2
Total	3	100.0	27	100.0	35	100.0	24	100.0	10	100.0	99	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2013

Data on the relationship between 'why respondents keep domestic helper' and 'level of monthly income' also revealed that a significant relationship exists between the variables (.000). Further breakdown of the result showed that respondents earning a monthly income between N40, 001 and N60, 000 per month sought the services of domestic helper than other respondents on the table. This may indicate that affluence has a lot to do with ability to secure the services of domestic helpers. Going further, descriptively, respondents earning below N20, 000 per month sought the services of domestic helpers for cleaning purposes than other income earners while a majority of the respondents earning between N20, 001 and N40, 000 per month sought the services of domestic helper due to the nature of their jobs. Further, majority of respondents earning N40, 001 and N60, 000 sought domestic helper services for cleaning purposes. Equally, respondents earning between N60, 001 and N80, 000 also engaged the services of domestic helpers for one form of assistance or the other.

Chi Square Relationship between respondents' Age and Why Respondents Keep Domestic Helpers

	Respondents' Age (Years)									
	26-35		36-45		46-56		56 and above		Total	
Why do you keep house helpers?	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
For cleaning purposes	1	25.0	10	45.5	18	31.0	2	13.3	31	31.3
As a form of assistance	1	23.0	7	31.8	15	25.9	10	66.7	33	33.3
Nature of my job	2	50.0	5	22.7	25	43.1	3	20.0	35	35.4
Total	4	100.0	22	100.0	58	100.0	15	100.0	99	100.0

The table above examines the relationship between 'why respondents keep domestic helpers' and some 'selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics'. Chi square result showed that there was no significant relationship between the variables (0.09). Data above revealed that respondents between ages 46 and 55 years engaged the services of domestic helpers more than other age groups in this study. Further breakdown of the findings also showed that respondents whose age falls between 36 and 45 years engaged the services of domestic helpers for cleaning purposes more than other age groups. In addition, respondents

aged 56 years and above sought the services of domestic helpers for one form of assistance or the other, than other age groups in this study. Also, respondents aged between 26 and 35 years sought the services of domestic helpers more than other age groups. Chi-square statistical result showed that a significant association exists between age and seeking the services of house helpers.

Summary of Findings

The section presents the major findings in this study. This study sought to understand the attitude of civil servants to domestic helpers in south-west Nigeria. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents were females and they were more involved in engaging in the services of domestic helpers. Furthermore, these domestic helpers were employed based on the need to perform certain duties which would be difficult to combine with the respondents' career.

The respondents' attitude towards domestic helper was indifferent in the sense that they seemed not to see anything wrong in employing them. Findings further showed that a significant relationship existed between level of education and keeping of domestic helpers. A large number of educated respondents might want to keep domestic helpers based on their educational status. In addition, findings showed that significant relationships existed between income levels and keeping domestic helpers. The higher the income of the respondents, the higher their tendencies of engaging the services of domestic helpers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has further revealed that the practice of child labour (Domestic helper) has been sustained primarily by the occurrence of poverty and high level of illiteracy among school-age children arising from low economic status of their parents. It follows therefore that curbing this menace would require resolving the twin issues of poverty and low level education in our society.

This paper opines that as government continues to put up measures to alleviate poverty generally, it should institutionalize the use of domestic helpers. One way or doing this is by making those using domestic helpers to register with the government and put in place appropriate sanctions against defaulters. This will enable appropriate government agencies to monitor the environment of work of the helpers. It is obvious that the domestic helpers are exposed to grave abuses and labour exploitation which include excessive working hours with little or no rest. They also suffer non-payment of wages, forced confinement, physical and sexual abuse and forced labour. Such census of users of domestic helpers will make it possible for government to ensure a conducive work environment for the helpers.

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