INVESTIGATION OF THE DETERMINANTS OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST DOMESTIC WORKERS IN BUHIGWE, KIGOMA REGION

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

2025

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certify that they have read this dissertation and hereby recommend for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania, this dissertation titled: **"Investigation of the Determinants of the Domestic Violence against Domestic Workers in Buhigwe, Kigoma Region",** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work of the Open University of Tanzania.

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I, **Mhadham Adam Miyonga,** declare that the work presented in this dissertation is original. It has never been presented to any other University or Institution. Where other people's works have been used, references have been provided. It is in this regard that I declare this work as originally mine. It is hereby presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work of the Open University of Tanzania.

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Signature

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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work, first and foremost, to God Almighty, whose boundless grace, strength, and wisdom have guided me through this academic journey. Without His divine favor, this accomplishment would not have been possible. To my beloved family, my wife and children, whose unwavering love, patience, and sacrifices have been my most significant source of motivation. Their support and understanding during the long hours of study and research have been invaluable, and I am forever grateful. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my employer, the Ministry of Home Affairs, for providing me with the opportunity and support to pursue this academic endeavor. Their commitment to professional growth and development has been instrumental in making this achievement possible. May this work serve as a testament to the power of faith, dedication, and the support of loved ones and institutions that believe in pursuing knowledge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I sincerely thank God Almighty for granting me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to complete this dissertation. His grace has been my guiding light throughout this academic journey.

I sincerely appreciate my supervisors, Dr. Betty Mntambo and Dr. Straton Ruhinda, for their invaluable guidance, unwavering support, and insightful feedback. Their expertise and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping this study, and I am truly grateful for their dedication.

A special word of thanks goes to my beloved wife, Mrs. Salma James Luhaga, and my children, Sumaiya Mhadham, Aidath Mhadham, Gaddafi Mhadham, and Adam Mhadham, who have endured my absence and supported me wholeheartedly during the entire period of this study. Their patience, love, and encouragement have motivated me, and I sincerely appreciate their sacrifices.

Lastly, I am grateful to the Open University of Tanzania and the Government for providing the necessary authorization and facilitation to conduct this research. Their support has been crucial in making this study a reality.

ABSTRACT

Domestic violence against domestic workers remains a critical social issue in Tanzania, particularly in rural-urban transitioning districts like Buhigwe, Kigoma. This study investigates the key determinants of domestic violence against domestic workers, focusing on socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors shaping their vulnerability. Using a qualitative research approach and a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with domestic workers, employers, and institutional stakeholders. The study adopts the Social Ecological Model to analyze the interplay of individual, relational, community, and societal factors influencing domestic violence. Findings indicate that rapid urbanization and shifting household structures have increased the demand for domestic workers. Economic hardship forces many young women into domestic labor, often without contracts or formal safeguards, making them susceptible to abuse. Additionally, the study reveals weaknesses in community-based reporting mechanisms, as domestic workers often fear retaliation and lack confidence in institutional responses. The study recommends policy reforms to strengthen labor protections, enhance enforcement mechanisms, and promote awareness campaigns to challenge harmful cultural attitudes. By addressing these structural challenges, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to create a safer and more equitable working environment for domestic workers in Tanzania.

Keywords: *Urbanization, Domestic Violence, Domestic Workers, Power Dynamics, Employer and community-based reporting mechanisms.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FGDs   -   Focus group discussions

ILO   -   International Labour Organization

NBS   -   National Bureau of Statistics

NGOs   -   Non-governmental Organizations

SEM   -   Social Ecological Model

UN   -   United Nations

URT   -   The United Republic of Tanzania

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Domestic violence against domestic workers is a growing concern in many parts of Tanzania, particularly in rural areas where socio-economic transformations are reshaping traditional labor dynamics. In Buhigwe District, Kigoma, increasing urbanization and changing household structures have increased the demand for domestic workers. However, these workers, often young women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, face heightened risks of exploitation and abuse. This study examines the key determinants of domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe, exploring the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that contribute to this issue. The findings provide insights to inform policy interventions and strengthen protections for domestic workers in the district and beyond.

1.2 Background to the Problem

Domestic violence against domestic workers is a pervasive issue that spans global, regional, and local levels, reflecting entrenched socio-economic and cultural inequalities. Globally, domestic workers constitute a significant portion of the informal labor sector, yet they face persistent exploitation and abuse due to their marginalized status. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021) estimates that over 75 million domestic workers worldwide, mostly women and girls. These workers often endure verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, frequently exacerbated by their exclusion from standard labor protections. Inadequate legal frameworks and weak enforcement mechanisms leave them vulnerable to exploitation, especially in

regions where cultural norms and systemic gender inequalities prevail. For example, Wright et al. (2017) identify power imbalances in employer-employee relationships as a root cause of abuse, compounded by socio-economic dependency and a lack of awareness about workers' rights. These global dynamics demand attention to localized interventions tailored to specific socio-cultural contexts.

In Africa, the issue of domestic worker exploitation is deeply rooted in historical and cultural contexts. Domestic workers, often women from low-income backgrounds, provide essential household services but are seldom afforded dignity, fair compensation, or legal protection. A study by Kamanga et al. (2023) highlights how urbanization across the continent has created a surge in demand for domestic workers while eroding traditional communal values that once offered informal protection. Rapid urbanization and economic inequality have amplified vulnerabilities, particularly for female domestic workers who navigate systemic discrimination and abuse. In East Africa, as noted by Lwanga-Ntale (2018), cultural norms and patriarchal attitudes often justify and normalize mistreatment, further marginalizing this group. These trends underline the necessity of strengthening regional policies and advocacy campaigns to safeguard domestic workers' rights.

In Tanzania, domestic workers are a crucial component of the informal labor force, supporting urban and rural households. Despite their contributions, they remain among the most vulnerable groups in the workforce. The United Republic of Tanzania (URT, 2020) reports that domestic work is characterized by informal agreements, lack of written contracts, and limited access to legal recourse, making

workers susceptible to exploitation. The rising incidence of domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District, Kigoma, reflects a significant social challenge shaped by urbanization and socio-economic transformations. Historically, Buhigwe was a predominantly rural area with limited infrastructure and low levels of internal migration. Domestic work, often associated with urban settings, was relatively uncommon, and instances of violence against domestic workers were rare due to the close-knit, communal nature of rural life, where social norms strongly discouraged mistreatment (Mwamfupe, 2017).

However, establishing Buhigwe as a district in 2012 has accelerated urbanization, attracting individuals from various parts of Tanzania seeking employment and economic opportunities, leading to population growth and socio-economic shifts (URT, 2020). According to the 2022 Population and Housing Census, Buhigwe's population grew by over 15% compared to the 2012 Census, reflecting increased internal migration and demographic changes (NBS, 2022). This influx has significantly altered the social fabric, increasing the demand for domestic workers as families adopt urban lifestyles. Urbanization has also introduced socio-economic complexities, including the erosion of traditional communal values that once protected vulnerable groups (Moyo & Mususa, 2022).

Reports from the Buhigwe District Social Welfare Office indicate a sharp rise in the number of domestic workers and cases of violence against them. In 2015, only five cases of domestic violence involving domestic workers were reported. By 2023, this number had surged to 48, representing a nearly tenfold increase over eight years

(Buhigwe District Council, 2023). These statistics highlight a growing social problem in a district grappling with urbanization-related changes. Such trends corroborate studies that link urbanization to weakened social cohesion and heightened socio-economic inequalities, factors that exacerbate the exploitation of domestic workers (ILO, 2021; Kamanga et al., 2023).

Most domestic workers in Buhigwe are young women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who lack formal contracts, legal protections, or union representation, making them easy targets for abuse. As urbanization advances, this issue has intensified, with workers facing verbal, physical, and even sexual abuse, often in environments where reporting mechanisms are inadequate or absent (ILO, 2021).

The significant rise in both the number of domestic workers and incidents of violence against them necessitates an urgent investigation into the socio-economic, cultural, and policy-related factors contributing to this trend. Understanding these dynamics is essential for creating effective interventions to protect domestic workers' rights and ensure equitable development as Buhigwe transitions from a rural to an urban setting.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The increasing prevalence of domestic violence against domestic workers in the Buhigwe District, located in the Kigoma Region, represents a critical yet underexplored social issue. Historically, as a rural area, Buhigwe has undergone significant socio-economic transformations following its designation as a district in

2012. This development has attracted internal migrants seeking employment opportunities, contributing to urbanization and an increased demand for domestic workers (URT, 2020). However, this shift has also exposed domestic workers primarily young women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to heightened risks of abuse and exploitation.

Existing studies on domestic violence in Tanzania predominantly focus on intimate partner violence and family-based abuse (Lwanga-Ntale, 2018; Mollel & Chong, 2021), with little attention paid to the specific vulnerabilities of domestic workers, particularly in rural or semi-urban settings experiencing urbanization. Reports from the Buhigwe District Social Welfare Office indicate a rise in domestic violence cases involving domestic workers, from five reported incidents in 2015 to 48 in 2023, reflecting an alarming trend (Buhigwe District Council, 2023). Studies suggest socioeconomic inequalities, power imbalances, and weak legal protections exacerbate domestic workers' vulnerability (ILO, 2021; Moyo & Mususa, 2022).

However, localized insights on how these factors manifest in newly urbanizing districts like Buhigwe remain limited. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the determinants of domestic violence against domestic workers in the Buhigwe District. By examining the interplay between urbanization, socio-economic disparities, and cultural norms, the research aims to provide evidence-based insights to inform policy interventions and advocacy efforts to enhance the protection of domestic workers in Tanzania.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 Main Objective

Investigating the factors contributing to the rising prevalence of domestic violence against domestic workers

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

i. To examine the socio-economic changes influencing the demand for domestic workers

ii. To explore the role of power imbalances in contributing to domestic violence against domestic workers

iii. To assess the effectiveness of community-based reporting mechanisms in addressing domestic violence against domestic workers.

1.5 Research Questions

i. What are the key socio-economic factors driving the increasing demand for domestic workers in Buhigwe District?

ii. How do power dynamics between employers and domestic workers contribute to domestic violence in Buhigwe District?

iii. How effective are community-based reporting mechanisms in addressing domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significance at multiple levels theoretical, methodological, practical, and policy-related particularly within the context of Tanzania's rural-urban transition

and the socio-economic dynamics shaping the experiences of domestic workers. Theoretically, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on domestic violence by applying the Social Ecological Model (SEM) to understand how individual, relational, community, and societal factors interact to influence domestic violence against domestic workers. While most existing literature in Tanzania has focused on intimate partner violence or gender-based violence in general, this study provides a nuanced and layered understanding of how macro and micro factors intersect to expose domestic workers to abuse. It expands the application of SEM within the context of informal labor and gendered power relations in newly urbanizing settings.

Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative research approach using a case study design, thereby offering rich, contextualized insights that quantitative methods may overlook. By utilizing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with domestic workers, employers, and institutional actors, the study captures the lived experiences and complex social realities of participants. This contributes to methodological innovation in social work research on marginalized populations and enhances the visibility of voices often excluded from policy discourse.

Practically, the findings have implications for grassroots-level interventions aimed at preventing violence against domestic workers. The study documents community perceptions, institutional barriers, and challenges in reporting abuse, providing an evidence base for designing more responsive community-based mechanisms. It identifies gaps in awareness, enforcement, and support services that hinder access to

justice for domestic workers. Policy-wise, the study offers timely recommendations that can inform national and local policies on labor rights, urban planning, and gender-based violence prevention. As Buhigwe District continues to experience urbanization, there is a pressing need for regulatory frameworks to address the vulnerabilities of informal workers, particularly women. The study's recommendations may assist in the formulation of targeted interventions, training programs for employers, and community awareness campaigns.

Finally, the study contributes to social work practice and advocacy by foregrounding the systemic and structural determinants of domestic violence in informal labor settings. It serves as a foundation for future research and programmatic interventions in Tanzania and similar socio-economic contexts, making it a critical scholarly and practical resource.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature, focusing on domestic work, domestic violence, and urbanization. It explores a theoretical framework and empirical studies and identifies gaps in knowledge that this study seeks to address.

2.2 Conceptualization of Terms

2.2.1 Domestic Workers

Domestic workers are individuals employed in private households for cleaning, cooking, childcare, and elderly care (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). They are often part of the informal labor sector and face precarious working conditions, including low wages, lack of legal protections, and exposure to abuse (Kamanga et al., 2023). In the context of the Buhigwe District, domestic workers are predominantly young women from low-income backgrounds who migrate in search of employment opportunities. Their economic vulnerability and the absence of formal contracts make them susceptible to various forms of domestic violence.

2.2.2 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence refers to any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or economic abuse occurring within a household, often perpetrated by a family member or employer (United Nations Women [UN Women], 2020). While most research on domestic violence focuses on intimate partner violence, domestic workers also

experience mistreatment, including verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual harassment, and economic exploitation (Lwanga-Ntale, 2018). In the Buhigwe District, rapid urbanization and socioeconomic shifts have intensified power imbalances between domestic workers and their employers, increasing the risk of abuse.

2.2.3 Urbanization

Urbanization transforms rural areas into urban centers, characterized by population growth, economic expansion, and infrastructure development (Mwamfupe, 2017). This transformation alters social structures, often increasing demand for domestic labor while eroding traditional community-based worker protections. In Buhigwe District, urbanization has led to a surge in the employment of domestic workers. However, it has also introduced new challenges, including weakened social support systems and heightened vulnerability to exploitation (Moyo & Mususa, 2022).

2.2.4 Power Dynamics

Power dynamics refer to how authority, control, and influence are distributed within relationships, often creating hierarchies that determine access to resources and decision-making (Wright et al., 2017). Employers hold significant power over domestic workers due to economic dependency, lack of legal protections, and societal attitudes normalizing exploitation (ILO, 2021). In Buhigwe, domestic workers frequently experience coercion, restrictions on movement, and fear of retaliation, which discourage them from reporting abuse.

2.2.5 Community-based Reporting Mechanisms

Community-based reporting mechanisms are local structures designed to help individuals report abuse and access support services, including mediation, counseling, and legal assistance (Kamanga et al., 2023). These mechanisms often involve community leaders, social workers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and legal aid services. In Buhigwe District, the effectiveness of such mechanisms remains unclear, as domestic workers may face barriers such as stigma, fear of job loss, and lack of awareness about available support systems (Mwamfupe, 2017). Understanding how these mechanisms function in Buhigwe is crucial for developing strategies to improve protections for domestic workers.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study employs the Social Ecological Model (SEM) as its guiding theoretical framework to explore the determinants of domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District. Originally developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), the SEM has since been widely applied in social work and public health research for its emphasis on the interdependence between individuals and their environments. It enables researchers to analyze how individual behavior is shaped not only by personal attributes but also by relational, community, and societal-level influences. Given the multifaceted nature of domestic violence, the SEM provides a comprehensive structure to examine the intersecting forces that contribute to the vulnerability of domestic workers in a rapidly urbanizing context. The Social Ecological Model is particularly well-suited for this study because it allows for a holistic examination of domestic violence as a phenomenon that exists within and

across multiple layers of influence. In Buhigwe, domestic workers often face abuse not merely as isolated incidents but as outcomes of broader systemic factors such as gender inequality, power imbalances, cultural norms, economic deprivation, and weak legal protections. SEM provides the analytical flexibility to explore these interconnected dimensions, which aligns with the core principles of social work namely, understanding individuals within the context of their social environments and promoting systemic change.

A key strength of the SEM lies in its ability to offer a broad and layered perspective on social problems. It accommodates the complexity of domestic violence by recognizing that it is influenced by factors at various levels: individual characteristics such as age or education, interpersonal relationships like employer-employee dynamics, community attributes including social norms, and wider societal structures such as labor policies and cultural ideologies. Furthermore, its interdisciplinary applicability makes it a robust and widely validated tool for analyzing gender-based violence and informal labor conditions.

However, the SEM is not without its limitations. One of the main critiques is that it tends to be more descriptive than predictive. While it is effective at identifying the range of factors that influence behavior, it does not always specify the causal mechanisms through which these factors interact. This limits its utility when seeking to establish direct cause-and-effect relationships. Additionally, the model's broadness can sometimes lead to conceptual vagueness or the risk of oversimplifying complex issues, especially those rooted in deep-seated structural inequalities.

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Implementing SEM in real-world interventions can also be challenging, particularly in low-resource settings like Buhigwe, where institutional capacity and infrastructure for comprehensive interventions may be limited.

Despite these limitations, the Social Ecological Model remains an appropriate and effective theoretical framework for this study. The nature of domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe demands a multi-level analytical approach, and SEM offers precisely that. It provides a lens through which the interplay of individual vulnerabilities, relational power dynamics, community structures, and broader societal forces can be critically examined. While other theories, such as Rational Choice Theory or Feminist Conflict Theory, may illuminate specific aspects of the issue, SEM allows for a more integrative and contextualized analysis that captures the full complexity of the problem.

In conclusion, the decision to adopt the Social Ecological Model is grounded in its ability to bridge micro and macro perspectives and offer a structured yet flexible framework for understanding domestic violence in transitional societies. Although it presents certain challenges, its strengths in guiding multi-layered inquiry and informing holistic interventions justify its use in this study. As such, SEM not only supports the research objectives but also contributes meaningfully to the broader discourse on social protection, gender justice, and informal labor in Tanzania.

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

The empirical literature related to the study of domestic violence against domestic workers in rural-urban transitioning areas like Buhigwe District highlights the socio-

economic factors, structural dynamics, and institutional frameworks contributing to the rise in abuse. This section examines the relevant studies aligned with the study's specific objectives, focusing on the socio-economic changes influencing the demand for domestic workers, the structural factors leading to domestic violence, and the effectiveness of institutional frameworks in addressing these issues.

2.4.1 Socio-Economic Changes and Increasing Demand for Domestic Workers

Several studies have shown that socio-economic changes in rural areas undergoing urbanization increase demand for domestic workers. Tung (2014) argues that rapid urbanization, particularly in regions like Buhigwe, often creates new job opportunities in the informal economy, including domestic work. As urbanization progresses, there is a growing need for domestic labor to support the expanding middle class, often at the cost of domestic workers' rights and protections. According to Kihato and Madzwamuse (2014), the rise in urbanization leads to a higher demand for domestic workers due to increased economic activity and household complexities, such as working parents and the need for household management. This phenomenon is evident in rural-urban transition areas like Buhigwe, where in-migration and the availability of informal work opportunities have resulted in more people seeking employment as domestic workers, including both local and migrant populations.

In Buhigwe, the district's recent transformation from a rural to an urbanized setting is likely contributing to the growing demand for domestic workers. Magoha and Akimbom (2019) noted that such transitions often increase population density,

resulting in a larger pool of potential domestic workers and employers. However, while the demand for labor grows, the lack of formalization in employment relationships leaves domestic workers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. As the demand for labor increases in this urbanizing district, the need to understand the socio-economic drivers of this shift becomes more pressing.

2.4.2 Imbalances and Domestic Violence against Domestic Workers

Power imbalances are a significant factor contributing to domestic violence against domestic workers, particularly in rural and urbanizing contexts like Buhigwe District. These imbalances stem from structural inequalities embedded in socio-economic, cultural, and institutional frameworks. Wright et al. (2017) highlight that domestic workers often find themselves in highly unequal relationships with their employers, characterized by dependency and a lack of legal protections. The informal nature of domestic work exacerbates this dependency, as many workers lack written contracts and access to mechanisms for redress. Such vulnerabilities allow employers to wield disproportionate control, fostering environments where abuse may flourish.

In rural-urban transitioning areas like Buhigwe, urbanization exacerbates these dynamics. According to Tung (2014), rapid urbanization leads to a growing demand for domestic labor, which increases the exploitation of workers, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. In these contexts, domestic workers, often women and girls, are subjected to verbal, physical, and emotional abuse due to their subordinate position within households. These abuses are usually justified by cultural

norms reinforcing hierarchical relationships between employers and workers, as Gogoi and Roy (2020) observed in similar contexts. Furthermore, gendered power dynamics play a critical role in perpetuating domestic violence. Lloyd (2019) notes that patriarchal attitudes, deeply ingrained in many societies, normalize the mistreatment of domestic workers, who are predominantly women. This normalization often leads to the trivialization of their experiences and the minimization of accountability for abusive employers. The lack of social and legal recognition of domestic workers' rights compounds their vulnerability.

Kabeer (2000) underscores that socio-economic dependency further entrenches these power imbalances, as domestic workers often lack alternative employment opportunities. This dependency discourages them from reporting abuse or seeking justice, thereby perpetuating cycles of violence. Addressing these imbalances requires interventions prioritizing domestic workers' empowerment through education, awareness, and robust legal protections.

In summary, power imbalances fueled by socio-economic dependency, cultural norms, and inadequate legal safeguards significantly contribute to domestic violence against domestic workers. Addressing these challenges requires a complex approach to empower workers and mitigate systemic inequalities.

2.4.3 Effectiveness of Community-Based Reporting Mechanisms in Addressing Domestic Violence

Community-based reporting mechanisms play a critical role in addressing domestic violence against domestic workers, particularly in areas where institutional

frameworks are underdeveloped or inaccessible. These mechanisms often rely on local networks, including community leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots groups, to provide victims with avenues to report abuse and seek support. Wright et al. (2017) emphasize that such systems are vital in informal labor sectors like domestic work, where formal legal protections are often inadequate or poorly enforced.

In rural and urbanizing areas like Buhigwe District, integrating community-based mechanisms can bridge gaps created by the absence of robust institutional frameworks. According to UN Women (2020), these mechanisms are more accessible to domestic workers due to their localized nature, enabling timely intervention and support. However, their effectiveness depends on factors such as the availability of resources, the level of community awareness, and the commitment of local stakeholders to addressing domestic violence. Mwamfupe (2017) notes that urbanization can introduce new forms of exploitation, underscoring the need for community-based mechanisms to adapt to changing social dynamics.

Kihato and Madzwamuse (2014) argue that while community-based mechanisms can be effective, they often face challenges such as limited funding, lack of training for community leaders, and cultural norms that discourage reporting. For example, in patriarchal societies, domestic violence may be seen as a private matter, and victims may fear retaliation or stigma if they come forward. To address these barriers, successful mechanisms often incorporate awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts to shift societal attitudes and encourage reporting. Studies by Gogoi and Roy (2020)

further emphasize the importance of community-led initiatives in empowering victims, particularly in marginalized communities. Additionally, collaboration between community-based mechanisms and formal institutions can enhance their effectiveness. Lloyd (2019) highlights that partnerships between grassroots organizations and local governments can provide victims access to legal and psychosocial support, thereby improving outcomes. Kamanga et al. (2023) add that such collaborations can also help address systemic challenges, such as underreporting and weak enforcement of protective laws. In Buhigwe, where urbanization introduces new challenges, leveraging these partnerships can ensure domestic workers receive comprehensive protection.

In conclusion, community-based reporting mechanisms offer valuable solutions for addressing domestic violence against domestic workers. Their effectiveness, however, hinges on adequate resources, societal support, and integration with broader institutional frameworks. Strengthening these mechanisms in areas like Buhigwe requires targeted investments, sustained efforts to promote a culture of accountability, and partnerships that align community-based efforts with formal legal systems.

2.5 Research Gap

Despite increasing attention to domestic violence, there is still a significant gap in understanding the specific factors affecting domestic workers, particularly in rural-urban transitioning areas like Buhigwe District. Most existing studies focus on intimate partner violence or general household abuse, often neglecting the unique

vulnerabilities of domestic workers within employer-employee relationships (Wright et al., 2017; Lloyd, 2019). While socio-economic changes are recognized as key drivers of the demand for domestic labor, limited research has explored how these changes affect the conditions and treatment of domestic workers, particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas (Mwamfupe, 2017).

The power imbalances in domestic work are also underexplored. While unequal power dynamics in employer-employee relationships are acknowledged, there is a lack of localized analysis of how these dynamics play out in rural districts undergoing socio-economic transformation like Buhigwe (Gogoi & Roy, 2020). Moreover, studies rarely address the intersection of gender, socio-economic dependency, and cultural norms, which together perpetuate cycles of abuse against domestic workers.

While community-based reporting mechanisms are recognized as vital for addressing domestic violence, there is limited empirical research on their effectiveness in protecting domestic workers. Most studies focus on formal institutional frameworks, often overlooking grassroots efforts in under-resourced and transitioning areas (Kamanga et al., 2023; UN Women, 2020). Additionally, the challenges posed by urbanization, such as weakened social cohesion and increased anonymity, are rarely examined in these reporting mechanisms.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by investigating the socioeconomic factors driving the demand for domestic workers, exploring power imbalances in domestic violence,

and assessing the effectiveness of community-based reporting mechanisms in the Buhigwe District. The findings will offer localized insights to inform targeted interventions and contribute to broader discussions on the rights and protections of domestic workers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the research methodology, including the research design, study area, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and analytical approaches.

3.2 Research Strategies

3.2.1 Philosophy

This study adopted an interpretivist philosophy, emphasizing understanding individuals' subjective experiences and social realities (Creswell, 2014). By exploring domestic workers' experiences in Buhigwe, interpretivism enabled a nuanced analysis of their lived realities amidst urbanization.

3.2.2 Research Design

This study employed a case study design, ideal for exploring complex social issues within a specific context (Creswell, 2014). The design facilitated a detailed investigation of domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District, a region experiencing rapid urbanization. The case study approach provided comprehensive insights into diverse perspectives and contextual dynamics by incorporating multiple data collection methods, such as interviews and focus group discussions. It was particularly suited for addressing "how" and "why" questions, offering a deeper understanding of the socio-economic and structural factors influencing domestic violence and the effectiveness of institutional frameworks in this transitioning rural-urban area.

3.2.3 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, which was well-suited for exploring individuals' subjective experiences and social realities within their specific contexts (Bryman, 2021). A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to delve deeply into the perspectives of domestic workers, employers, and institutional representatives in the Buhigwe District to understand the factors contributing to domestic violence amidst the region's rapid urbanization.

The qualitative approach was justified by its ability to provide rich, detailed data that captured the complexities and dynamics of socio-economic and structural influences on domestic violence (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Unlike quantitative methods, which prioritize numerical data and generalizability, qualitative research focuses on uncovering meanings, processes, and relationships, making it ideal for investigating "how" and "why" questions central to this study. Furthermore, the approach allowed flexibility in exploring emerging themes and patterns that may not have been anticipated initially, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

3.2.4 Study Area

Buhigwe District was uniquely suited for this study due to its transitional status from a predominantly rural area to a rapidly urbanizing region, driven by its recent establishment as a district (URT, 2021). Creating new administrative districts often spurs socio-economic and demographic changes, including increased infrastructure development, improved accessibility, and migration, as people seek economic

opportunities (World Bank, 2022). Buhigwe experienced these trends with a growing influx of diverse populations from various parts of Tanzania. This migration led to a rising demand for domestic labor and introduced urban-related challenges such as domestic violence, which were less prevalent in its previously rural context (NBS, 2022).

Buhigwe's strategic location as a border district with significant cross-border trade and migration added another layer to its rapid urbanization (IOM, 2023). This positioning amplified its urbanization trajectory, distinguishing it from other Kigoma districts, either predominantly rural or already urbanized with more established institutional frameworks. Buhigwe's unique socio-economic changes made it an ideal setting for examining how urbanization influences domestic work and violence.

Moreover, recent local government reports revealed a sharp rise in cases of domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe, aligning with the socio-economic transformation of the district (Buhigwe District Council, 2023). Previously, the rural nature of Buhigwe contributed to a lower incidence of domestic work and associated violence. However, urbanization triggered new challenges, making exploring the factors behind these trends crucial. By focusing on Buhigwe, this study addressed a localized issue and contributed to understanding broader patterns in other emerging urban areas in Tanzania. The findings could guide interventions in similar districts undergoing rural-urban transitions, enhancing their relevance beyond Buhigwe (UN-Habitat, 2022). This context underscored the importance of selecting Buhigwe as the study area for this research.

3.2.5 Sampling Procedures

This study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that allowed the researcher to intentionally select participants most knowledgeable and relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Purposive sampling was particularly suitable for this study as it focused on exploring the unique experiences and perspectives of domestic workers, employers, and key institutional representatives in the Buhigwe District. This approach ensured that the selected participants had direct experience or insight into the socio-economic changes, structural factors, and institutional frameworks related to domestic violence in the context of urbanization.

The sampling process targeted domestic workers, given their firsthand experiences of employment conditions and potential domestic violence. Employers were also included to provide perspectives on hiring practices and interactions with domestic workers. Additionally, institutional representatives, such as local government officials, social workers, and civil society actors, were sampled to assess the effectiveness of policies and frameworks addressing domestic violence. The diversity of these groups ensured a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015). The qualitative nature of the research, which prioritized depth of understanding over generalizability, further justified the decision to use purposive sampling.

As Palinkas et al. (2015) argued, purposive sampling effectively accessed participants who could provide rich, detailed data about complex social issues. This

method was particularly advantageous in contexts like Buhigwe, where urbanization and its impacts on domestic work were still emerging, necessitating the involvement of individuals with specific knowledge of these dynamics. By selecting participants based on their relevance and expertise, purposive sampling enabled the study to generate meaningful insights into the socio-economic and structural factors influencing domestic violence against domestic workers and the institutional responses to these challenges.

3.2.6 Study Population

The population for this study included domestic workers, their employers, and institutional stakeholders in the Buhigwe District. Domestic workers represented the primary focus group, as they were directly impacted by domestic violence and were uniquely positioned to provide insights into their lived experiences, working conditions, and the socio-economic factors shaping their employment. Employers were another critical segment of the population, as their practices, attitudes, and interactions with domestic workers influenced the dynamics of domestic labor and potential occurrences of violence.

Institutional stakeholders included local government officials, social workers, law enforcement officers, and representatives of civil society organizations operating in the Buhigwe District. These individuals were integral to understanding the structural and policy-related factors contributing to domestic violence and assessing the effectiveness of institutional frameworks designed to address it. The selection of this population was grounded in Buhigwe's rapid urbanization, which led to increased

demand for domestic workers and heightened instances of domestic violence. By encompassing this diverse population, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive picture of the interplay between socioeconomic changes, domestic work, and institutional responses within the district. This population also reflected the multi-stakeholder nature of the issue, aligning with the study's objectives to explore the factors driving domestic violence and evaluate the adequacy of interventions in the context of urbanization.

3.2.7 Inclusion Criteria

The study focused on domestic workers aged 18 years and above currently employed in domestic settings within the Buhigwe District, ensuring the inclusion of the primary interest group. Additionally, the study included employers of domestic workers in the district to gain insight into factors driving the increasing demand for domestic workers and potential contributing factors to domestic violence. Key informants, such as representatives from local institutions, including social services, law enforcement, and NGOs, were also included to provide expert perspectives on the impact of urbanization and the effectiveness of institutional frameworks in addressing domestic violence. All participants had to provide voluntary informed consent to ensure ethical compliance and participant understanding of their rights in the research process.

3.2.8 Exclusion Criteria

The study excluded individuals under 18 who were considered minors and could not legally provide informed consent for participation. Furthermore, individuals who

were not currently employed as domestic workers or did not employ domestic workers in the Buhigwe District were excluded, as their experiences and perspectives were irrelevant to the study's focus. Any participants who declined to provide informed consent or withdrew from the study at any point were also excluded to maintain ethical integrity and ensure that the data collected aligned with the study's objectives. These exclusions helped maintain a clear focus on the research population and enhanced the study's validity.

3.3 Sample Size

The study employed a small, focused sample size of approximately 30-40 participants, reflecting the qualitative nature of the research. This sample included 10-15 domestic workers, 10-12 employers, and 10-12 institutional stakeholders (local government officials, social workers, and civil society representatives) in Buhigwe District. The choice of sample size was informed by the principle of saturation, which suggested that data collection could cease when no new themes or insights emerged (Guest et al., 2013). This approach ensured that the study captured a variety of perspectives while remaining manageable for in-depth analysis.

The use of a purposive sampling technique ensured that participants were selected for their relevant knowledge and experience, allowing the study to explore specific issues related to domestic violence against domestic workers in the context of urbanization (Palinkas et al., 2015). The small sample size was justified as it prioritized depth over generalizability, enabling the researcher to gather detailed insights into the socio-economic, structural, and institutional factors contributing to

domestic violence. This targeted sampling approach was well-suited to the study's objectives and context, ensuring the findings were rich, context-specific, and meaningful.

3.4 Data Collection

The data for this study were collected using qualitative methods, primarily through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), as these methods were well-suited for exploring participants' experiences and perceptions in depth. The aim was to gather rich, detailed data on the socio-economic changes, structural factors, and institutional frameworks influencing domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District.

3.4.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with domestic workers, employers, and institutional stakeholders. This method allowed for flexibility in questioning, ensuring that participants could express their views freely while also addressing specific research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews were guided by an interview schedule developed based on the study's goals, but participants were encouraged to share their experiences and insights in their own words. Interviews with domestic workers focused on their employment conditions, experiences of violence or exploitation, and perceptions of socio-economic changes in the district. Employers' interviews explored their attitudes toward domestic work, hiring practices, and any encounters with domestic violence. Interviews with institutional stakeholders assessed their roles in addressing domestic violence and the effectiveness of existing policies and frameworks.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

In addition to individual interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) were organized with groups of domestic workers, employers, and local stakeholders. FGDs allowed participants to engage with one another and share diverse perspectives on the issues being studied (Bloor et al., 2001). The discussions explored common themes such as the impact of urbanization on domestic work, the structural causes of domestic violence, and institutional responses. The use of FGDs helped uncover group dynamics and provided a broader understanding of community-wide perceptions of domestic violence and the role of domestic workers in Buhigwe.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. This method was chosen because it provides a systematic approach to organizing and interpreting qualitative data while allowing for the flexibility to capture the complexity of participants' experiences and perspectives. The thematic analysis enabled the identification of key themes related to the determinants of domestic violence against domestic workers, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors influencing this issue. NVivo software further facilitated the process by providing an efficient means of coding, retrieving, and visualizing data patterns, enhancing the rigor of the analysis.

Thematic analysis followed the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), beginning with familiarizing the data. In this phase, all recorded interviews

and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. The researcher read the transcripts multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the data and made preliminary notes on recurring patterns. Following familiarization, the process of generating initial codes commenced. This involved systematically assigning labels to segments of text that contained meaningful information related to the research objectives. NVivo software was employed to manage and organize the data, ensuring consistency in coding and reducing the risk of researcher bias.

After coding, the next step involved searching for themes by grouping related codes into broader categories that reflected significant patterns in the data. These themes were reviewed iteratively to ensure coherence and alignment with the study objectives. Some themes were merged where overlaps were identified, while others were refined to capture distinct aspects of domestic violence against domestic workers. Defining and naming themes followed, giving each theme a clear and descriptive label encapsulating its essence. This stage ensured that themes accurately represented the data and provided meaningful insights into the research problem.

The final phase of thematic analysis involved producing the report, where the identified themes were synthesized into a coherent narrative. To enhance the credibility of the findings, direct quotations from participants were integrated to illustrate each theme and provide depth to the analysis. NVivo software facilitated this process, efficiently retrieving coded data and visualizing connections between themes. The systematic approach to data analysis ensured that the study's findings were grounded in empirical evidence and contributed to a deeper understanding of

domestic violence against domestic workers. By employing thematic analysis and NVivo software, this study ensured a rigorous, transparent, and credible qualitative data analysis. Integrating participant perspectives with theoretical frameworks strengthened the study's contributions to social work research and policy development. This methodological approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that shape the experiences of domestic workers, providing valuable insights that can inform policy interventions and advocacy efforts.

3.6 Qualitative Rigor

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of this qualitative study, the research process was guided by the four key criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These dimensions collectively enhance the authenticity, transparency, and robustness of the findings, which are essential in qualitative inquiry. Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the data and the interpretations derived from it. To enhance credibility, the researcher employed *member checking*, whereby selected participants were asked to review and verify the accuracy of their interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations. This allowed participants to correct any misrepresentations and to provide additional clarifications where necessary. Prolonged engagement in the field also contributed to credibility by enabling the researcher to build trust with participants, understand the context deeply, and observe non-verbal cues that enriched the data.

Transferability concerns the extent to which the study's findings can be applicable in other similar contexts. Although generalizability is not the goal of qualitative research, transferability was addressed by providing *thick descriptions* of the research context, participants' backgrounds, and the socio-economic setting of Buhigwe District. By offering detailed contextual information, readers are better positioned to determine whether the findings are relevant to other settings experiencing similar socio-economic transitions.

Dependability involves ensuring that the research process is logical, traceable, and well-documented. An *audit trail* was maintained throughout the study, documenting all research activities, including data collection methods, coding decisions, and thematic development. Peer debriefing was also conducted with academic colleagues who reviewed the methodology and emerging themes, offering critical insights and helping to reduce researcher bias. These strategies ensured that the research process could be replicated or evaluated by others.

Confirmability addresses the degree to which the findings are shaped by the participants' perspectives rather than researcher bias or assumptions. To achieve this, the researcher maintained a *reflexive journal* throughout the study to record personal reflections, ethical dilemmas, and decision-making processes. This reflexivity helped to minimize the influence of preconceptions and ensured that interpretations remained grounded in the data. Additionally, triangulation was achieved by collecting data from multiple sources domestic workers, employers, and institutional stakeholders allowing for cross-verification of emerging patterns and enhancing the objectivity of the findings.

In sum, the rigor of this qualitative study was maintained through systematic application of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These measures ensured that the study's findings are trustworthy, ethically sound, and meaningfully contribute to the understanding of domestic violence against domestic workers in the context of rural-urban transition in Tanzania.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

This study's ethical considerations were paramount to protect participants' rights, dignity, and privacy. First and foremost, the study obtained informed consent from all participants. This process involved explaining the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, the potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and were given sufficient time to ask questions before deciding whether to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To safeguard confidentiality and anonymity, the study ensured that all data collected was kept secure and identifiable information was removed during the analysis. Participants' details, such as names and addresses, were not shared or published. Instead, pseudonyms were used to protect their identities, and all data was stored in password-protected files. Additionally, the study adhered to data protection principles as outlined in ethical guidelines for social research, ensuring that data was used only for the research purpose and kept for the legally required duration before disposal (Wiles, 2013).

In recognition of the sensitive nature of the study, especially concerning domestic violence, particular attention was paid to ensuring participants' emotional well-being. During data collection, participants were reminded that they were free to skip any questions they did not wish to answer or withdraw from the interview or focus group at any time. If any participant experienced emotional distress during the study, they were referred to appropriate support services or counseling, ensuring that their mental health was not compromised.

Moreover, the study sought formal ethical clearance from governmental institutions in the Kigoma region and Buhigwe District. This process ensured that the research complied with national and institutional ethical standards. The clearance also helped to ensure that the study was conducted in a manner that respected the community's cultural norms and values, especially about sensitive issues such as domestic violence and the experiences of domestic workers. By adhering to these ethical standards, the study aimed to conduct research that respected the rights of participants, maintained integrity, and contributed meaningfully to the field of social work without compromising the well-being of those involved.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Overview

Chapter Four of this dissertation presents the findings of the study on the determinants of domestic violence against domestic workers in the Buhigwe District, Kigoma Region. As the core empirical section, it builds on the preceding chapters, particularly the research objectives, theoretical framework, and methodology, to analyze the collected data systematically. The findings are expected to provide insights into the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors contributing to domestic violence against domestic workers. They will be structured around the study's specific objectives, including the impact of socio-economic changes on domestic labor demand, power imbalances in employer-worker relationships, and the effectiveness of community-based reporting mechanisms in addressing domestic violence.

Given the study's qualitative approach, the chapter will likely employ thematic analysis, presenting key themes from interviews, focus group discussions, and other data sources. These findings will be contextualized within existing literature and theoretical perspectives, notably the Social Ecological Model, which helps understand how different environmental layers contribute to domestic violence. Moreover, the analysis will integrate participant narratives, illustrative quotes, and field observations to enhance the depth and credibility of the study's conclusions. The chapter will conclude by linking the findings to policy and practical implications, setting the stage for discussions in the subsequent chapter.

4.1.1 Socio-Economic Changes Influencing the Demand for Domestic Workers

The study findings reveal that Buhigwe District's socio-economic transformations have significantly influenced domestic worker demand. Rapid urbanization, shifting household structures, economic hardships, and the expansion of the informal labor sector have contributed to a rising dependence on domestic labor. Participants, both domestic workers and employers, pointed to increased mobility, migration patterns, and changing gender roles as key drivers shaping the labor dynamics in the district.

4.1.2 Urbanization and Migration as Drivers of Demand

One of the most prominent findings of this study is that urbanization has significantly contributed to the demand for domestic workers in the Buhigwe District. Historically, Buhigwe was predominantly rural, where families relied on traditional communal labor to manage household chores. However, the demand for domestic workers has increased with the district's infrastructural growth, economic activities, and rising population. This transformation has created new labor demands, attracting individuals seeking employment, particularly young women from surrounding rural areas. Employers, community leaders, and domestic workers acknowledged this shift, linking urbanization and migration to the changing domestic labor landscape in the district. Employers reported that as their professional responsibilities grew, they found it increasingly difficult to balance work and household chores, thus necessitating the hiring of domestic workers. One male employer observed:

> *"Before, our families were structured in a way that everyone contributed to housework. But nowadays, with businesses*

growing and more people working outside the home, we need extra hands to manage our houses." **(IDI, January 2025)**

This perspective was echoed by another employer, who highlighted how the influx of people into Buhigwe had fundamentally altered household structures:

"People are moving here from rural villages looking for opportunities. Many of these women take up domestic work because it is one of the few jobs available to them. Employers like us also find it convenient because we now have more options to hire household helpers." **(FGD, February 2025)**

The growing urban landscape of Buhigwe has been accompanied by a rise in formal and informal economic activities, creating a more structured labor market that accommodates domestic workers. Many households, which previously managed without hired help, now see domestic workers as a necessity rather than a luxury. As a result, domestic work has become one of the primary employment sectors for unskilled workers migrating from rural areas.

For many domestic workers, migration to Buhigwe is primarily motivated by economic aspirations. They view domestic work as an accessible source of income amid limited opportunities in their home villages. A young domestic worker explained her decision to move:

"I came here last year from Uvinza because my cousin told me there are more jobs in Buhigwe. Many girls from our village are now working in homes here because families need workers." **(IDI, January 2025)**

Another domestic worker added that the urbanization of Buhigwe had created more

employment avenues, even for those with little formal education:

> *"In my village, finding a job is almost impossible. Most people rely on farming, but the income is too low. Here in Buhigwe, at least we can work in houses and get paid something every month."* **(FGD, February 2025)**

Urbanization has created employment opportunities and changed the expectations

around domestic work. As one community elder noted, families that would have

traditionally relied on extended relatives for household chores now prefer hiring

domestic workers:

> *"In the past, we had strong extended family networks where relatives helped each other. But with more people moving to town and family members living apart, people now hire domestic workers instead of depending on relatives."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

This change in household dynamics has increased reliance on paid domestic labor,

reinforcing the demand for workers in the expanding district. Additionally,

urbanization has led to a shift in the socio-economic structure of Buhigwe,

influencing not just employment patterns but also housing arrangements. Many

participants mentioned that as more people move into urban settings, living

arrangements become more individualistic, necessitating household support. A

female employer explained:

> *"Life in the town is different from the village. In the village, neighbors and extended family members help each other with*

chores, but here, everyone is busy. That's why many of us hire housemaids." **(FGD, February 2025)**

The influence of urbanization on the labor market is evident in the way employers view domestic workers. Many noted that, with increasing economic opportunities, they could now afford to pay for domestic labor. One employer remarked:

> *"A few years ago, only the wealthier families hired domestic workers. But now, even middle-income families like mine can afford one because the economy is growing, and we have better incomes."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

Urbanization has also expanded the network through which domestic workers secure jobs. In rural settings, employment opportunities were largely dependent on personal connections, but in the urban environment, hiring domestic workers has become a more systematic process. A domestic worker described how she found her job:

> *"I didn't know anyone here when I arrived, but I met other girls who introduced me to their employers. Now, if someone needs a housemaid, they ask around, and we find someone."* **(IDI, February 2025)**

Another domestic worker added:

> *"Some employers now look for housemaids through social media or by asking shop owners. There are more ways to find work here than in my home village."* **(FGD, February 2025)**

These insights underscore how urbanization has increased the demand for domestic workers and changed the mechanisms through which they find employment. The findings demonstrate that urbanization and migration have played a crucial role in

shaping the demand for domestic workers in Buhigwe District. As the district continues to develop, more people are moving into the area, and traditional family structures that once provided unpaid household support are shifting toward paid domestic labor.

Economic expansion has enabled more families to afford domestic workers, while urban living arrangements have increased the necessity for such services. Domestic workers, in turn, see Buhigwe as a place of economic opportunity, migrating from rural areas in search of employment. These transformations highlight the direct link between urbanization and the expansion of the domestic labor market, a trend likely to continue as the district undergoes further economic and infrastructural development.

4.1.3 Economic Hardships and the Rise in Domestic Work

4.1.3.1 Financial Constraints and Employer Preferences

Many employers admitted that the increasing cost of living had shaped their decision to hire domestic workers. For some, employing a domestic worker was a more economical choice than investing in appliances such as washing machines or enrolling their children in daycare. A female employer explained how household budgeting influenced her decision:

> *"Life has become expensive. We cannot afford daycare services for our children, so hiring a domestic worker is the best option. It is more affordable and helps us manage our finances better."*
> **(IDI, February 2025)**

Another employer emphasized that rising utility and school fees meant households had to prioritize their expenses. Since domestic workers often accepted lower wages, many families saw them as a more practical solution. A male employer elaborated:

> *"With the increasing school fees, water bills, and food prices, we must make adjustments. A housemaid is necessary, but at least she does not cost as much as sending our child to daycare or hiring professional cleaning services."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

This sentiment was echoed by other employers who felt that financial limitations restricted their ability to outsource household tasks in formal markets. A participant in a focus group discussion explained:

> *"Some people think only rich families hire housemaids, but that is not true. Even those with modest incomes need help, and hiring a girl from the village is cheaper than paying for other services."* **(FGD, February 2025)**

The findings suggest that economic hardship does not necessarily reduce the demand for domestic workers. Instead, it restructures how employers allocate their household budgets, with domestic labor emerging as an affordable and flexible option for many families.

4.1.3.2 Economic Pressures Pushing Domestic Workers into Employment

While employers seek domestic workers as a cost-effective solution, many domestic workers themselves are driven into employment by economic necessity. The study found that many domestic workers in Buhigwe had entered the labor force due to their families' financial struggles. Many respondents said they were forced to

abandon their education to support their families. A young domestic worker recounted:

> *"My parents could not afford to keep me in school, so I had to start working. Many girls in my village are working in town because our families need financial support."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

Another domestic worker emphasized how poverty left them with limited choices:

> *"If you don't work, your family suffers. My father lost his job, and my mother is sick, so I had to look for a job to help them. I started working as a housemaid when I was 14."* (IDI February 2025)

For many young girls, domestic work was among the few available employment opportunities, especially in a district where formal job opportunities were scarce. A domestic worker in a focus group discussion noted:

> *"In my village, the only work available for young girls is housework or selling vegetables. Since housework pays a bit more, most of us choose to come to town and work in homes."* **(FGD, February 2025)**

The study findings confirm that financial instability at the household level forces many young women into domestic work at an early age. Their economic vulnerability often means they accept low wages, irregular working hours, and sometimes exploitative working conditions to survive.

4.1.3.3 Single-Parent Households and the Increased Need for Domestic Workers

The study also found that the increasing number of single-parent households had further driven the demand for domestic workers. Many single parents, particularly

single mothers, expressed the difficulty of balancing employment with household responsibilities, making hiring domestic workers necessary. A community leader noted:

> *"There are many single mothers now who have to work full-time. Without another adult at home, they have no choice but to hire someone to help with house chores and child care."* **(FGD, February 2025)**

Single parents reported that domestic workers played a crucial role in enabling them to maintain employment. One single mother stated:

> *"Without my housemaid, I don't know how I would manage. I have to work to provide for my children, and she helps me with everything at home."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

Another single mother added that even though hiring a domestic worker required financial sacrifice, it was unavoidable:

> *"Sometimes I struggle to pay her salary, but I have no choice. If I don't have help at home, I would have to quit my job, and that would be worse."* **(IDI, February 2025)**

The reliance of single parents on domestic workers indicates how economic pressures shape household employment patterns. The study suggests that as the number of single-parent households continues to rise, the demand for domestic workers will also increase, reinforcing their role as essential laborers in urbanizing communities like Buhigwe. The findings highlight that economic hardship is a significant demand driver for domestic workers in Buhigwe District. Rising living

costs and financial constraints have led many employers to view domestic labor as a more affordable alternative to modern household conveniences. At the same time, economic struggles in rural areas have pushed young women into domestic work, often as a last resort to support their families. The increasing prevalence of single-parent households has further contributed to this demand, as many single mothers find it impossible to balance work and home responsibilities without additional support. These economic dynamics underline the complex interplay between poverty, household labor, and migration patterns, reinforcing the centrality of domestic workers in the socio-economic fabric of Buhigwe. However, the financial vulnerabilities of domestic workers also expose them to potential exploitation, an issue that requires further exploration in subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.1.4 Economic Hardship as a Driver of Domestic Labor Demand

Economic hardship has emerged as a key factor influencing the rising demand for domestic workers in Buhigwe District. The findings reveal that both employers and domestic workers are affected by financial instability, albeit differently. For employers, economic constraints mean hiring a domestic worker becomes a cost-effective alternative to modern household conveniences. In contrast, for domestic workers, financial difficulties in their families often push them into employment at a young age. The rise of single-parent households has also intensified the need for domestic labor, as many parents struggle to balance work and family responsibilities. These interrelated financial pressures have made domestic work an essential yet often undervalued occupation in the district.

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This sentiment was echoed by other employers who felt that financial limitations restricted their ability to outsource household tasks in formal markets. A participant in a focus group discussion explained:

> *"Some people think only rich families hire housemaids, but that is not true. Even those with modest incomes need help, and hiring a girl from the village is cheaper than paying for other services."* (**FGD, February 2025**)

The findings suggest that economic hardship does not necessarily reduce the demand for domestic workers. Instead, it restructures how employers allocate their household budgets, with domestic labor emerging as an affordable and flexible option for many families.

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The study findings confirm that financial instability at the household level forces many young women into domestic work at an early age. Their economic vulnerability often means they accept low wages, irregular working hours, and sometimes exploitative working conditions to survive.

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The study also found that the increasing number of single-parent households had further driven the demand for domestic workers. Many single parents, particularly single mothers, expressed the difficulty of balancing employment with household responsibilities, making hiring domestic workers necessary. A community leader noted:

"There are many single mothers now who have to work full-time. Without another adult at home, they have no choice but to hire someone to help with house chores and child care." **(FGD, February 2025)**

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"Without my housemaid, I don't know how I would manage. I have to work to provide for my children, and she helps me with everything at home." **(IDI, January 2025)**

Another single mother added that even though hiring a domestic worker required financial sacrifice, it was unavoidable:

> *"Sometimes I struggle to pay her salary, but I have no choice. If I don't have help at home, I would have to quit my job, and that would be worse."***(IDI, February 2025)**

The reliance of single parents on domestic workers indicates how economic pressures shape household employment patterns. The study suggests that as the number of single-parent households continues to rise, the demand for domestic workers will also increase, reinforcing their role as essential laborers in urbanizing communities like Buhigwe. The findings highlight that economic hardship is a significant demand driver for domestic workers in Buhigwe District. Rising living costs and financial constraints have led many employers to view domestic labor as a more affordable alternative to modern household conveniences.

At the same time, economic struggles in rural areas have pushed young women into domestic work, often as a last resort to support their families. The increasing prevalence of single-parent households has further contributed to this demand, as many single mothers find it impossible to balance work and home responsibilities without additional support. These economic dynamics underline the complex interplay between poverty, household labor, and migration patterns, reinforcing the centrality of domestic workers in the socio-economic fabric of Buhigwe. However, the financial vulnerabilities of domestic workers also expose them to potential exploitation, an issue that requires further exploration in subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.1.5 Changing Gender Roles and Women's Employment

The study further found that the increasing participation of women in formal and informal employment has played a crucial role in driving demand for domestic workers. Women traditionally stayed home to perform household duties and are now engaged in various economic activities, making external household support necessary. A working mother commented:

> *"Before, women were expected to stay at home and take care of everything, but now we also have to work. We cannot do it all, so we hire housemaids to help."* **(IDI, February 2025)**

A domestic worker echoed this, emphasizing how the shift in gender roles has provided more employment opportunities for women like her:

> *"Now that more women are working in offices and businesses, we get more jobs because they need us to care for their homes and children."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

Participants also discussed how societal attitudes toward gender roles were evolving, with men becoming more accepting of hiring domestic workers to support their wives. A male participant in a focus group discussion observed:

> *"In the past, men would not allow their wives to work outside the home, but now things are changing. If my wife is working, we must hire a domestic worker to help manage things at home."*
> **(FGD, February 2025)**

These responses indicate that as more women enter the workforce, the demand for domestic workers will likely continue to rise, reinforcing the link between economic participation and shifting household labor dynamics.

4.1.6 The Role of Informal Labor Structures

The absence of formal employment opportunities for unskilled laborers has made domestic work an accessible option for many women and young girls in Buhigwe. Most domestic workers indicated entering this profession due to limited alternative employment opportunities. A respondent explained:

> *"I did not complete school, and there are no factories or offices where I can work. The only jobs available for people like me are housework or selling vegetables at the market."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

Another domestic worker added:

> *"If there were more jobs for us, we would not be doing this work. But in Buhigwe, it is easier to find work as a housemaid than anything else."* **(FGD, February 2025)**

Employers acknowledged that the informal nature of domestic work made it an attractive employment option because it required no legal formalities. One employer noted:

> *"I don't have to go through complicated procedures to hire a housemaid. If I need help, I just ask around, and someone recommends a worker."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

This finding aligns with broader labor market trends in Tanzania, where informal labor continues to absorb a significant portion of the workforce, particularly among women and youth. The findings illustrate that multiple socio-economic factors have influenced the increasing demand for domestic workers in the Buhigwe District.

Urbanization and migration have expanded the labor market, providing more employment opportunities for domestic workers, while economic hardships have driven both employers and workers to engage in domestic labor arrangements. Changing gender roles, particularly the growing participation of women in financial activities, have also contributed to this shift, as more families seek external assistance in managing household responsibilities.

Additionally, the informal nature of domestic work has made it a readily accessible employment option for women with limited formal job opportunities. As Buhigwe continues to develop, the demand for domestic workers will likely grow. However, the study highlights concern about domestic workers' vulnerabilities due to their reliance on an informal and often unregulated labor market. These findings set the stage for further exploration of power dynamics, employer-worker relationships, and mechanisms to protect domestic workers from exploitation, which will be examined in subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.2 The Role of Power Imbalances in Contributing to Domestic Violence against Domestic Workers

The study findings reveal that power imbalances are a significant factor contributing to domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District. These imbalances are shaped by economic dependency, employer authority, societal norms, and the informal nature of domestic work, leaving workers vulnerable to mistreatment. Employers often exert control over domestic workers' working conditions, wages, mobility, and even personal lives, creating an environment where

abuse can occur with little consequence. Many domestic workers interviewed expressed fear of retaliation or job loss if they spoke out against mistreatment, reinforcing the power dynamic that enables violence. This section explores the various dimensions of power imbalances that contribute to domestic violence, drawing from the voices of domestic workers, employers, and community members.

4.2.1 Economic Dependency and Vulnerability to Abuse

Economic dependency emerged as one of the most decisive factors reinforcing power imbalances and enabling domestic violence. Many domestic workers enter employment out of financial desperation, often accepting exploitative conditions because they lack alternative income sources. Several domestic workers described situations where employers used financial control to justify abusive treatment. One young domestic worker shared her experience:

> *"My employer always tells me, 'You should be grateful I gave you this job.' She shouts at me all the time and sometimes even slaps me when she's angry. But I have nowhere else to go, so I just endure it."***(IDI, January 2025)**

Another domestic worker echoed this sentiment, explaining how economic dependency prevents workers from leaving abusive households:

> *"I don't like the way I am treated, but I have younger siblings to support. If I leave this job, what will they eat? So I stay, even when I am insulted or beaten."* **(IDI, February 2025)**

On the other hand, employers admitted that they sometimes take advantage of domestic workers' financial vulnerability to impose strict working conditions. A female employer in Buhigwe noted:

> *"We know these girls need work, so we expect them to do everything without complaining. If they don't like it, they can leave but they won't, because they have no other options."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

These findings highlight how economic dependency restricts domestic workers' ability to resist mistreatment, allowing power imbalances to persist and making them susceptible to various forms of abuse.

4.2.2 Employer Authority and Control over Domestic Workers

Buhigwe employers often control domestic workers' lives, dictating their work, movements, and interactions. This control is rooted in the perception that domestic workers are subordinate and must be fully obedient. Many domestic workers reported being denied fundamental freedoms such as leaving the house, communicating with friends and family, or making independent decisions about their own time. One domestic worker described her restrictions:

> *"I am not allowed to leave the house unless my employer sends me somewhere. Even on Sundays, I must stay inside. If I try to visit a friend, she accuses me of being lazy or disrespectful."* **(IDI, February 2025)**

Another domestic worker explained how this control extended to communication:

> *"I had a mobile phone, but my employer took it away. She said I don't need it because I should be focused on my work. Now, I have no way to talk to my family."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

Such restrictions create an environment where domestic workers are isolated and unable to seek external support. A community leader in a focus group discussion acknowledged this issue:

> *"Some employers treat housemaids like prisoners. They don't let them go out, they monitor their calls, and if they complain, they threaten to fire them. This makes it easy for abuse to continue without anyone knowing."***(FGD, February 2025)**

This level of control, combined with economic dependency, creates a highly unequal relationship where domestic workers feel powerless to resist mistreatment.

4.2.3 Cultural and Gender Norms Reinforcing Abuse

Power imbalances between employers and domestic workers are further reinforced by cultural and gender norms that normalize exploitative relationships. In many Tanzanian households, domestic workers especially young girls are seen as inferior, making it socially acceptable for employers to mistreat them. These norms are deeply embedded in society, shaping how employers perceive domestic workers and justifying the mistreatment they endure.

Many participants in this study acknowledged that cultural beliefs about domestic workers being "lesser" or undeserving of dignity contribute significantly to domestic violence against them. Employers often believe that hiring a domestic worker is an act of charity, reinforcing their authority over them and making mistreatment seem acceptable. A male employer in Buhigwe rationalized the control and discipline he imposed on his housemaid:

> *"In our culture, young girls must be taught to be respectful and hardworking. If a housemaid is lazy or disobedient, it is my responsibility to correct her, even if it means punishing her."*
> (**IDI, February 2025**)

This perspective demonstrates how cultural expectations of obedience and submission place domestic workers in a vulnerable position, making them susceptible to verbal, physical, and even psychological abuse. Another employer admitted that many people in the community view housemaids as individuals who need to be disciplined rather than as workers with rights:

> *"People say that if you don't discipline your housemaid, she will become stubborn and disrespectful. So, many employers believe they have the right to be strict and even harsh."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

These attitudes are not limited to employers but are widespread within the broader community. A male participant in a focus group discussion observed that the mistreatment of domestic workers is rarely questioned because of societal assumptions about their social status:

> *"Many people believe that housemaids should be treated strictly because they come from poor backgrounds. Employers think they are doing them a favor by giving them work, so they feel entitled to treat them however they want."***(FGD, January 2025)**

The perception that domestic workers owe gratitude to their employers for providing them with jobs often discourages them from speaking out against abuse. Many workers fear their complaints will not be taken seriously, reinforcing their vulnerability. One domestic worker shared her frustration:

> *"People say that housemaids deserve to be beaten if they don't work hard enough. Even if we report abuse, no one will believe*

us because they think we are just complaining." (**IDI, February 2025)**

This widespread belief that domestic workers must endure mistreatment as part of their job conditions highlights how deeply entrenched cultural attitudes legitimize violence against them.

4.2.3.1 Gender Norms and the Devaluation of Women's Work

In addition to cultural beliefs about class and status, gender norms also contribute to the mistreatment of domestic workers. Since domestic work is traditionally seen as "women's work," it is often undervalued and associated with servitude rather than employment. This perception not only affects how employers treat domestic workers but also influences how society at large responds to their abuse. A female domestic worker pointed out how gender norms affect expectations of obedience and silence:

> *"As a woman, I am expected to serve and not complain. If my employer shouts at me or punishes me, I am supposed to accept it because that is what women do we take care of others and keep quiet."* (**IDI, January 2025)**

This expectation that female domestic workers should remain silent in the face of mistreatment is further reinforced by patriarchal beliefs that place women in subordinate roles within society. A community leader acknowledged that many employers mistreat domestic workers because they view them as weak and unable to defend themselves:

> *"Because most domestic workers are women, employers think they can control them easily. They take advantage of their*

vulnerability and treat them like they have no rights." **(FGD, February 2025)**

Employers also expect female domestic workers to be submissive, reinforcing the belief that they are not entitled to question authority. One employer described how female workers are expected to endure brutal conditions:

> *"A good housemaid is one who works without complaining. If she starts talking back or demanding better treatment, we say she is disrespectful and needs to be replaced."* (**IDI, January 2025)**

These gendered expectations make it difficult for domestic workers to resist exploitation, as they risk being labeled as "problematic" or "disobedient" if they speak out.

4.2.3.2 Normalization of Violence against Domestic Workers

The normalization of violence against domestic workers is another key issue reinforced by cultural and gender norms. Many employers and community members consider physical discipline a necessary and acceptable part of managing household workers. A male employer admitted that he saw no issue with using physical punishment to control domestic workers:

> *"If my housemaid makes a mistake, I discipline her the same way I would discipline my children. It is not abuse it is just teaching her how to behave properly."***(IDI, February 2025)**

Similarly, a community elder stated that employers have the right to use force when necessary:

> *"Housemaids are like children in the house. If they don't listen, they must be corrected. Some people think beating them is wrong, but how else will they learn?"***(FGD, January 2025)**

Domestic workers themselves often internalize these beliefs, feeling that abuse is a normal part of their job. One worker shared her thoughts on how violence was justified:

> *"I don't like being beaten, but I know it happens when I make mistakes. Sometimes, I try my best, but if my employer is angry, she will still slap me or shout. I just keep quiet and continue working."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

These findings highlight how social conditioning has normalized violence against domestic workers, making it difficult for them to seek help or demand better treatment.

4.2.3.3 Lack of Legal Protection and Social Support

The cultural and gender norms that reinforce power imbalances and domestic violence against domestic workers are further compounded by the absence of strong legal protections and social support systems. Many domestic workers stated that they did not know their rights and that even when they experienced abuse, they had nowhere to turn for help. One domestic worker explained her situation:

> *"I don't know if there is any law that protects us. My employer says she can do whatever she wants because she is the one paying me."***(IDI, February 2025)**

A social worker in Buhigwe acknowledged that the lack of enforcement of labor rights contributes to the exploitation of domestic workers:

"Even though there are laws that should protect domestic workers, they are rarely enforced. Most employers know they won't face any consequences, so they continue mistreating their workers." (**IDI, January 2025**)

This absence of legal accountability further strengthens power imbalances, allowing employers to continue mistreating domestic workers without fear of repercussions.

The findings illustrate that power imbalances between employers and domestic workers are not only economic but also deeply rooted in cultural and gender norms that normalize mistreatment. Societal attitudes that view domestic workers as inferior, combined with patriarchal beliefs about female subservience, contribute to an environment where abuse is tolerated and even justified. Additionally, the normalization of violence, coupled with a lack of legal protections, leaves domestic workers with little recourse when they experience mistreatment. Addressing these deeply ingrained cultural and gender norms will require targeted awareness campaigns, legal reforms, and more vigorous enforcement mechanisms to protect domestic workers from abuse and exploitation.

4.2.4 Fear of Retaliation and Barriers to Reporting Abuse

One of the most troubling aspects of power imbalances is the fear of retaliation, which prevents many domestic workers from reporting abuse. Several workers expressed concerns that complaining would lead to job loss, further deepening their financial struggles. A domestic worker who had experienced physical violence explained:

"I wanted to report my employer after she hit me, but I was afraid. If she fired me, where would I go? It is better to suffer than to be homeless." (IDI, January 2025)

Another worker noted that even when abuse is reported, there is little accountability:

"My friend went to the village leader after her employer beat her, but nothing was done. The employer just hired another girl. So now, even if I am mistreated, I keep quiet because I know nothing will change." **(IDI, February 2025)**

Employers also admitted that they rarely face consequences for mistreating domestic workers. One employer stated:

*"If a housemaid leaves because she's unhappy, there are many others looking for work. They need us more than we need them, so they won't cause trouble."***(IDI, January 2025)**

This lack of accountability, combined with economic dependency and restrictive work conditions, creates a cycle where domestic violence is tolerated and often goes unreported. The findings illustrate how power imbalances play a critical role in perpetuating domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District. Economic dependency forces workers to endure mistreatment, while employer control over wages, mobility, and communication further disempowers them. Cultural and gender norms normalize the subordination of domestic workers, reinforcing their vulnerability to abuse.

Additionally, the fear of retaliation and inadequate reporting mechanisms prevent workers from seeking justice. Addressing these power imbalances requires legal

protections, awareness campaigns, and community-based interventions to shift societal attitudes and empower domestic workers. The following section will examine how community-based reporting mechanisms function in responding to these challenges and whether they provide an effective solution for domestic workers facing abuse.

4.3 Effectiveness of Community-Based Reporting Mechanisms in Addressing Domestic Violence against Domestic Workers

The study findings reveal that community-based reporting mechanisms play a crucial role in addressing domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District. However, their effectiveness remains limited due to several factors, including lack of awareness, fear of retaliation, cultural barriers, and weak institutional support. While some domestic workers have successfully sought help through these mechanisms, many still hesitate to report abuse due to concerns about job loss or social stigma. This section explores the strengths and limitations of community-based reporting mechanisms and their impact on protecting domestic workers.

4.3.1 Awareness and Accessibility of Community-Based Reporting Mechanisms

One of the significant challenges identified in this study is the lack of awareness about community-based reporting mechanisms among domestic workers. Many respondents indicated that they were unaware of formal structures available to help them when they faced abuse. A domestic worker shared her experience:

> *"I have heard that some people report abuse, but I don't know where to go. If something happens to me, I just keep quiet because I have no idea who can help."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

Another domestic worker echoed this sentiment, highlighting how a lack of knowledge about reporting channels leaves them vulnerable:

> *"Sometimes I feel like leaving my job because of the way I am treated, but where would I go? I don't know any office or leader who can help me."***(IDI, February 2025)**

On the other hand, employers seemed more informed about community-based mechanisms but felt that domestic workers rarely used them. A female employer stated:

> *"There are local leaders and social workers who deal with these cases, but most housemaids don't report. Maybe they don't trust the system, or they are just afraid."***(IDI, February 2025)**

Community leaders acknowledged that efforts had been made to create awareness, but many domestic workers still did not engage with these mechanisms. One local leader in a focus group discussion explained:

> *"We have tried to educate the community about reporting violence, but the problem is that domestic workers are afraid to come forward. Some prefer to suffer in silence rather than risk losing their jobs."***(FGD, January 2025)**

These findings suggest that increasing awareness and accessibility of reporting mechanisms is critical to protecting domestic workers.

4.3.2 Fear of Retaliation and the Risk of Job Loss

Another major factor limiting the effectiveness of community-based reporting mechanisms is the fear of retaliation. Many domestic workers worry that reporting

abuse will result in job loss, which could worsen their financial situation. One domestic worker explained:

>*"Even if I am beaten or insulted, I don't report because my employer will fire me. If I lose this job, where will I go? It is better to stay quiet."***(IDI, January 2025)**

Another worker described how employers discourage them from seeking help:

>*"My employer once told me, 'If you report me, I will make sure you never find another job.' So, I just endure whatever happens."***(IDI, February 2025)**

Employers themselves acknowledged that domestic workers rarely reported abuse, mainly because they feared the consequences. A male employer explained:

>*"Housemaids are scared to report because they depend on us for work. If one leaves, another girl will come looking for a job the next day. They know they have no power."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

Community leaders also recognized this challenge, with one stating:

>*"Many domestic workers do not report abuse because they are afraid of being blocked. If an employer fires them and spreads bad stories about them, they may never find work again."* **(FGD, February 2025)**

These findings highlight the urgent need to address power imbalances and ensure domestic workers feel safe when seeking support through community-based mechanisms.

4.3.3 Cultural Barriers and Social Stigma

Cultural norms also play a role in limiting the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms.

In many communities, domestic workers are seen as subordinate, making it difficult

for them to be taken seriously when they report abuse. A domestic worker described

how societal attitudes discourage them from seeking help:

> *"People think that housemaids deserve whatever treatment they get. If I tell someone that I was beaten, they will say, 'Maybe you made a mistake.' So, what is the point of reporting?"* **(IDI, January 2025)**

A male employer reinforced this idea, stating that community attitudes make it

difficult for domestic workers to get justice:

> *"Society sees domestic workers as low-class people. Even if they report abuse, many will not believe them because they think housemaids are always looking for sympathy."* (IDI, February 2025)

Community leaders admitted that cultural norms sometimes prevent cases from being

taken seriously. A local leader in a focus group discussion noted:

> *"In some cases, when a housemaid reports violence, people say she is just looking for attention. This discourages many from speaking out."* **(FGD, January 2025)**

Domestic workers also expressed frustration with how they are treated when they

attempt to seek help. One worker explained:

> *"One of my friends went to report abuse to a local leader, but he told her to 'just be patient.' She was so disappointed that she never tried again."* **(IDI, February 2025)**

These findings suggest that addressing cultural barriers and social stigma is essential for improving the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms.

4.3.4 Weak Institutional Support and Limited Resources

Even when domestic workers overcome fear and cultural barriers to report abuse, they often encounter weak institutional support. Many community-based mechanisms lack the resources to provide meaningful intervention. A domestic worker recounted her experience of seeking help:

> *"I reported my employer for beating me, but nothing happened. The village leader spoke to her, but she continued to mistreat me. After that, I lost hope."* **(IDI, January 2025)**

A social worker acknowledged that local authorities cannot often take decisive action:

> *"We receive many cases of abuse, but sometimes we do not have the resources to follow up. Employers know this, so they do not fear consequences."***(IDI, February 2025)**

A male community leader highlighted the need for more vigorous enforcement:

> *"Reporting mechanisms exist, but they are weak. If we want real change, we need proper legal frameworks and resources to support victims."***(FGD, January 2025)**

These testimonies reveal that while reporting mechanisms exist, their effectiveness is hindered by poor enforcement and inadequate support structures.

4.3.5 Success Stories and Areas for Improvement

Despite these challenges, some domestic workers have successfully used community-based mechanisms to escape abusive situations. A domestic worker shared her story:

> *"I reported my case to a women's organization, and they helped me find a safer place to work. If it weren't for them, I would still be suffering."***(IDI, February 2025)**

Another worker described how intervention from local leaders made a difference:

> *"My employer used to refuse to pay me. But when I reported it to the local chairperson, he forced her to pay my salary. That gave me hope."***(IDI, January 2025)**

Community leaders agreed that improvements were needed, with one suggesting:

> *"We need better training for community leaders on how to handle these cases. Domestic workers should feel protected, not ignored."* (FGD, February 2025)

The findings indicate that while community-based reporting mechanisms play an essential role in addressing domestic violence against domestic workers, their effectiveness remains limited. Low awareness, fear of retaliation, cultural stigma, and weak institutional support prevent many workers from seeking help. However, cases where interventions have succeeded demonstrate that these mechanisms can become more effective with better awareness campaigns, more vigorous enforcement, and community education. Strengthening these structures is crucial to ensuring that domestic workers have access to justice and protection against abuse.

4.4 Discussion

The findings of this study align with existing literature on domestic violence against domestic workers, revealing the interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that shape the lived experiences of this vulnerable group. The study confirms that economic dependency is a significant determinant of domestic violence against domestic workers, a finding consistent with previous research (Kamanga et al., 2023). Many domestic workers endure exploitative conditions due to limited alternative employment opportunities, reinforcing the power imbalances that facilitate abuse. These findings corroborate the Social Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which emphasizes that individual experiences of violence are shaped by interactions at multiple levels, including personal, relational, community, and societal factors.

One of the key findings is that urbanization in the Buhigwe District has led to an increased demand for domestic workers while simultaneously exacerbating their vulnerabilities. This supports Mwamfupe's (2017) argument that urban expansion disrupts traditional social protection networks, exposing informal workers to exploitation. The study participants described how migration and economic hardships push young women into domestic work, often under precarious conditions.

This aligns with Wright et al. (2017), who identified power imbalances and socio-economic dependency as root causes of domestic worker abuse globally. By integrating these perspectives, this study highlights the urgent need for policy interventions that regulate domestic work and ensure worker protection. The findings

also reinforce the role of patriarchal norms in perpetuating domestic violence against domestic workers. The study reveals that many employers view domestic workers as subordinate, justifying verbal, physical, and emotional abuse under the guise of discipline. This aligns with Lwanga-Ntale (2018), who noted that deeply ingrained gender and class hierarchies normalize mistreatment in domestic employment. The Social Ecological Model further explains how societal attitudes shape employer-worker relationships, illustrating how macro-level gender ideologies trickle down to micro-level interactions. These findings suggest that addressing domestic worker abuse requires not only legal reforms but also cultural shifts in how domestic labor is perceived and valued.

Moreover, the effectiveness of community-based reporting mechanisms remains limited due to fear of retaliation, social stigma, and weak institutional support. This finding is consistent with Kamanga et al. (2023), who noted that domestic workers often lack awareness of their rights or fear job loss if they report abuse. The study participants described instances where workers remained silent despite experiencing severe mistreatment, reinforcing Kabeer's (2000) argument that economic dependency constrains agency. The findings indicate that while community-based mechanisms exist, their accessibility and efficacy must be improved through awareness campaigns and more vigorous enforcement mechanisms.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the Social Ecological Model by demonstrating how interrelated factors at different environmental levels shape domestic violence against workers. At the microsystem level, personal experiences

of economic hardship create vulnerability to exploitation. At the mesosystem level, employer-worker power dynamics reinforce control and abuse. At the exosystem level, weak labor protections fail to deter mistreatment, while at the macrosystem level, patriarchal norms and economic inequalities sustain systemic injustices against domestic workers. By applying this model, the study underscores the complexity of domestic violence in the context of informal labor, highlighting the need for multi-level interventions.

Overall, the study's findings contribute to the growing discourse on labor rights and gender-based violence, particularly in transitioning rural-urban districts like Buhigwe. Integrating literature, empirical findings, and theoretical insights strengthens the case for targeted policy reforms that protect domestic workers from exploitation. The study also calls for greater advocacy efforts to challenge societal norms that legitimize abuse and for institutional frameworks that prioritize the rights and well-being of domestic workers. Addressing domestic violence in this context requires a holistic approach that combines legal protections, economic empowerment programs, and cultural transformations aimed at fostering dignity and respect for all workers.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study sought to investigate the determinants of domestic violence against domestic workers in the Buhigwe District, with a focus on socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. The findings reveal that economic dependency remains a primary driver of domestic worker exploitation, as many workers tolerate abuse due to a lack of alternative employment opportunities. Power imbalances between employers and domestic workers further contribute to mistreatment, with employers exerting control over wages, working conditions, and even the personal freedoms of workers. Many domestic workers are forced to remain in exploitative environments due to financial insecurity, limiting their ability to advocate for better conditions or report mistreatment.

The study also found that urbanization in Buhigwe has increased the demand for domestic workers while simultaneously exacerbating their vulnerabilities. As more families migrate to urban areas and traditional social support systems weaken, domestic workers become increasingly exposed to various forms of abuse. The erosion of extended family structures and informal protective networks means that domestic workers often lack the community-based support that might have previously offered some protection.

Furthermore, economic hardships in rural areas have pushed many young women into domestic work, making them more susceptible to exploitation due to their

desperate need for employment. Patriarchal norms and societal attitudes further reinforce these vulnerabilities by normalizing mistreatment under the pretext of discipline and control. Many employers perceive domestic workers as subordinate individuals who must be managed through strict control, which sometimes includes verbal abuse, excessive workloads, or physical punishment. These cultural perceptions contribute to a work environment where exploitation is overlooked or deemed acceptable. Despite the existence of community-based reporting mechanisms, the study found that these structures remain primarily ineffective due to various challenges. Many domestic workers fear retaliation or job loss if they report abuse, while weak enforcement of labor laws means that perpetrators of domestic violence against workers often go unpunished.

Additionally, a lack of awareness among domestic workers regarding their rights further limits their ability to seek help, leaving them trapped in exploitative situations. The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for policy interventions, increased legal protections, and broader societal shifts in attitudes toward domestic work. Without significant changes to labor policies, enforcement mechanisms, and social norms, domestic workers will continue to face high levels of vulnerability and exploitation in Buhigwe District and beyond.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that a complex interplay of socioeconomic and cultural factors drives domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe District. Economic hardship serves as a primary force, compelling many women to enter domestic work

under inherently exploitative conditions. Faced with limited employment opportunities in their rural communities, these women often migrate to urban areas for financial stability, only to find themselves trapped in low-paying jobs that lack the safeguards of formal labor protections. This economic desperation not only forces them into exploitative work environments but also leaves them with few viable options to escape abusive situations, thereby perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability and mistreatment.

At the same time, deeply entrenched patriarchal norms play a significant role in legitimizing the abuse. Cultural beliefs that view women as subordinate and inferior underpin the mistreatment they endure. These norms normalize harsh disciplinary practices by employers, who often justify abusive behavior as necessary to maintain order or discipline within the household. Such attitudes contribute to a power imbalance that leaves domestic workers at the mercy of their employers, reinforcing the acceptability of abuse within this labor sector.

Furthermore, the problem is compounded by the absence of strong legal protections tailored to domestic workers. Many of these workers fall outside the ambit of standard labor laws, which leaves them without legal recourse when faced with exploitation and violence. The existing community-based reporting mechanisms, which could provide a support network and avenue for justice, are largely ineffective. Domestic workers are often reluctant to report abuse due to fear of retaliation, social stigma, and a lack of awareness about their rights.

Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach encompassing comprehensive policy reforms to formalize domestic work and extend legal protections. In addition, targeted awareness campaigns must be implemented to educate domestic workers and employers about labor rights and acceptable practices. Strengthened legal enforcement is also critical, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and that the rights of domestic workers are robustly safeguarded.

5.3 Recommendations

Addressing domestic violence against domestic workers in Buhigwe requires strengthening legal protections to ensure fair wages, reasonable working hours, and comprehensive labor rights enforcement. The Tanzanian government must prioritize policy reforms that formalize domestic work as a recognized sector with adequate safeguards against exploitation. In addition, awareness campaigns should be implemented at the community level to educate employers and domestic workers on labor rights and the legal consequences of mistreatment. By fostering awareness, domestic workers can be empowered to seek support, while employers can be held accountable for maintaining ethical employment standards.

Enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of community-based reporting structures is also crucial in empowering domestic workers to report abuse without fear of retaliation. These mechanisms should be strengthened through local government and civil society collaboration, ensuring domestic workers have safe and confidential channels for seeking justice. Moreover, economic empowerment programs targeting women in vulnerable communities can reduce dependency on

domestic work and mitigate exploitation risks by providing alternative income-generating opportunities.

Changing societal norms that reinforce the subjugation of domestic workers is another critical step in addressing domestic violence in this sector. Advocacy efforts should focus on challenging patriarchal beliefs that normalize mistreatment, fostering a culture of dignity and respect for domestic workers. Engaging traditional and religious leaders in these efforts can help shift deep-seated cultural attitudes that perpetuate discrimination and abuse. Through a combination of legal reforms, awareness initiatives, improved reporting mechanisms, economic empowerment, and cultural transformation, a safer and more equitable working environment for domestic workers in Buhigwe District and beyond can be created.

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APPENDICES

Interview Guide: In-depth Interviews

Introduction

- Welcome the participant and introduce yourself.

- Explain the purpose of the study: to understand the socio-economic changes influencing domestic work, the role of power imbalances in domestic violence, and the effectiveness of community-based reporting mechanisms in Buhigwe District.

- Assure the participant of confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

- Obtain verbal consent to record the interview.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Can you tell me about yourself? (Age, gender, education level, and occupation)

2. How long have you lived in Buhigwe District?

Section 2: Socio-Economic Changes Influencing the Demand for Domestic Workers

1. In your view, how have socio-economic conditions in Buhigwe District changed in recent years?

o Prompts: Changes in migration, employment opportunities, infrastructure, or family structures.

2. How do you think these changes have influenced the demand for domestic workers?

o Prompts: Has the demand increased or decreased? Why?

3. What factors do you think encourage families to hire domestic workers?

o Prompts: Economic needs, cultural expectations, urbanization.

Section 3: Role of Power Imbalances in Domestic Violence against Domestic Workers

1. What do you think are the main factors contributing to domestic violence against domestic workers in this community?

o Prompts: Gender roles, economic dependency, cultural norms.

2. How do power dynamics between employers and domestic workers influence their relationships?

o Prompts: Unequal control, exploitation, or abuse.

3. Do you think domestic workers feel empowered to speak up when they face mistreatment? Why or why not?

o Prompts: Fear of losing jobs, stigma, lack of reporting channels.

Section 4: Effectiveness of Community-Based Reporting Mechanisms

1. Are you aware of any community-based systems or programs that help domestic workers report abuse or violence?

o Prompts: Community leaders, NGOs, support groups.

2. How effective do you think these mechanisms are in protecting domestic workers?

o Prompts: Accessibility, trustworthiness, follow-up actions.

3. What challenges do you think domestic workers face when trying to report abuse through these mechanisms?

o Prompts: Stigma, fear of retaliation, lack of awareness.

4. What improvements would you suggest to make community-based reporting mechanisms more effective?

o Prompts: Training for community leaders, increased awareness, better collaboration with formal institutions.

Closing

- Thank the participant for their time and valuable input.

- Reassure them about the confidentiality of their responses.

- Provide information on local support services or resources they can access if needed.

An interview Guide for FGD

Introduction

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.

- Explain the purpose of the discussion: to explore socio-economic changes influencing domestic work, the role of power imbalances in domestic violence, and the effectiveness of community-based reporting mechanisms in Buhigwe District.

- Emphasize that all opinions are valuable and there are no right or wrong answers. Encourage open, respectful participation.

- Assure confidentiality and explain that the session will be audio-recorded with their consent.

- Obtain verbal consent from participants.

Section 1: Icebreaker and Demographics

1. Let's start by introducing ourselves. Please share your name (or how you prefer to be addressed) and your role in the community.

2. What is your relationship to domestic work? (e.g., domestic worker, employer, community leader, etc.)

Section 2: Socio-Economic Changes Influencing the Demand for Domestic Workers

1. How have socio-economic conditions in Buhigwe District changed over the past few years?

o Prompts: Migration patterns, job opportunities, changes in household structures, urbanization trends.

2. In what ways have these changes influenced the demand for domestic workers?

o Prompts: Are more households hiring domestic workers? Why?

3. What factors do you think drive families to employ domestic workers?

o Prompts: Economic needs, cultural practices, new social pressures.

Section 3: Role of Power Imbalances in Domestic Violence Against Domestic Workers

1. What are the key factors that contribute to domestic violence against domestic workers in this community?

o Prompts: Gender roles, economic dependency, societal attitudes, employer control.

2. How do power dynamics between employers and domestic workers shape their relationships?

o Prompts: Instances of exploitation, control over wages, restrictions on mobility.

3. What challenges do domestic workers face in asserting their rights or raising concerns about mistreatment?

o Prompts: Fear of job loss, stigma, lack of legal protections.

Section 4: Effectiveness of Community-Based Reporting Mechanisms

1. Are there community systems or organizations in Buhigwe that help domestic workers report abuse?

o Prompts: NGOs, community leaders, faith-based organizations.

2. How accessible and reliable are these mechanisms for domestic workers?

o Prompts: Do workers trust these systems? Are they easy to reach?

3. What challenges do these mechanisms face in addressing domestic violence?

o Prompts: Limited funding, social stigma, insufficient training.

4. What improvements would you suggest to make these systems more effective?

o Prompts: Awareness campaigns, better resources, stronger collaborations with formal institutions.

Section 5: Community and Policy Perspectives

1. How does the community perceive domestic workers and their rights?

o Prompts: Respect, societal attitudes, cultural norms.

2. What role should the community play in protecting domestic workers from violence?

o Prompts: Education, advocacy, creating safe spaces.

3. How can local policies or programs better support domestic workers and address violence?

o Prompts: Policy reforms, increased funding, improved enforcement.

Closing

- Thank participants for their valuable input and time.

- Reassure them about the confidentiality of the discussion.

- Share information about local resources or support services they can access if needed.

- Ask if they have any final comments or questions before concluding the session.

Research Clearance Letter

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Ref. No OUT/PG202287041   14th February, 2025

District Executive Director,
Buhigwe District Council,
P.O. Box 443,
KIGOMA.

Dear Director,

RE: <u>RESEARCH CLEARANCE FOR MR. MHADHAM ADAM MIYONGA, REG NO:</u>
<u>PG202287041</u>

2.   The Open University of Tanzania was established by an Act of Parliament No. 17 of 1992, which became operational on the 1st March 1993 by public notice No.55 in the official Gazette. The Act was however replaced by the Open University of Tanzania Charter of 2005, which became operational on 1st January 2007.In line with the Charter, the Open University of Tanzania mission is to generate and apply knowledge through research.

3.   To facilitate and to simplify research process therefore, the act empowers the Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania to issue research clearance, on behalf of the Government of Tanzania and Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology, to both its staff and students who are doing research in Tanzania. With this brief background, the purpose of this letter is to introduce to you **Mr. Mhadham Adam Miyonga, Reg.No: PG202287041)**, pursuing **Master of Social Work (MSW)**. We here by grant this clearance to conduct a research titled **"Investigation of the determinants of the Domestic**

Violence against Domestic Workers' in Buhigwe, Kigoma Region". He will collect his data at your area from 1st March to 30th March 2025.

4.   In case you need any further information, kindly do not hesitate to contact the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of the Open University of Tanzania, P.O.Box 23409, Dar es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820.We lastly thank you in advance for your assumed cooperation and facilitation of this research academic activity.

Yours sincerely,

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Prof.Gwahula Raphael Kimamala

For: VICE CHANCELLOR

JAMHURI YA MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA

OFISI YA RAIS

TAWALA ZA MIKOA NA SERIKALI ZA MITAA

HALMASHAURI YA WILAYA YA BUHIGWE

Unapojibu tafadhali taja;-
Kumb.Na. BHDC/EDU/10/44/101

27/02/2025

Mhadham Adam Miyongo,
Mwanafunzi wa Chuo Kikuu Huria cha Tanazania,
S.L.P 23409,
Dar es Salaam.

YAH: **KIBALI CHA KUFANYA UTAFITI**

Rejea mada tajwa hapo juu.

2.   Tumepokea barua kutoka Chuo Kikuu Huria cha Tanazania yenye **Kumb. OUT.PG202287041** ya tarehe 14.02.2025 ikihusu ombi la kufanya utafiti kwa ndug. Mhadham Adam Miyongo utafiti unaohusiana na "DETERMINANT OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST DOMESTIC WORKERS".

3.   Kwa barua hii, umeruhusiwa kufanya Utafiti katika kata ya Buhigwe, Kibande na munyegera kuanzia tarehe **01/03/2025** hadi **30/03/2025**. Utafanya utafiti wako katika Kata Buhigwe, Kibande na Munyegera na si vinginevyo.

4.   Watendaji wa Kata mpokee na mpatie ushirikiano chanya kwa kipindi chote atakachokuwa akifanya Utafiti huo.

5.   Nakutakia Utafiti mwema.

Evancy N. Bilala
Kny: **MKURUGENZI MTENDAJI (W),**

Nakala;

Mh. Diwani kata ya Buhigwe - kwa taarifa

Mh. Diwani kata ya Munyegera - kwa taarifa

Mh. Diwani kata ya Kibande - kwa taarifa