

This study set out to inquire into the education problems that hinder housemaids from performing their jobs adequately and using their own skills to improve their socio economic status. Greenfield estate in Nairobi is a typical middle class residential area within the city.

Three categories of respondents participated in the study. 40 housemaids and 40 employers were selected using systematic sampling while purposive sampling was used in selecting 14 organizations. Out of the 40 housemaids 30 fully participated. In addition 21 housemaids employers and 7 officers participated. Data analysis took the form of descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and proportions (percentages). The data was also summarised in tables.

The major instruments for data collection were interview schedules administered to the housemaids and questionnaires administered to housemaids' employers and to the representatives of the seven organisations. The gathered data were analysed and interpreted in line with the research questions.

Results show that lack of basic education hamper the effective performance of housemaids in their duties. The resultant ignorance also inhibits housemaids from benefiting from training programmes offered in the few institutions and also from union membership, which could protect their interests. Majority of the sampled housemaids were illiterate and that illiteracy positively correlates with the lack of awareness of individuals' rights and avenues for improving individual skills and welfare. This ignorance of basic rights has made the housemaids to be exploited by the employers, a fact reflected in the number of hours they work (between nine and fifteen hours per day) and quite a number working throughout the week(no time off). About twenty (20) housemaids expressed a desire for more education and training which they say as one way of improving their performance at work as well as opening up avenues for mobility. The study concludes that adequate education and training can benefit the housemaids in increasing their bargaining power, awareness of rights and hence, the ability to command better pay.

On the basis of the above findings, the study recommended, that:

- i) Greater emphasis should be given to training so that the housemaids can be qualified for the jobs they do, both for efficiency and welfare purpose.
- ii) A law should be enacted enjoining the employers of housemaids to enter into written contracts with them, such a law should also specify that these housemaids work for a minimum of eight hours per day and anything beyond, treated as overtime and be paid for accordingly. It should also provide for insurance of housemaids against such risks as fire.
- iii) Housemaids should be encouraged to join unions such as KUDHEHIA (Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions and Hospitals Association).