



**AN EXPLANATORY CASE STUDY OF NIGERIAN FEMALE DOMESTIC  
WORKERS PERSPECTIVES ON COPING STRATEGIES AS LIVE-IN  
EMPLOYEES: TOWARDS DECOLONIAL REFLECTIONS**

by

Oluwapelumi, Temitope Adegbenjo

Student number

218086415

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School of social sciences

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Supervisor: Dr. Bhekani David Nzimande

Co- Supervisor: Prof. Kgari-Masorole Masondo

Date: November 2024

## **DECLARATION**

I, Oluwapelumi, Temitope Adegbenjo, the undersigned, declare that the contents of this thesis titled “An explanatory case study of Nigerian female domestic workers’ perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees: towards decolonial reflections” is my original work. It has not previously been presented to another institution in part or in whole for a degree. This study has been acknowledged and referenced accordingly.

Student name and Surname: Oluwapelumi Temitope Adegbenjo

Sign: 

Date: November 20<sup>th</sup> 2024

## DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR/S

I supervised this PhD thesis to my satisfaction, and it is submitted with my approval Titled: *“An explanatory case study of Nigerian female domestic workers’ perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees: towards decolonial reflections.”*

Student name and number: Oluwapelumi, Temitope Adegbenjo - 218086415

Dr. Bhekani David Nzimande

Signature



Date *28 March 2025*

Prof. Kgari-Masorole Masondo

Signature



Date 28 March 2025

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the infallible, generous, and omniscient God. Additionally, I dedicate it to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Adegbenjo, whose unwavering support and sacrifices have been invaluable throughout this journey. Thank you for your boundless love and dedication. I also extend this dedication to all female live-in employees who have endured and overcome challenging circumstances in the domestic work environment.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.
COVID	Corona-virus disease.
FLSA	Fair labour standard act.
GCC	The Gulf Cooperation Council.
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency virus.
ILO	International labour organization.
IK	Indigenous knowledge.
NIN	National identity number.
ODW	Overseas domestic workers.
UK	United Kingdom.
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.
WLC	Work life conflict.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Nigeria and many other countries, the continuous employment of women as domestic workers is a widespread phenomenon. This practice, among other factors, contributes to the stratification of the economy and to the division of labour characterized by the oppression of women. Nigeria has a large domestic sector that is dominated by women, with workers often demeaned as housemaids or house helpers. In the domestic sector, these workers are subjected to exploitation, abuse, and violence in the homes of their employers, and they are also forced to adapt or adjust to the challenges they face daily. The abuse and maltreatment of women domestic workers in Nigeria has been extensively studied empirically, however, there has been little research on the coping strategies these women use, especially in a decolonial context. This study adopted a qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews to explore the coping strategies adopted by female live-in domestic workers. Twenty live-in female domestic workers participated in the study. The research incorporated three theoretical frameworks: Coping Theory, Intersectionality, and African Feminism. Building on these theories, the study argues that African women across various cultures employ diverse strategies and initiatives to navigate and negotiate their roles with employers. The strategies they employ are often derived from what they perceive to be life lessons, which they have acquired because of negotiating several other spaces as women within a highly patriarchal society. The findings revealed that patience, wisdom, perseverance, social interaction, telling jokes, cultural practices, the use of waist beads, conflict resolution, and spirituality were among the adaptive resilience strategies used by these workers. Nonetheless, the study shows that coping strategies grounded in a decolonial perspective enable women to utilize their indigenous knowledge to negotiate duties and overcome challenges as domestic workers. This research discussed how these coping strategies are employed by female live-in employees when faced with adversity. Furthermore, the study suggests that the well-being of female live-in domestic workers should be prioritized, and that employers should be thoroughly vetted and evaluated before hiring domestic workers. Failing to manage the abuse of female live-in domestic workers undermines their well-being and perpetuates exploitation. Despite their resilience and coping strategies, unchecked abuse can lead to severe physical and mental health issues, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

**Keywords:** female domestic workers, coping strategies, exploitation, resilience, decolonial perspective

## **CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that women are more likely than men to engage in domestic labour due to various historical and socio-cultural factors. These factors include the subordination of women across cultures, the exploitation of women from low-income backgrounds, and the historical disenfranchisement of women during the pre-colonial and colonial periods in African countries (Goucher, 2020; Candido, 2020). As a result, women's economic roles and labour divisions are often marked by oppression and exploitation (Barrett, 2014; Berenstein, 2016). According to Lai (2020), women employed as domestic workers suffer from poor working conditions, maltreatment, abuse, and violence. A particularly egregious example is their exposure to menial and dehumanizing jobs in Nigeria and across the globe. According to Makama (2013), the subordination of women in Nigeria has resulted in an increase in the number of women working as domestic workers in private homes. Even so, domestic work remains one of the lowest-paying sectors, and it is mainly a female-dominated occupation (Ogbechie, 2019). According to Fapohunda (2012) and Safuta (2019), domestic workers in Nigeria are vulnerable to various forms of abuse and are not recognized by society as professionals. The perception that domestic workers are not legitimate workers in Nigeria is deeply ingrained and unconsciously normalised by many. The labour market for domestic work is highly feminized (Olayiwola, 2019). Although men also work as domestic workers, women dominate this field (Beri, 2020). As Van (2017) argues, domestic duties are highly racialized, gendered, and class-based, and women are disproportionately affected. Consequently, the hiring of women as domestic workers is a common practice in Nigeria and other African countries (Demissie, 2018; Ogbechie, 2019). During the past few years, local labour pressures have increased, resulting in an increased number of domestic workers in Africa. This in turn has exacerbated social inequality.

For this study, domestic work is defined as any form of work, or duties performed in or for households by individuals in such employment (Taran, 2014). Domestic workers perform general cleaning in houses, cooking, washing clothes and dishes, ironing, polishing furniture, caring for the young and elderly, and running basic errands such as grocery shopping and other household chores (Tayo, 2007). In some countries, domestic work is attributed to certain ethnic, racial, and social groups. During the colonial period in Africa, domestic work was the means through which Africans were incorporated into colonial duties. They served as nannies, drivers, house helpers,

cleaners, gardeners, and cooks. Bayane (2019) noted that during apartheid in South Africa, black Africans were primarily employed as housekeepers and mine workers, while in India, scheduled castes and tribes were also involved in domestic duties. A recent study conducted in Canada found that most domestic workers were Filipino migrants (Mindó, 2023). In Africa, countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Uganda, and Ghana report high numbers of females working in private homes as domestic workers (Bosch, 2015; Nesbitt-Ahmed, 2016). However, South Africa remains a prominent example of the historical legacy of domestic work in Africa (Bayane, 2019). This is due to factors such as apartheid, rural poverty, limited employment opportunities, and women's subordination (Zungu, 2009). Workers in this field typically seek employment in middle- and upper-income households in urban areas, leading females from rural communities to migrate to metropolitan cities (Harju, 2016). Many women in Nigeria work in the domestic sector, where they are often derogatorily referred to as housemaids or house helps (Omokhodion, 2009). Taiwo (2013) reports that the prevalence of house-helps is continually increasing in Ibadan, with many households and commercial enterprises hiring domestic workers. Located in the southwestern region of Nigeria, Ibadan has developed into a hot spot for sourcing, transporting, and relocating domestic workers (Olayiwola, 2019). Anecdotal evidence indicates that domestic workers are primarily employed for the purpose of managing neglected or increased duties within a household or business.

According to Dyer (2011), household chores pose particular challenges for women, as males often show patriarchal traits and neglect household tasks, leaving women to handle all chores, resulting in excessive burdens. As a result of this dynamic, unemployed women, young adults, and adolescent girls from rural or disadvantaged communities have been able to obtain employment as domestic servants in many Nigerian cities, such as Ibadan (Aderinto, 2012). Furthermore, Fapohunda (2012) noted that due to the scarcity of jobs and the absence of alternatives, females face a limited choice: to work as domestic workers or remain unemployed. A large number of women who are unable to complete their tertiary education resort to informal employment as domestic workers. Women are deprived of the opportunity to realize their potential in this environment as well as remain subordinated to social influences such as social hierarchy, compliance, and conformity (Akpotor, 2009; Tolla, 2013). The patriarchal culture and practices which became prevalent in Ibadan, like many other societies in Nigeria, contribute to women's oppression and subordination. Although domestic workers contribute significantly to households,

several concerns persist in regard to their treatment within their employers' homes. Live-in domestic workers, in particular, are subject to abuse, oppression, sexual assault, long working hours, and discrimination (Okafor, 2009). For instance, Lambo (2019) reported a case where an employer lacerated a female domestic worker with a razor blade for stealing milk in Oyo State, Nigeria. Coble (2020) also documented that abuse and maltreatment are common experiences for female domestic workers, often perpetuated by their employers. Furthermore, female domestic workers are vulnerable to sexual abuse by male employers and other members of the employer's family (Silvey, 2020). As reported by Oyetunde (2019) in Nigeria, numerous female domestic workers complained about sexual abuse, often involving their employers' husbands or grown children. In the same way, domestic workers in Europe are at risk of exploitation because they are often overworked and assigned additional duties beyond the scope of their job descriptions (Camargo, 2017).

Female domestic workers also experience emotional and psychological trauma and torture resulting from various forms of abuse as live-in employees (Friedman, 2013). Due to the increasing reports of such abuse and exploitation in Ibadan, this location was chosen for the study population. Despite the numerous challenges associated with domestic work, female live-in domestic workers employ various means to adapt and adjust to their daily struggles. The objective of this study was to provide a platform for these women to share their perspectives on coping strategies against their lived experiences as live-in employees in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria through a decolonial lens. The purpose of this study was to explore the coping strategies of female domestic workers to better understand their experiences. A decolonial perspective from an African perspective focuses on healing and recovery, grounded in cultural values, beliefs, and indigenous knowledge (Teka, 2020). Indigenous local communities possess a wealth of knowledge among elders and other knowledge custodians, making them an important resource for African researchers and intellectuals (Kaya, 2014). As Prah (2018) argues, studies such as this are crucial for the preservation of indigenous experiences in global scholarship. This dissertation adds to the body of knowledge on female domestic workers' coping strategies, providing an in-depth investigation into the indigenous knowledge practiced by these employees in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. A comprehensive interaction between the researcher and live-in domestic workers provided the researcher with a deeper insight into the coping strategies employed by these women. This chapter provides a background to the study, a description of domestic work, and an overview of the topic.

Furthermore, the chapter unpacked the research problem, objectives, and justification for the study. Lastly this chapter also provided the outline structure of the dissertation.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Numerous studies have been conducted on domestic workers across Africa. Nesbitt (2020) explored the opportunities and challenges associated with paid domestic work in Nigeria. Tade (2012) described the factors promoting domestic workers demand in Oyo State, Nigeria. Ally (2010) studied domestic workers' experiences during the transitional period. Van (2019) examined the perceived stressors and coping mechanisms of migrant female domestic workers in Singapore. Bosmans (2016) investigated domestic workers' stigmatization and coping strategies. Crawford (2018) has suggested that decolonial reflections on the coping strategies of live-in female domestic workers must be contextualized. Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010) argued further that it is crucial to focus on the work environment, sociocultural norms, and historical peculiarities resulting in the feminization and racialization of this class of economic production. On the other hand, majority of studies have examined the influence of patriarchal traits as dominant cultural factors that have hampered women's empowerment across all sectors (Sultana, 2010; Asiyabola, 2005). Some have focused on the complexities and dominance of black Africans in the domestic services, considering complex narratives of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism (Pierre, 2020; King, 2012). Additionally, key studies have examined issues such as remuneration, long working hours, poverty, exploitation, abuse, and ethical concerns in domestic work, which have significantly affected the lives of live-in female domestic workers (Pape, 2016; International Labour Organization, 2016). Although significant progress has been made in mainstreaming gender and class in this discourse, it is imperative to investigate the coping strategies of live-in domestic employees to highlight their resilience.

The use of domestic workers as a workforce in Ibadan, Nigeria, is not a new phenomenon (Awosusi, 2012). Historically, it was been considered a cultural practice in wealthy homes (Wilson, 2010). During employments, live-in domestic workers are more preferred to the general day to day or visiting domestic workers based on their availability. It has been noted by Osiro (2023) that the live-in domestic workers are more exposed to various forms of exploitation and oppression. According to Nesbitt (2016), most domestic workers in Nigeria are subjected to verbal abuse by their employers. Similarly, Olayiwola (2019) argued that employers physically abuse

their employees, including beatings and unbearable punishments. Furthermore, Nesbitt (2016) found that there have been countless undocumented stories of abuse against female domestic workers. Some females engage in domestic work for personal reasons such as free housing in the cities, while others do so to support their families and save money (Olaniyi, 2009). According to Nesbitt-Ahmed (2016), some domestic workers depend on wealthy households for employment as a means of suppressing poverty and acquiring a higher standard of living. Oyetunde (2019) suggests that female domestic workers are subject to sexual abuse and exploitation due to their precarious positions. According to Omokhodion (2010), employers in Nigeria view domestic workers as useful tools for handling neglected household chores, such as the cleaning of the house. Several challenges have been associated with the high employment rates of female domestic workers in homes. According to Olayiwola (2019), domestic workers are responsible for managing their challenges and mistreatment within their employers' households as there is usually no formal or informal support system. Because of the challenges associated with domestic work, Zohuri (2020) notes that female domestic workers are committing suicide at a higher rate than ever before, due to mental illness and depression. There are, however, few empirical studies that examine coping strategies from a decolonial perspective. Bosmans, 2016 and Van, 2019 revealed that time for self, social networking, managing thoughts, religion, and social support have been applied as coping strategies by female domestic workers across the globe. However, in as much as these strategies were applied there is a niche in the body of research on the decolonial perspectives of African female domestic workers. Therefore, this study intends to explore from a decolonial lens on the coping strategies of female live-in domestic workers in Ibadan city, Oyo state Nigeria, an area that has been explored extensively.

Over the years, women in the domestic sector have been vulnerable to different forms of maltreatment and injustice perpetuated by employers. Therefore, the daily lives of most of these women become a tragedy as live-in employees. It is important to draw an understanding from the live-in experiences of different female domestic workers by probing how live-in female domestic workers navigate themselves during adversities as female live-in employees. Elomaa (2023) stipulates that coping strategies are essential as it enables an individual to manage stress, challenges and difficult situations effectively. Studies have been carried out which focused on migrant's domestic workers coping strategies through the initiatives of ILO regulation programs and policies (Miyazaki, 2023; Basu, 2024). Thus, in as much as these regulations are in place it is

crucial to turn towards the decolonial lens which has been infused into the study by drawing from the indigenous knowledge systems. Failing to manage the coping strategies of female domestic workers undermines the well-being and perpetuates continuous exploitation.

### **1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), the rationale for a study stems from the factors that motivate the researcher to pursue the project, which may be personal, contextual, or academic in nature. This study is driven by both personal and academic motivations. As a Nigerian, the researcher has witnessed and heard numerous accounts of domestic workers being abused. However, their experiences and coping mechanisms are scarcely documented in academic literature. My curiosity was piqued by the stories of neighbours who once worked as domestic workers. They detailed how they adopted various strategies to please their employers or manage their daily duties. These narratives often included coping strategies ranging from appeasement to the use of traditional charms to gain favour from employers. Additionally, some domestic workers resort to extreme measures, such as voodoo or food poisoning, when angered by their employers. The lack of academic attention to these silenced narratives motivated me to investigate the experiences and coping strategies of live-in female domestic workers from a decolonial perspective. This study addresses a significant social issue: the subordination and exploitation of female domestic workers in Nigeria. Domestic work in Nigeria is highly feminized, and literature has documented the numerous challenges faced by these workers, including verbal and physical abuse (Nesbitt, 2016; Olayiwola, 2019; Omrani, 2020). Despite the prevalence of abuse, the specific experiences and coping strategies of female live-in domestic workers remain under-researched. This study filled the gap by exploring decolonial reflections on coping strategies, particularly through the lens of African indigenous knowledge. The dearth of research on this topic, especially in Ibadan, Oyo State, further propels my academic drive to contribute to this field.

### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

The main research objective investigates the Nigerian female domestic workers' perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees from a decolonial lens in Ibadan city Oyo State Nigeria. Hence, the following specific research objectives are appropriate for this research work.

1. To critically discuss and describe the experiences of the Nigerian live-in female domestic employees in Ibadan city, Oyo state Nigeria.

2. To identify and describe the indigenous coping strategies used by Nigerian live-in female employees.
3. To critically discuss and describe how Nigerian live-in female employees apply these strategies in their employer's homes.
4. To identify and critically examine the communal voices of the Nigerian female live-in employees on approaches to foster the adaptation of the coping strategies in Ibadan city Oyo state Nigeria.

The research objectives were achieved by elucidating female domestic workers' perspectives through the following questions.

1. What are the experiences of Nigerian live-in female domestic employees in Ibadan city Oyo state Nigeria?
2. What are the indigenous coping strategies used by Nigerian live-in female domestic workers in Ibadan city Oyo state Nigeria?
3. How has the Nigerian live-in female domestic workers apply these strategies in their employer's homes?
4. What approaches are in place to foster the adaptation of coping strategies by the Nigerian female live-in employees?

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Studies indicate that females engaged in domestic work are often subjected to oppression, various forms of exploitation, and abuse based on their gender and social class (Ribeiro, 2019; Ghaddar, 2018). Andall (2017) highlights that domestic workers are oppressed globally. Escalating poverty and poor living conditions in rural areas have driven a continuous flow of young and adult females into domestic work in Nigerian cities (Chen, 2016). Such patterns are prevalent in the Middle East, Africa, and Nigeria (Busza, 2016). Despite the International Labour Organization's (ILO, 2016) regulations on domestic workers' duties and working conditions, Ogbechie (2019) notes that Nigeria has yet to implement comprehensive legislation to regulate live-in domestic workers' duties and chores. Current focus is on wages, long working hours, and maternity protection (Pape, 2016).

In Nigeria, female domestic workers face enormous tasks and various forms of exploitation and violence in their employers' homes. The challenges experienced by live-in female domestic workers often consist of negative, stressful, traumatic, or difficult situations that they are often unable to resolve (Jackson and Edenborough, 2007). Nevertheless, numerous studies have been carried out about maltreatment, various forms of abuse and violations against domestic workers (Kandilige, 2023). Bosmans, (2016) study focused on the stigmatization and coping strategies among domestic workers. Ho, (2021) study also focused on the health stressor problems and coping strategies of migrant domestic workers. However, there is a niche in the body of research on the coping strategies of female domestic workers from a decolonial lens. This study investigates female domestic workers' perspectives on coping strategies. It uses decolonial reflections to contribute to understanding coping mechanisms rooted in African indigenous knowledge. The study provided platform and created a safe space for domestic workers to share their indigenous knowledge perspectives on coping strategies employed in their employers' homes, thereby making this research relevant not only in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, but also throughout Africa and beyond. It contributes to scholarship on decolonial reflections by highlighting how Nigerian female domestic workers use native philosophies to navigate abuse and exploitation. This research challenges epistemic violence against previously colonized communities by elevating indigenous knowledge. Using decolonial lenses, which critically investigate dominant practices and knowledge in modern society (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015), the study empowers female domestic workers to share their experiences and combat exploitation, abuse, oppression, and violence in their cultural context. This research provided novel empirical insights into female domestic workers' coping strategies as live-in employees. It contributes to academic knowledge of decolonization and indigenous knowledge. The researcher also intends to present the findings from the study to various domestic workers recruitment agencies and local governments in Ibadan city, Oyo state Nigeria. This will also serve as a women empowerment program to share vital indigenous knowledge of coping strategies in the domestic work sector.

By highlighting the reliability of African knowledge as a coping strategy and examining the power dynamics between employers and domestic workers, the study sparks new debates on coping strategies, decolonial perspectives, and their theoretical underpinnings. The study sampled adult female domestic workers, excluding minors under 18 years involved in child labour due to

potential psychological implications. Male domestic workers were also intentionally excluded, given the predominance of females in domestic work roles.

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this study is limited and geographically confined, since its goal is to explore domestic work in depth to uncover the coping mechanisms that women use in this context. Participants were selected from Ibadan City in Oyo State, Nigeria, specifically from two of the eleven local government areas: Ibadan Northeast and Egbeda. These areas were chosen carefully as they included both residential and commercial zones. However, the study did not identify or include the employers of the domestic workers to avoid bias and ensure the focus remained solely on the experiences of female live-in domestic workers. The research faced challenges in addressing the behavioural components of live-in experiences, especially when discussing sensitive issues such as physical assault, maltreatment, and sexual harassment. These topics are often difficult for individuals to talk about openly due to social norms regarding acceptable discussions. Consequently, discrete approaches were necessary. Some participants expressed a preference for a female research assistant who could better understand and empathize with their challenges. To address this, a female research assistant from Ibadan was recruited to facilitate conversations with participants who felt more comfortable sharing their experiences with her.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

Defining key terms is essential in a study to ensure clarity, accuracy, and consistency. This study conceptualizes the following key terms:

1. **Domestic work:** Domestic work in this study is defined as any form of work or duties performed in or for households by an individual employed in such a capacity (Taran, 2014). This includes tasks such as general house cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and dishes, ironing, caring for children, elderly, and running basic household errands (Tayo, 2007). Domestic workers, commonly known as house-helps or maids in Nigeria and other West African countries, have increasingly become integral to household operations. This shift necessitates a critical examination of its implications for family stability and women's traditional roles within the household. Contemporary domestic employment falls into three categories: live-in workers who reside with the employer's family and receive a monthly

stipend; workers compensated through non-monetary means such as education or skill acquisition; and, casual workers employed under specific, agreed-upon terms.

2. **Female domestic worker:** Female domestic workers, often referred to as housemaids, are women employed to perform various household tasks within a private residence (Marchetti, 2021). These tasks include cleaning, cooking, childcare, laundry, and shopping. Female domestic workers may work part-time or full-time, with their responsibilities varying according to their employers' specific needs and contracts. In this study, "female" and "women" are used interchangeably to refer to these workers.
3. **Decolonial reflections:** Decolonial reflections refer to a critical intellectual framework aimed at challenging and deconstructing colonialism's legacy and its ongoing impact on societies, cultures, and systems globally. Rooted in postcolonial studies, critical theory, and social justice movements, this framework advocates for the reclamation of autonomy and cultural identities for previously colonized peoples (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).
4. **Live-in employee:** A live-in employee is defined as an individual who resides at their place of employment as part of their employment agreement. This arrangement typically involves the worker living in accommodation provided by the employer, such as a room or flat on the property. The nature of live-in employment encompasses the type of work performed, housing arrangements, and the associated legal and social implications (Robinson, 2020).
5. **Indigenous knowledge:** Indigenous knowledge encompasses the experiences and wisdom accumulated by a given group, forming the basis for decision-making in both familiar and unfamiliar situations (Olokesusi, 2006). This study, through a decolonial lens, explores indigenous knowledge as a coping strategy among female domestic workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Indigenous knowledge, rooted in centuries-old habitual experiences, is integral to local cultures and environments (Abebe, 2011). It is a form of knowledge passed down through generations, aiding community members in overcoming challenges to their well-being (Ajibade, 2003).
6. **Coping strategy:** Coping strategies are the various techniques and mechanisms individuals use to manage stress, adversity, or challenging situations. These strategies, which aim to maintain psychological well-being, can be adaptive or maladaptive and vary from person

to person. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as ongoing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific demands. Coping strategies are categorized into two dimensions: emotion-focused and problem-focused. Emotion-focused coping involves self-preoccupation or other activities aimed at regulating emotions, while problem-focused coping seeks to solve or minimize the effects of stressful situations (Cohen and Lazarus, 1973). These strategies are pertinent to understanding how female domestic workers cope within their employers' homes.

## **1.8 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is structured into six chapters, each critically exploring different aspects of the research.

### **1.8.1 Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study**

The first chapter provides an introduction and background to the study, identifying the primary research problem: exploring the coping strategies of Nigerian female domestic workers in Ibadan, through a decolonial lens. This chapter outlines the main objective, to explore these workers' lived experiences. It includes the research statement, broader issues addressed, research questions, objectives, significance, limitations, and key concepts. The chapter concludes with a summary of its sections and an overview of the thesis structure.

### **1.8.2 Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework**

The second chapter reviews existing literature on domestic work and coping strategies, emphasizing the historical and contemporary contexts of African female domestic workers. It traces the evolution of domestic work from precolonial to post-colonial times, highlighting female domestic workers' migration patterns globally, particularly in the context of COVID-19 and mistreatment. The chapter delves into the concept of decolonization and the role of indigenous knowledge in daily life. It focuses on the feminization of domestic work. A decolonial perspective is used to identify gaps in the literature regarding coping strategies. Cohen and Lazarus's coping strategy theory, intersectionality theory, and African feminist theory form the theoretical framework. These theoretical frameworks are critically analysed and applied to the research.

### **1.8.3 Chapter Three: Research methodologies and epistemology design**

Chapter three justifies the use of a qualitative research design, specifically the phenomenological approach, to engage with domestic workers' perspectives on coping strategies and live-in experiences. Detailed information is provided on sampling techniques, sample size, the study area, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations for the study.

### **1.8.4 Chapter Four: Findings and discussions of the study**

The fourth chapter presents empirical findings from semi-structured interviews with female domestic workers in Ibadan. It provides background information on the domestic work sector in Ibadan and Nigeria. A profile of the research participants is presented, along with a discussion of their experiences and challenges. Based on a decolonial approach, the chapter provides a descriptive analysis of dominant narratives and the exploitation experienced by live-in domestic workers.

### **1.8.5 Chapter Five: Discussion and overview of findings**

This chapter offers a more detailed and critical discussion of the empirical findings, linking them to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. It examines the perspectives of female live-in employees on coping strategies, highlighting the strengths and dynamics of these strategies within the context of Ibadan.

### **1.8.6 Chapter Six: Conclusion and recommendations**

The final chapter synthesizes the study's essential findings and presents theoretical conclusions and arguments. The chapter links the findings to the analysis and concludes with recommendations based on the study's findings. A decolonial perspective is presented in this chapter to provide practical and theoretical insights into the coping strategies of Nigerian female domestic workers.

## **1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provides a background for the research and introduces the research problem: an investigation of the perspectives of live-in female domestic workers on coping strategies in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria from a decolonial perspective. The significance of the study and key questions were discussed in depth. The subsequent chapter will delve into a comprehensive literature review of domestic work. This will include the conceptualization of African women, the

historical context of domestic work in Africa and globally, and a critical examination of existing research on the subject.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Literature reviews help put the research into context by showing its relevance to a particular field. This involves the identification and analysis of various information resources related to the study (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2008). A part of the procedure includes an initial assessment of applicable resources and the construction of an account that integrates and explains them accordingly. The review structure was informed by the research questions stated earlier in chapter one. This chapter presents reviews of related studies in Nigeria and across the world. It developed and critically unpacked various concepts around domestic work across the globe and particularly in Nigeria. The study investigated Nigerian female live-in employees' coping strategies towards decolonial reflections in Ibadan Oyo state Nigeria which enabled the research to identify the cross-cultural similarities and differences in various findings on coping strategies of live-in domestic workers from a decolonial perspective. The literature's reviewed in this study was drawn from previous studies and works relevant and thus led to a better understanding of the research topic. Hence, this chapter was drawn from textbooks, academic journals, published and unpublished thesis/dissertations and electronic materials. Thematic classification was used in reviewing literature as it aligns with qualitative case study research methodology adopted in this study. This enabled the classification of related data efficiently and collectively. This chapter has been divided into three main sections. The first review started with the historical and current conceptualization of African women, then the notable roles of females in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial Africa, as well as the subordination of women. Consequently, the term "women and females" was used interchangeably in this study as it represents the sex and gender roles of women in African society. Thereafter, the discussion focused on the scope of domestic work which gave more insight into the feminization of domestic work across the globe and the gender distribution of domestic work. The impact of female subordination in African societies was also discussed in the study. Sexual molestation against female domestic workers was also revealed in the literature review section.

In the second section, the study presented literature on the migration of females across the shores of Africa. This literature shared more insight into the economic impact of domestic employment and the globalization of domestic work within African countries and other parts of the world. A new dimension of modern slavery of African nationals in the Middle East region was explored

through the trafficking of women and children. Nevertheless, it was also important to understand how domestic workers balance their domestic chores and personal life. It was also important to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on female live-in domestic workers across the world. In the same manner, understanding decolonial perspectives, which gave insights about indigenous knowledge was a critical area to examine as the study focused on decolonial lenses which explained how humans integrate indigenous knowledge into their daily lives. This gave more insight into its reflections on Nigerian society.

In the last section, the study presented a theoretical discussion of the relevant theories to the study. Three theories were incorporated into the study that provided relevant and in-depth explanations of African women's struggles. This research adopted Cohen and Lazarus' theory of coping strategies, intersectionality, and African feminist theory to explain African women's struggles in the domestic work sector. The theoretical framework was presented in the literature review for conceptual clarity and coherence. This clarity helped prevent ambiguity and allowed for a more systematic investigation of the research problem.

## **2.2 CONCEPTUALIZATION AND THE DUTIES OF AFRICAN WOMEN**

The conceptualization of African women entails different aspects which is shaped by varieties of factors such as culture, history and social factors (Tamunomiegbam, 2024). In many African societies, women have traditionally performed powerful roles within the family and communities often as matriarchs, care givers, custodians of cultures and spiritual leaders as women played key roles in the spiritual life of their communities. However, it is universally believed that women are physically and mentally inferior to men and their activities should be restricted to childbearing, rearing and domestic chores (Ademiluka, 2018). However, feminist scholars have criticized these narratives over the years that women's roles encompass different works of life, therefore females are physically and mentally capable as their male counterparts (Rowland and Klein, 2013). African women's history has been defined by a world enmeshed in woes, frustration, oppression, maltreatment and inequalities (Casimir, 2013). The feminist philosophy seeks explanation and justification for why African women/females have been denied a voice and not treated equally to their men counterparts. Casimir (2013) described that inequality is historically rooted in cultural philosophical falsities and colonialism which were used to justify women's oppression. In addition to the attitude of oppression of the colonial structure, Heffernan (2019; Biko 1973) acknowledges

that it is important to rally around to understand the cause of oppression. The study of African women's history emerged as a field soon after African history became a widely respected academic subject. Women's status in Africa varies across nations and regions. In most African regions the female ability to conceive is inferred as the primary responsibility for both biological and social reproductive functions (Wood, 2012). Even when a female has other goals or aspirations, they are often subjected to reproductive tasks and domestic duties in their homes (Madau, 2017). Afis (2010) argues that women are most likely to be mothers, wives, daughters and homemakers in Africa. In the African context, female duties include child care, cooking, brewing beer, fetching water, firewood, cleaning the house, floors and working in the fields (Walters, 2022). Pregnant women in Africa worked on the farms until delivery, then rested for three to four weeks after childbirth to continue with domestic chores (Lowe, 2016).

There are serious contesting perspectives about the roles of indigenous African women in the precolonial era and those of European women in the body of scholarships. Bustamante, Jashnani and Stoudt (2018), opined that gender is a colonial construct that emerged from dehumanizing indigenous Africans. This view of undermining and dehumanizing African women from Diebold (2021) is grounded on the "western human rights constructions which are based on the biological structures ascribed to a woman, and the social construction of men to be superior by virtue of their biological traits. Taking this further, Lugones argued that European women were thus seen as not equals to their male counterparts but superior to African males and females (2010: 743). As such Allen (1992) provided evidence that African indigenous communities were matriarchal compared with Europeans and this challenged European males' power and they ventured into a pilgrimage of dehumanizing African women. However, many scholars using the western genre have addressed the question of women's status in various African societies long before the women's movement ushered in the post-colonial era of concern about women's status in various societies and cultures (Familusi, 2012; Coquery, 2018). Hume (2017) and Sudarkasa (1986) noted that women in African societies are considered "Jural minors" who are subjected to the guardianship of their fathers and husbands. Housekeeping skills were mostly learnt by girls at a tender age from home by observing their mothers' daily activities and chores (Olsson, 2018). Therefore, by their married, they could prepare meals and take care of the home by themselves. Furthermore, Kurian (2020) emphasised the fact that African women lack control over their lives and resources due to their dependence. Other scholars have argued that gender existed among indigenous societies but was not constructed

upon power, race, or an “organizing principle/hierarchical category” (Diebold, 2021: 16), but a “psychological or psycho-spiritual sense” (Allen, 1992: 207). For example, in the West African region, the kingdom of Dahomey remains a notable example of an indigenous society constructed on the psychological, psycho-spiritual sense, and powers held by martial women who also played key roles as warriors (Larsen, 2021). Despite the fact that most African societies are patriarchal and uphold women’s traditional roles, there is ample evidence that some African women have attained high status and played significant roles in African development (Tunbosun, 2020).

Nevertheless, Sudarkasa (1986) and Olajubu (2012) have also argued that many non-African scholars view African women as "chattels" compared to their male counterparts. Chuku (2013) disagreed with this notion and stated that African females are not chattels and that the African society provides women with mobility by enabling them to contribute to Africa's development and help them understand the role of women in Africa. Rather than the dichotomy of masculine super-ordination/female subordination, Alahira (2014) holds that there is sex complementarity rather than masculine super-ordination/female subordination. Furthermore, some have argued that these assertions are not applicable to all African societies.

### **2.3 THE NOTABLE ROLES OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA**

The term roles describe specific obligation or function an individual holds in a particular context or system. Precolonial Africa saw African women play an important role in many areas, particularly economics, safeguarding the regions, politics, social, and cultural domains, as well as spirituality (Falola, 2012). Precolonial African women, more or less like their female counterparts around the world, were heavily involved in political, economic and social activities to the extent that their cultural norms and traditions allowed them (Fofack, 2014). Some women on the other hand, rose to the challenge of political economic and social activities, providing leadership not just to their female peers but also to their male counterparts in general (Akyeampong, 2014). For instance, Yaa-Asantewa (1863-1923) a Ghanaian notable woman who achieved recognition due to her significant contribution and influence, battled the British invasion of her homeland by preserving her people. However, she later lost her life during an invasion (Mowaiye, 2018). In Benin Republic, the Dahomey (female troops) fought alongside male soldiers from other regions during the precolonial period in pursuit of the defence of their homeland (Alpern, 2011). Female warriors played a significant role when the Shona ethnic groups were attacked by the British in

Zimbabwe (Raftopoulos, 2008). During the reign of Oba Esigie of Benin, between 1504-1550, his mother orchestrated a series of war adventures in support of her son's defence of the kingdom (Osadolor, 2001; Gunsch, 2017). Precolonial African regions and kingdoms played an important and powerful role in safeguarding their homelands. Traditional education in precolonial Africa was role-oriented (Blakemore, 2017). Females were involved in less physically and psychologically demanding activities. Many taboo conventions and beliefs, among other things, pushed women to the margins and imposed the idea of female subjugation (Onah, 2021). Throughout the precolonial period, the African woman's mind was not fully realized (Moagi, 2020). Women were not allowed to form their own organizations in the villages during this period, nor were they allowed to attend village meetings unless specially invited (Dogo, 2014). Moagi (2020) went further, stating that they could not run for any political positions because they were disenfranchised. Through their families, brothers, and spouses, they were involved in their community's political life and market activities (Amadiume, 2015).

Awortu (2020) argued from another perspective that women could govern their own affairs to a significant level based on sex segregation in African societies. Women were not equal to males in executive and judicial positions, although they played complementary roles in various political activities (Brundage, 2020). According to Tripp (2017) it is worth noting that African women, like their counterparts across the world, had little political clout when it came to governing the whole community with males. Even if a woman held a monarch's title, the councils were dominated by males who made decisions (Tripp, 2017). Women were not treated equally to men in terms of decision-making in a variety of economic activities, including agriculture, trade, and manufacturing, despite playing significant roles in these fields (Osafo, 2013). For instance, in African traditional societies, women were not allowed to own land or property; they could only get land through their male relatives (Green, 2013). As a result, the extent of the land available to them constrained their agricultural activity which was subsistence farming (Fofack, 2014). Women had a certain amount of autonomy in crucial areas of the economy (Parpart, 2019). Their economic activities, on the other hand, were not as well-managed and supervised as males'. As a result, African women, like other women around the globe, performed the essential duties of maternity and nurturing children (Shrestha, 2019). Dogo (2014) emphasized that external factors contributed to African women's subjection. This includes the laws enacted by Europeans in the nineteenth century. These laws portrayed the dominance of patriarchy as the female counterparts remained

submissive to the laws (Birgit, 2017). Nevertheless, it was also believed that a woman's prerogative is to obey while a man's duty is to command (Miller, 2007).

### **2.3.1 The influence of external factors on females' roles and duties in colonial Africa**

Before colonial dominance, Euro-Arab civilizations infiltrated Africa through trade, the introduction of Western and Arabic religions (Islam and Christianity) and other forms of contact and negotiation of trades (Jackson, 2015). Colonialism also influenced the legal basis for women's subjugation in Africa (Griswold, 2017). In the African region during the colonial period, European missionaries often promoted the Victorian ideal of womanhood, where women were expected to be pious, submissive focus on mothering nature and home making (Semple, 2003). This stood in stark contrast to the responsibilities that women already played in many African societies as leaders and economic contributors. Nevertheless, as Europe became industrialized in the nineteenth century, the subordination and oppression towards women persisted (Choi, 2022). African women like their European counterparts were kept out of public life. Consequently, women were denied several fundamental human rights, including freedom and employment in the civil service as executive members (Rubio, 2014). African women were oppressed by colonialism while their counterparts in Europe fought for equality (Clark, 2008). Women's opportunities for large-scale distributive and retail trade through local and long-distance trade were harmed by colonialism, whereas men had more incentives which surpassed women economically as a result of the great economic importance of their wealth (Amadiume, 2015).

During this period, African women were often marginalized and their traditional roles, powers and other notable roles were diminished by the colonial powers which imposed the western gender norms that often conflicted the indigenous African traditional roles in Africa (Singha,2024). The colonial policies in Africa introduced a range of policies which depicted women's rights and roles in the African continent (Thebe, 2023). These policies disrupted the traditional roles, introduced new economic systems and imposed the western gender norms. Some of the colonial policies which affected women's right include land ownership and Agricultural policies, labour policies, educational policies and taxation which was in favour of men in the African communities.

In the nineteenth century, African females, like their American and European counterparts, began working for pay during the colonial period which was influenced by colonialism (Byfield, 2018). Nonetheless, most African females did not hold positions of power. African females worked as

teachers, clerks, shopkeepers, typists, domestic workers in homes, and other low-status occupations (Lawrance, 2006). Women were more occupied with domestic chores and low-income occupations which limited the chances for equality (Bock, 2012). According to De Haas, (2021), women's wages outside the home remain low, limiting their social and supportive responsibilities. Despite these difficulties, certain African women had a significant impact on political events and the nationalist struggle, ultimately leading to political independence (Tripp, 2017). Women and activists, like Funmilayo Ramson Kuti, Efunroye Tinubu of Lagos, and Omu Okwei of Ossomari, played a significant role in Nigeria's political affairs due to the economic importance of their wealth to society (Achebe, 2020). A significant role was played by women during the apartheid regime in South Africa, as Lilian Masediba Ngoyi, an anti-apartheid activist, was elected to the African national congress executive committee and founded the federation of South African women (Clark, 2022).

As in many other parts of Africa, colonization had profound socioeconomic, political, and cultural impacts on communities. The colonization in Nigeria significantly impacted women's roles and economic activities, bringing profound changes that influenced social structures, labour patterns and economic opportunities. In Nigeria specifically, colonization manifested through indirect rule system which involved governing through existing traditional structures (Nwodim, 2021). Olukoju (2004) noted that the city of Ibadan has become one of the largest cities in the region. This was manifested through political restructuring, economic exploitation, social changes and cultural exchange.

### **2.3.2 The subjugation of women in post-colonial Africa**

African women's subjection in post-colonial Africa is a complex problem with roots in both native patriarchal structures and colonial legacies (Wisker, 2017). African women's lives have been impacted by this complicated reality. Thus, African women have been negotiating strategies as they deal with enduring the social, political and economic inequalities.

During the late 1950s, decolonization of Africa began, which led to the gradual independence of most African states during the 1960s to the 1990s (Brennan, 2015). During these periods, a number of African countries gained independence. In the years following independence, African males perpetuated the sexist attitude of their former colonial rulers toward African females, having been deeply affected by the colonial strategy to exclude women from mainstream development (Ocheni,

2012; Maloiy, 2018). Numerous African nations undertook nation-building initiatives following their independence, which substantially marginalized women (Anunobi, 2002; Ake, 2019). In post-colonial government and political institutions in the African region, women were frequently barred from leadership posts despite their active involvement in liberation campaigns such as those in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Algeria and Angola (Badri and Tripp, 2017). In Nigeria, the governance led by men continued to marginalize women by replicating colonial power systems (Dagunduro, 2020).

African women were employed in the industries at a minimal secretary level (Rodney, 2018; West, 2022). Similarly, to their placement in the workforce and earning potential, females also experienced discrimination in the workplace (Moyo, 2019). Despite the departure of colonial rulers in Africa, women's opportunities and rights were still limited to minimal jobs within the African societies. For centuries, the ancient universal practice of male supremacy in the family has metamorphosed into a philosophical tradition, and even in current times (Bryceson, 2019; Bassef 2019). Hudson (2020) pointed out that subordination and reliance have subjected women to men's supremacy in societies with muted female voices. Despite the conformity over time, there has been an increasing reform with the participation of women on equality which is still in progress in many parts of the world (Bekana, 2020).

The colonial rules created a gender hierarchy that persisted into the post-colonial era in Africa (Akyeampong, 2013). During this period, these rules eroded the roles and marginalized women from formal, political economic structures. Hence, it remains crucial to draw back from a decolonial lens by addressing and challenging the dominant colonial framework that has shaped how coping strategies has been understood. Decolonial reflections aims to dismantle the intellectual legacies of colonialism by recognizing and validating diverse indigenous knowledge systems including how different cultures perceive and practice coping strategies.

## **2.4 HISTORY AND SCOPE OF DOMESTIC WORK IN AFRICA**

The emergence of domestic work in the African can be traced to rural African women. Mookk, (2019) argues that millions of rural African women farm staple food crop with separate farm plots. Therefore, farming and the production of food crops was a major task for women, their husbands and family members. These women were responsible for the triple workload of agricultural production, housework, and childcare responsibilities (Panuccio, 2019). Domestic labour,

commonly referred to as housework, is commonly conflated with women's work (Oakley, 2018). Domestic work encompasses childcare, cooking, laundry, cleaning, washing and general household maintenance (Cheung, 2021). Suwada (2021) argues that domestic work is a jumble of multi-tasking activities that dominate women's everyday life, driven by love, obligation, care and concern for family and lineage rather than financial gain. Bryceson (2019) described domestic work from another dimension as the unmediated delivery of fundamental home necessities such as cooking, cleaning, childcare and the direct subsistence of food production through family farming. However, in terms of women's input, the extent and intensity of it might vary based on their participation in a paid job outside the house and childcare duties associated with fertility rates. Henn (2019) also noted that women's participation decreases if women have fewer children or are engaged in other wage labour activities. However, it cannot be eliminated without compromising labour supply, family and community survival.

In the 1900s, African domestic labour's shifting character has been linked to changes in African families and household membership (Bryceson, 2018). African family structures became diverse at the turn of the twentieth century, rarely resembling a western nuclear family model (Bryceson, 2019). The distinction between the home as a familial living unit, production, reproduction, decision making, and consuming units was unclear. Ekejiuba (2020) argued from his observation pertaining to a study in Eastern Nigeria that the fluidity of ordinary rural familial is made up of negotiated relationships that result in reliance and relative autonomy between the sexes. He extended further and used the term "hearth-hold" instead of "household". This is defined as a demographic group consisting of women and all her dependents which includes all members of the family. The hearth symbol signifies that women/females were responsible for household food security and well-being. Therefore, men belonged to a single hearth-house or alternated between numerous wives, mistresses and a mother (Ekejiuba, 2020). A woman's hearth-hold was the household unit that included consumption, production, and reproduction. It was a focal point of domesticity with the cooking hearth providing food, comfort, well-being, and security (Ziegler, 2013). Men were regarded as heads of homes and provided trading capital for their wives while women were heads of hearth-hold with well-defined obligations in monogamous or polygamous marriages (Peil, 2018). Men were primarily facilitators rather than direct agents of hearth-hold activities for women, which included providing housing and assets such as land, fruits, and livestock to support their productive hearth-house activities. Men contributed to women's main

food production from their farms, this also includes the paying of school fees and medical expenses as well as the provision of meat for the household (Hill, 2018).

The slave-trading of the precolonial period in Sub-Saharan Africa created confusion in domestic life and labour patterns in African societies (Bryceson, 2020). Women were left to provide for the needs of their families, while the men were captured and seized into forced labour by slave traders (Spuy, 2021). The influence of indigenous slavery and slave raids/capture, in Africa was the reason women quit farming for security reasons (Manning, 2004). By the mid-nineteenth century, the trans-Atlantic slave trade in West Africa had ended, while slavery was on the rise in East and Central Africa (Lovejoy, 2011). Compared to Trans-Atlantic commerce, East and Central Africa trade was less focused on export and more oriented towards women and children (Shaw, 2020). According to Wright (1993) and Da Silva (2017), they noted that women were used as pawns by chiefs or Swahili traffickers in East and Central Africa. Agricultural products, cooked food and sex were the main sources of commodified value in exchange; therefore, women were considered to be captives based on their sex. Captured women who made it to the metropolitan coastal and Zanzibar were meant to work as domestic servants and frequently concubines bearing children for their masters (Croucher, 2011). Bellucci, (2019) mentioned that with the exceptional rapid economic and social change since 1900, transitions from coerced to paid labour from agriculture to service sector work and from formal to informal employment have all fuelled the expanding commercialization of labour in society which has affected the devaluation of domestic labour.

Domestic service in the intimacy of the colonial household generated sensitivity about race and class barriers in society (McClintock, 2013). With the labour of 'houseboys' at their disposal, many colonial ladies were preoccupied with keeping their homes tidy while the houseboy's duties were to maintain the household surroundings and other minimal duties such as washing, cleaning the yard and gardens (Ferguson, 2014). In South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria and Ghana, female domestic employees who served as cleaners during the colonial period were preoccupied with rigorous duties which in turn made female domestic employees work as live-in workers (van Nederveen Meerkerk, 2015; Jansen, 2019). European employers provided residential dwellings for these workers (King, 2012). In most cases, elderly women with grown children were forced to accept such working circumstances. Domestic service, therefore, became an attractive livelihood because accommodation was provided at the employer's residence. Meanwhile, men working as gardeners, or cleaners had to travel on a long distance, each day to go to work (Nesbitt, 2016). During colonial

rule, aside from gardener duties, men also served as indoor domestic workers and were referred to as 'house boys', 'garden boys,' and even 'nurse boys,' to push the pram and wash nappies (Bujra, 2000).

Slavery, primitivism, and promiscuity were also associated with African female domestic employees (Demissie, 2019). Bryceson (2020) noted from another perspective that European women in Northern Rhodesia now Zambia, supposedly rejected female employees who they felt would appeal to their husbands, leading to the country's long-standing habit of hiring houseboys till present day. Nevertheless, there was also racism from the European women. Domestic service, interestingly, served as a source of employment in many places with divided income levels (Wills, 2009). Domestic labour was predicted to be the largest sector of the paid labour force in Zambia in the mid-80s, surpassing mining (Schlyter, 2009; Hansen, 2018). Based on African urban migration, during the colonial period, non-Africans dominated most towns and capital cities in African countries, consisting of European government officials, Asian and Lebanese traders, and a mix of educated European and Asian professionals working in health, education, or legal services (Njoh, 2008). The European government officials dominated the capital and economic driving cities of Lagos and Port-Harcourt in Nigeria (Olukoju, 1850; Izeogu, 2018). Adjepong (2013) affirmed that in Ghana the non-Africans occupied the capital city of Accra and Cape Coast region to facilitate the gold trading.

For all races, labour occupational distribution in towns was heavily directed towards men, while few non-African urban women worked in the official sector (Rodney, 2018). However, African females were employed as domestic workers in European homes (Ally, 2010). Blaauw (2010) also denotes that during this period, employers preferred to hire older women as domestic servants which became a profession for older women. This was because of the rising number of widows, divorcees and the emergence of health-related challenges such as HIV and AIDS virus in African countries. Urban circumstances conspired to bring supply and demand closer together. European colonial conquest and rule of the African continent were nearing completion at the turn of the twentieth century. This was generally justified in terms of stabilizing a strife-torn of the continent in the aftermath of the slave trading and colonialism in the region (Bryceson, 2010).

Nevertheless, the apartheid period in South Africa also lasted for years, contributing to the oppression and the establishment of new ethnic identities and geographical dispersion. This is

linked to the sexual liaisons between the Europeans men and African women. This gave birth to the "creolized" communities (coloured population) (Cohen, 2010). The legal prohibition of subordination and oppression by Europeans did not end the enslavement of Africans within Africa (Deutsch, 2006). A large number of formerly enslaved and oppressed persons continued to work in servile labour conditions for people who occupied social positions related to the old orders (Miller, 2018). This was especially true for females who performed domestic labour in houses; many married their masters in re-constituted households. Wives-turned-mothers working in rural farmhouses were the most common domestic labourers in Africa at the turn of the century (Kaberry, 2005). After colonial expatriates left the African continent, a new form of household work was established, reducing paid household jobs as extended families took on household duties (Masterson, 2019). Although paid domestic work was still present at some point, however, the extended families domestic duties surpassed the paid domestic work. The standard employment procedure was to bring a young female relative from the family's hometown/ villages to the cities to work as an unpaid nanny by getting free accommodation and other urban opportunities from the immediate family in return (Fapohunda, 2019). This practice became common in Nigerian cities, especially in the South-Western and Eastern regions of the country by recruiting females from neighbouring villages to the cities (Olayiwola, 2019). Due to their entry into city life, the young migrant females were able to complete secondary school and tertiary education. Females were eager to serve as it provided a chance and opportunity for them to leave rural/village areas and pursue a better life in the cities (Ngwamma, 2018). Recruiting female domestic workers from relatives in rural areas became a key channel for young females to migrate to the cities. This allowed the African population to quickly equalize what had previously been a largely male-biased urban sex ratio (Tacoli, 2012).

#### **2.4.1 The globalization of domestic employment around the world**

The employment of domestic workers in private homes has been a long-standing global practice. Domestic service is a trend that is widespread, deeply ingrained, and characterized by unfair and exploitative practices (Namukwambi, 2010; Varman, 2020). The issue of female domestic workers has been a prominent topic in the body literature for a very long time (Chang, 2016). Across the globe, there has also been an increase in the demand for domestic services. 4.2 million people were employed in domestic duties in various homes in India as of 2015 (Das, 2015). There has been an outrageous increase of 9 million domestic workers every year in the Latin American and Caribbean

regions (Novta, 2017). Baird (2017) also postulated that in Asia and the Pacific regions 21.5 million females were employed in private households to perform house chores and duties. Moreover, Brazil is reported to have the highest rate of domestic workers, with domestic workers increasing steadily every year. As of 2013, Acciari (2019) reported that there were 6.4 million domestic workers employed in numerous households in Brazil. In addition to this, 93% of the domestic workers employed were females and 60% of them were black females of African descent which represents the actual race and population of female domestic workers in Brazil (Harrington, 2016).

It is becoming increasingly common for migrants' female domestic workers to be employed in the Arab states of the Middle East. As of 2015, about 1.6 million female migrants were involved in housework duties across this region (Fernandez, 2014; Pape, 2016). Velasco (2013) states that after Asia and Latin America, Africa is the third-largest employer of female domestic workers in the world. In Africa, South Africa, Nigeria, Zambia, and Ethiopia are among the countries with the highest reports on domestic workers' employment in homes. However, South Africa has recorded the highest numbers of domestic workers in Africa, consisting of native African and marginalized women (Cock, 2011; International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2016). In South Africa, the domestic employment industry is predominantly made up of uneducated native African women from marginalized communities (Dinkelman and Ranchhod, 2012).

In a further attempt to highlight the rate of domestic work around the world, Reda (2018) states that young women from rural areas in Ethiopia are exploited as domestic servants and forced into prostitution within and outside of the country. According to Demissie (2018), a study on the migration of women found that a large number of young Ethiopian women are transiting through Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, and Libya as they travel to the Middle East region in search of domestic work jobs. Nigerian households employ certain individuals to perform housekeeping chores as part of the everyday routine (Nelson, 2017). While it is evident that domestic workers are widely employed in African homes, there are no studies that examine the coping strategies of female domestic workers from a decolonized perspective.

#### **2.4.2 The impact of patriarchy on females' subordination to domestic work**

Women are often enmeshed in a generalized patriarchal system where their subordination becomes a central feature and their entire way of life (Pamungkas, 2019). Patriarchy gives absolute

superiority to men while limiting women's rights (Sultana, 2010). Moeller (2018) also noted that patriarchy commands domination in public and private spheres. Adisa (2019) says patriarchal ideas in communities encourage male non-participation in domestic activities. Males were equally involved in domestic chores which are limited to certain areas. According to Jayachandran (2021), there is a societal viewpoint that domestic chores are the responsibility of women, while gardening is the responsibility of men. This assertion proves that there is a gender bias in the domestic industry since female employees outnumber male workers. As a result of patriarchal beliefs, domestic work is regarded as women's labour in most African cultures (Dillip, 2018). According to the socialist feminist argument, patriarchy and the subordination of females to domestic work are part of the root causes of women's oppression (Chinn and Wheeler, 1985; Hossen, 2020). Seedat (2006) also contends that female domestic workers' occupational choices are a manifestation of the socialization process they were exposed to at a young age as girls. This includes patriarchal norms and societal beliefs which culminate in females by performing house chores and domestic duties (Alabi, 2019).

A study conducted by Breakfast (2021) asserts that African women experience gender inequality and oppression on three levels: class, gender, and race. Cock (2019) also noted that domestic employment has absorbed many African women in recent years. This indicates that the sector has become increasingly distant from the gender equality and democracy activism that can be observed in other sectors. According to the International Labour Organization (2012), domestic labour is primarily gendered, since most employees are women. In contrast, domestic work is traditionally associated with the cultural concept of women's work, which entails soft labour, while men are structured for rigorous and strenuous work (Cerrato, 2018). This reflects the traditional and cultural organization of women's work. It is widely acknowledged that domestic labour was an institution that reflected racism throughout the apartheid era and continues to do so today (Ally, 2010). During colonialism in African countries, African women provided domestic support services to European households (Jennifer and Fish, 2006). Additionally, males worked as gardeners and guards (d'Souza, 2010). Poor women in Nigeria often take up domestic work as a means of reconciling their needs for income, a decision that is not always voluntary (Fapohunda, 2012). As a result, domestic work has become one of the most important sources of employment for women in Nigeria and other African countries (Ngwama, 2020). In several studies on domestic work, it has been demonstrated that women who serve as domestic workers are faced with poverty and deprived of

basic living conditions (Maani and Chen, 2012). As a result of poverty and a lack of sustainable employment opportunities, rural Nigerian females have been driven to relocate to metropolitan areas (Ikuteyijo, 2020).

Post-apartheid South Africa is known for its continual efforts to achieve equality for all residents, particularly marginalized workers. Despite 25 years of democracy, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world today (Meiring, Kannemeyer, and Potgieter, 2018). This inequality is reflected in the persistent over-representation of women, particularly African women, in low-wages jobs and low-skilled jobs. Domestic work has been a significant source of employment, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana (Dinkelman and Ranchhod, 2012). It remains a significant source of employment in South Africa, with over 953,000 native African women employed in this sector, accounting for 5.84 percent of the total workforce (Stats South Africa, 2019). This is significant given that domestic workers make up around 8% of the informal employment market in South Africa. The informal economy is one of the few areas of employment growth, with 220,000 new positions added between 2017 and 2018 (Stats South Africa, 2018).

Domestic workers are often females who work under difficult conditions, facing violence and exploitation. Domestic workers are characterized by a sense of entrapment and dependency on their employers (Chung, 2020). There are few formal jobs available in the current society, while many females are subjected to gender discrimination of class, race, and ethnicity (Grusky, 2019). As most of these workers are from poor households, they generally have low levels of education and few marketable skills, other than maintaining the house chores and caring for others (Peterson, 2007). Traditionally, cleaning, cooking, caring for children, and caring for the elderly are considered women's work (Alabi, 2019), so men have a difficult time competing with women on the job market. Thus, domestic work remains one of the few employment options available to less privileged women from marginalized communities. The undervaluation of domestic work is influenced by gendered perceptions of domestic employment in homes and society's class structures (Tomei, 2011).

Bennett (2005) stated that individuals are born into a particular culture with its norms and traditions, which in turn determine how they view the world. According to Cerrato (2018), women have very limited choices when it comes to domestic activities, since most domestic chores are

gender specific. Marais and Van Wyk (2015) report that poverty remains a major motivator for young women seeking work as live-in domestic servants. According to Weybright, et al. (2017), poverty and teenage pregnancy are factors that influence the inability of young female high school students to complete and pursue higher education, resulting in young women working for domestic companies in major cities (Panday, 2009; Weybright, Caldwell, Xie, Wegner, and Smith, 2017). Even though African females have historically had limited professional opportunities due to low levels of formal education, Marais and Van Wyk (2015) argue that high unemployment has led educated indigenous African women to explore domestic work as a possible source of income in light of the high level of unemployment. As Meyiwa (2012) points out, society must take time to acknowledge the contributions of these women, who are entrusted with the care of the family and performing duties in the homes of their employers. It is important to recognize that domestic workers play an important role in various household settings as they create the necessary space for employers to take care of other tasks outside the household or pursue other career goals by making this commitment (Tayo, 2007). As the primary contributor to the development of human resources, productivity, and economic progress in the household, live-in domestic workers actively contribute to the development of society (Brizi and Bertolaso, 2017). The current economic environment has exposed female workers to a variety of forms of exploitation and placed limitations on their lives and the lives of their families (Blackett, 2011; Seedat, 2006). In recent years, workers have been concerned about low wages, sexual harassment, violence, and intimidation when they attempt to organize themselves (Demissie, 2018).

#### **2.4.3 Frequent occurrences of abuse and maltreatment of female domestic workers**

Domestic workers are subjected to not just physical assault but also verbal and non-verbal abuse, as well as various forms of sexual harassment, including rape, at their employers' homes (Lee, 2018). Verbal harassment includes sexist jokes, persistent and uninvited demands for sexual favours, and unwelcome compliments of sexual nature (Cortina, 2021). Non-verbal abuse occurs through visual communication that does not require physical touch or oral communication, such as lewd or suggestive gesturing, winking, leering, and inappropriate staring (Atkins, 2021). Erulkar (2007) noted that in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, young female domestic workers are among the most vulnerable to sexual violence. Given the fragmentation of domestic work life, domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment by male employers. There have also been

instances where domestic workers were sexually harassed by other workers, such as drivers and guards, in the employer's household (Thobejane, 2016). Besides, female domestic workers are also harassed by their employers and other household members (Pande, 2018).

Domestic workers lack job security, and employers often dismiss them for petty reasons, such as breaking a utensil (Mahajan, 2013). Shroff (2019) further stated that many domestic workers are accused of stealing by their employers, serving as an excuse to terminate their employment. Due to a lack of social protection in the informal sector, domestic workers do not enjoy the security that "decent employment" demands (Fernandez, 2019). Consequently, they are excluded from legislation meant to protect them from maltreatment and various forms of abuse. Additionally, domestic workers are not regularly remunerated because their employment is within a household, and benefits like pension plans and medical aids are not included. The abundant supply of paid domestic workers poses a constant threat of job loss whenever they do not follow their employers' discretion. Moreover, the supply of female domestic workers in cities often exceeds demand. Moghe (2013) noted that many domestic workers continue to work under extremely harsh and demeaning conditions. Because of the large pool of domestic workers, employers have the option to hire and fire workers at any time. As a result, these workers are often unable to bargain for their wages, leading to a downward push on domestic work wages (Sengupta, 2013). When workers demand higher wages, they are often automatically displaced by their employers due to the rapid supply and demand of domestic workers (Dinkelman, 2012).

In the Arabian states, human rights organizations have reported human trafficking, brutality, rape, beatings, starvation, excessive domestic chores, debt bondage, and sexual slavery (Nisrane, 2020). Suicide rates among migrant domestic workers in the Arabian Gulf are also high (Dervic, 2012). In Saudi Arabia, 37% of documented suicides are among migrant female domestic workers. In Lebanon, media reports indicate that at least one domestic worker commits suicide every week to escape workplace maltreatment, often leading to their death (Fernandez, 2020). This number is projected to have doubled, with further ramifications owing to the COVID-19 pandemic (Anti-Racism Movement, 2020). According to this study, domestic employees are subjected to mental, physical, economic, and sexual abuse, as well as duties outside their job descriptions (d'Souza, 2010). However, not much has been done on the perspectives of African domestic workers' lived experiences and coping strategies from a decolonial perspective, reflecting on African indigenous knowledge. Domestic work is often invisible and performed behind closed doors, making it

difficult to regulate (Anderson, 2007). Steedman (2009) noted that the legislative vulnerability of domestic workers is historically entrenched. In the United Kingdom, domestic workers' duties were excluded from legislation for a long time due to their proximity and intimacy with employers, among other reasons (Albin, 2016). Domestic workers are still excluded from working time regulations under regulation 19 of the Working Time Regulation Act in the United Kingdom (Mullally, 2015).

#### **2.4.4 Vulnerabilities of female domestic workers to sexual relationships and gender-based violence**

In today's society, many female live-in domestic workers are vulnerable to gender-based violence and are often forced into sexual relationships with the head of the household (husband) of working-class women (Christian, 2018). Infidelity and abuse of privilege by many spouses have led to shattered households and social instability within the family unit (DeSouza, 2009). Excessive outsourcing of chores to female live-in domestic workers has also contributed to increased instability in numerous homes. Sexual assault is another significant problem faced by domestic workers, which is difficult to quantify due to its recurring nature. Ribeiro's (2019) study on female domestic workers noted that migrant returnee live-in female domestic workers from Dubai to Ethiopia reported heinous sexual assaults perpetrated by their male bosses, children, and relatives. Demissie (2018) proposed another perspective, stating that some females hired as domestic employees later discovered their employers ran illegal brothels. This exposed them to prostitution, which is illegal in most Middle Eastern nations and the Gulf States.

Other forms of sexual molestation also exist for female domestic workers living or residing in the homes where they are employed (Rajan, 2020). Omer (2015) argued that more cases have been reported of adult males regularly sexually molesting female domestic workers, regardless of their age. Besides sexual abuse, female domestic workers are also subjected to physical abuse. In a news report from Beirut, Lebanon, a 33-year-old Ethiopian female domestic worker was savagely beaten and violently dragged into the back seat of a car by her employer's sibling. While this incident occurred, members of the community watched quietly, and no one intervened to help or stop the severe maltreatment and abuse of the female domestic worker (Demissie, 2018). Migrants from African countries working in domestic employment in the Middle East and Gulf States have sustained a pervasive culture of systematic gender-based violence in Lebanon and Dubai over the

last two decades (Hamill, 2011). Nevertheless, there are numerous unreported cases of widespread violence, rape, beatings, starvation, slavery-like practices, excessive domestic work, debt bondage, sexual slavery, and servitude of female live-in domestic workers in the region (Wickramage, 2017). African females still seek employment in this region.

## **2.5 TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING OF FEMALES AND CHILDREN INTO DOMESTIC WORK**

It has been reported that trafficking of women and children has been a major issue in some African countries (Okeshola, 2018). Women and children, especially young girls, are trafficked and smuggled within and beyond Africa to work outside of their home countries (Wilkins, 2020). Terms such as domestic servitude, domestic slavery, human trafficking for forced labour, and exploitation in domestic employment are frequently used interchangeably in this context.

Nguyen (2021) defines trafficking as the act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring, or receiving persons through means such as threats, force, deception, coercion, abuse of power, or exploitation of vulnerability. This includes exploiting individuals, particularly forcing females into prostitution or other forms of exploitation such as forced labour and organ removal, indicating the multifaceted nature of trafficking (Tadjbakhsh, 2020; Alabi, 2018). Albanese (2020) described trafficking as an organized criminal activity involving three or more people aiming for financial or material gains over time. This often includes smuggling migrants from their home countries to different regions globally. The smuggling of migrants and trafficking of humans differ; smuggling involves willing participants subjected to dangerous conditions, while trafficking involves ongoing exploitation (Mackenzie, 2020).

Reports indicate that migrants from West Africa, seeking better opportunities, are often smuggled through Libya to Europe (Kah, 2019). Trafficking victims either never consent to such acts or are deceived into consenting. The major difference between smuggling and trafficking is that smuggling ends upon arrival at the destination, while trafficking involves ongoing exploitation for financial gain (Asiyanbi, 2021). Several major trafficking patterns have been identified in West Africa, with internal trafficking from rural areas to metropolitan cities being the most frequent (Mbakogu, 2022). Shoa (2022) noted that adult women and young females are often recruited from villages to cities to work as live-in domestic workers. Another pattern involves trans-border

trafficking, particularly exploiting children in the labour market, often extending to Europe and the Middle East (Anichie, 2019).

Fernandez (2013) reported that over 30,000 Ethiopian women are trafficked each year by illegal brokers, enduring arduous journeys across the Somali desert and sea crossings to Yemen. In West Africa, women and girls from Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Niger, Benin, and Sierra Leone are trafficked for domestic service to Europe and the Middle East (Aronowitz, 2020). The demand for domestic workers has become a lucrative business (Fernandez, 2011). Ironically, some women who should lead the change against inappropriate hiring practices are involved in perpetuating illegal recruitment and trafficking (Adepoju, 2005). Tade (2014) noted that female recruitment into domestic work has become an organized illegal structure with global networks.

Human trafficking within and outside Africa has become a lucrative business for investors (Ikyernum, 2022). In Benin, there is significant internal trafficking of children and women from rural areas to cities like Cotonou and Port-Novo (Asiyanbi, 2021). Beninese citizens are trafficked to Nigeria, Ghana, Gabon, and Côte d'Ivoire for domestic work (Obikaeze, 2021). Poverty and lack of education drive this trafficking, as women and children seek better opportunities. Some are lured by false promises of education and a better life, which employers rarely fulfil (Nnamuchi, 2022). Nigeria is a central hub for trafficking women and children, with 83% of victims from Akwa Ibom State and others from various states (Ezeibe, 2021). Additionally, 90% of domestic workers during the height of trafficking into Nigeria were recruited from Benin (Folami, 2018).

Khan (2022) highlighted that traffickers prefer children under 16, contributing to the high rates of child labour in Africa (UNICEF, 2020). Recruiters often promise parents or guardians token payments and free education for child labourers, but these promises are seldom kept (Karenga, 2022; d'Souza, 2010). Trafficked individuals often face violence as domestic workers or street traders (Anichie, 2019). Despite efforts by governments and NGOs to eradicate inappropriate recruitment and smuggling, the business persists. Poverty and inequality in countries like Nigeria continue to drive women into trafficking for domestic work in the Middle East and Europe (Sinha, 2021; Demissie, 2018; Tade, 2012).

### **2.5.1 Migration of female domestic workers across the world**

Migration is becoming common in many regions of the world, especially as the number of women in feminized sectors such as domestic work is on the rise (Yeoh, 2014). The migration of women

has led to an increase in labour participation in marginalized communities, with many women moving from rural areas to urban cities within their country of origin and across borders. Albahari's (2015) study on Mediterranean migration revealed that thousands of nationals from Sub-Saharan countries take life-threatening risks by crossing the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean in small lifeboats to reach Europe, pursuing greener pastures.

Bastia (2018) argues that women often find transnational migration to be an empowering experience. Nisrane's (2020) study observed that many women use temporary contract migration to escape unwanted marriages, poverty, and dependence on patriarchal structures in their native countries, particularly in African regions. Migration is perceived as a means for women to support their families, develop skills, or uphold the societal ideals of womanhood (Parreñas, 2005). The employment of migrant domestic workers significantly impacts both their economic stability and personal lives.

In recent decades, a wave of migrant domestic workers has flooded Middle Eastern countries such as Dubai, Kuwait, and Doha (Baldwin, 2005). Similarly, European countries like Italy, Spain, Romania, the Netherlands, and Belgium have seen a consistent increase in the number of migrant domestic workers employed in private households over the past three decades, drawing academic attention to this sector (Albin, 2012). Another study highlighted that women use temporary contract migration to support their families and preserve their feminine values in developed countries (Parrenas, 2005).

For their livelihood and residence, migrant employees fully rely on their employers (Khan, 2011). Consequently, there has been a gradual shift in migration policies for domestic workers, with developed countries recruiting foreign workers from developing and underdeveloped nations to fill household labour gaps (Yeoh, 2010; Lin, 2017). Under these schemes, the governments of supplying countries provide unskilled migrant workers at low cost, aiming to gain a comparative advantage in labour supply. Both supply and receiving countries benefit economically from this transaction (Nisrane, 2020). In Middle Eastern migration policies, it is stipulated that workers who gain employment abroad do not have the right to bring dependents with them.

In contemporary times, many nations have reviewed and enacted laws guiding the migration of domestic workers. In Singapore, migrant domestic workers require a short-term permit contract that regulates their activities within a confined area (Roces, 2022). These temporary migration

schemes in Singapore are described as technologies of servitude (Lin, 2017). In April 2012, the United Kingdom introduced a work visa for migrant domestic workers called the Overseas Domestic Worker (ODW) visa, allowing them to work across the UK (Mullally, 2014). However, following the reintroduction of the ODW visa in 2012, the London-based organization Kalayaan recorded an upsurge in abuse, resulting in harsh living and working conditions and less freedom for those working under this tied-visa condition (Anderson, 2015). Despite this, few employees report abuses to the authorities (Demetriou, 2015). The newly enacted 2015 Act in the UK retains this contentious visa system, reigniting discussions over its flaws (Sloan, 2015; Anderson, 2015). A visa-on-arrival approach was also implemented to limit the excessive migration of domestic workers, as migrants were found to be misusing the ODW visa (Roberts, 2015; Sloan, 2015).

The Arabian region also created a migration sponsorship labour scheme for domestic workers, binding them to their employers or sponsors in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon (Pande, 2013; Demissie, 2018). Under the Kafala system, migrant workers enter the destination country under the financial and legal responsibility of a specific employer for the duration of the work contract (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; Mahdavi, 2013). The employer's strong authority and control under the Kafala system has been compared to human trafficking with work exploitation (Hamill, 2011). Omer (2015) affirms that the immediate dismissal of migrant female domestic workers is often related to sickness, injury, or pregnancy. Regular pregnancy and HIV tests are conducted, and positive results typically lead to deportation (Fernandez, 2014).

Yeoh (2014) affirms that migrant female domestic workers are exposed to numerous forms of exploitation based on their gender, class, religion, and nationality. Domestic work has been identified as one of the most common sectors of forced labour worldwide (Latham, 2019). Such exploitation and abuse include sexual assault, rape, deprivation of rest and food, and psychological abuse involving threats (Wickramage, 2017). Despite this, the coping strategies of females dealing with multiple exploitation experiences as live-in domestic workers remain under-researched, particularly in Africa (Pande, 2012; De Silva and Peiris, 2017). To aid their reintegration into home communities, it is crucial to explore and understand their coping strategies from a decolonial perspective, reflecting on African indigenous knowledge and the narratives of female domestic workers dealing with live-in experiences in their employers' homes.

### **2.5.2 Covid-19 and the lives of female domestic workers from a global perspective**

The literature review chapter would be incomplete without a critical examination of the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic. This significantly affected many occupations, including live-in domestic workers worldwide. The epidemic disproportionately impacted numerous jobs globally (Kugler, 2021), making migrant domestic workers especially vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and abuse during this period (Aoun, 2020). The ILO estimated that 2.1 million people were engaged in domestic work in the Gulf Cooperation Council nations of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the Arab states of Jordan and Lebanon (Khan and Harroff, 2011; AlTaher, 2019). Ngeh (2018) noted that the majority of domestic workers affected during the pandemic in the Arab states were female nationals from Asian and African countries, including Ethiopia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, Kenya, and Nigeria.

The COVID-19 epidemic triggered an economic crisis globally (Lukash, 2021). In countries across the Middle East and Africa, such as Nigeria and South Africa, employee salaries were reduced in most sectors, including the informal domestic work sector. Some female domestic workers were not paid during this period (Aoun, 2020). Fawaz (2021) highlighted that in Lebanon, the steep devaluation of the Lebanese pound exacerbated the country's financial crisis, affecting many migrant domestic workers who were unable to send funds to their home countries (Ansar, 2022). This not only added to the emotional and psychological stress of the workers but also impacted their financial stability.

Connell (2020) affirmed that at least one-third of Jordan's 75,000 foreign domestic workers lost employment and income during the pandemic. Despite their significant contributions to the economic and social well-being of both their home and destination nations, their efforts are often unappreciated and devalued (ILO, 2020). The pandemic's impact severely affected female domestic workers worldwide. Tazyeen (2021) contended that African migrant domestic workers in the Middle East were mostly affected. All residents in the GCC nations, Jordan, and Lebanon were at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the rising number of infections. This danger was magnified for female domestic employees responsible for cleaning and caring for children and the elderly. When a family member became unwell with COVID-19, domestic workers were required

to nurse them, as their duties included caring for household members (Begum, 2020). This exposure increased their risk of contracting the virus and facing deportation (Lokot, 2020).

During the lockdown, Amdeselassie (2020) confirmed that female migrant domestic employees were sent outside to conduct activities such as garbage collection, food shopping, or walking household pets, increasing their chances of infection. Live-in domestic workers had limited decision-making power while maintaining social distance. When they adhered to social distance, they often had to follow their employers' discretion, who might not observe such procedures, especially if they were essential workers in high-risk fields like healthcare (Aoun, 2020). When domestic workers contracted the virus, Taub (2020) noted they were often retrenched and evicted from their employers' homes immediately.

While some employers respected the dignity and human rights of domestic workers, abuses such as forced labour, discrimination, exploitation, and other forms of gender-based violence were frequent during this period globally (Nampewo, 2021). Several media reports from Lebanon, South Africa, Dubai, and Nigeria detailed incidences of mistreatment against female migrant domestic workers during the lockdown (Dermitzaki, 2020; Anti-Racism Movement, 2020; Anwar, 2023; Osiki, 2023). Female domestic workers faced numerous dangers, as employers often did not adhere to legal policies safeguarding their employment status. The hierarchical structure and power imbalance between employers and employees increased maltreatment likelihood (Khan and Harroff-Tavel, 2011). These offenses were frequently committed with impunity due to the lack of legislative protections for live-in domestic workers, with migrant female live-in domestic workers being particularly affected. Female migrant domestic workers attempting to flee exploitation and abuse were often re-victimized after trying to escape (Giammarinaro, 2020).

When female migrant domestic workers escaped exploitation, their visas became invalid, classifying them as irregular migrants under Arab law. These workers were sponsored by employers from their home countries to obtain visas for domestic work in Arab states (Aoun, 2020). Flight (2021) asserted that undocumented migrants apprehended by authorities during the pandemic were liable to detention before deportation and might face violence from police or security forces before and during incarceration. If they could not escape authorities, they faced assault, exploitation, and abuse while awaiting deportation or after being forcibly returned to their

home countries without proper investigation (Aoun, 2020). Female migrant domestic workers who escaped detention often became undocumented workers, limiting their employment opportunities. Many domestic workers rely on sporadic daily employment to make ends meet, but COVID-19 reduced the demand for this work globally (Pandey, 2021). Such workers were unable to pay rent and risked eviction, increasing their vulnerability to harassment by landlords (Gunda, 2021). Many migrant female domestic workers found themselves in dangerous legal and social circumstances, unable to renew their work permits during the pandemic (Shah, 2023). Seeking shelter during the pandemic, domestic workers often shared crowded rented flats with other illegal employees whose visas had expired and relied on precarious daily jobs for subsistence (Aoun, 2020).

Thousands of domestic workers were deported from different parts of the world during the pandemic, with the spread of the COVID-19 virus among live-in domestic workers exacerbating this issue. In the Middle East, Silvey (2020) reported that both documented and undocumented workers faced deportation. According to Amnesty International (2020), Qatari officials evicted hundreds of migrant workers after testing positive for COVID-19. Ethiopian nationals were summarily deported from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait to Addis Ababa on cargo flights during the outbreak (Deressa, 2020). The increase in deportations aimed to limit the virus's spread, as many domestic workers were infected (Gunda, 2021). However, governments in the Middle East and other countries where domestic workers were recruited, such as Ethiopia, risked transmitting the virus after the lockdown. Additionally, migrant domestic workers were often excluded from the COVID-19 response plans of the GCC nations, Jordan, and Lebanon, putting their health at risk (Al-Ali, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020). They were only prioritized for lifesaving treatment, and many were denied free testing despite the virus's spread (Azhari, 2020).

### **2.5.3 The contribution of domestic workers to the economy**

In modern societies, domestic workers play a crucial role in supporting the labour market and the economy by relieving working families of household chores (Thobejane, 2016). According to Lutz (2007), domestic work plays a key role in ensuring the economy's ability to function and continues to thrive. Albin (2012) noted that one-third of the world's households rely on domestic workers. The International Labour Organization echoes these sentiments, noting that although statistics on

domestic workers are scarce, the number of domestic workers worldwide is estimated to be over 100 million and rising in every part of the world (Thobejane, 2016).

In the wake of the world recession, domestic work has become an effective alternative employment opportunity for unskilled labourers who cannot be absorbed into other occupations (Farris, 2015). Increased rural-urban and international migration, as well as a lack of formal employment opportunities, have pushed many individuals, especially migrants, into the informal economy, where domestic work has become a major source of employment (Awumbila, Teye and Yaro, 2017). These factors have collectively contributed to a significant expansion in the domestic work sector over the past two decades across the world.

According to Steedman (2009), domestic workers make up a higher percentage of the workforce in developed countries than in developing countries. This disparity is mainly due to labour market structures in developed countries, which absorb a large number of people regardless of gender, race, and culture. In contrast, in developing countries, women's employment was historically low until gender equality was advocated. Paid domestic work is frequently coupled with unpaid domestic labour performed by women for their families, which is not included in gross domestic product (GDP) calculations or government statistics (Baxter, 2015). In many nations, the responsibilities of domestic employees are an important instrument for promoting growth.

Domestic work serves as a pathway out of poverty for individuals and families. In developing countries like Nigeria, where formal employment opportunities may be limited, domestic work serves as an accessible option for income generation. Consequently, domestic workers contribute to broader economic development by lifting people from marginalized communities out of poverty (Ngwama, 2020). Hellgren (2017) offers another perspective on the economic impact of domestic workers, stating that thousands of people migrate from their home countries in search of better opportunities by working as live-in employees. These workers often send portions of their earnings back to their families as remittances, which contribute to the economic well-being of families by boosting local consumption and investments (Fernandez, 2011).

Despite the importance of domestic work in today's society, regulating it remains a global concern (Blackett, 2011). More importantly, the employee-employer relationship is often so close that the former appears to be a family member rather than a co-worker. This reduces their perceived value and the measurement of their economic contribution. Zungu (2009) notes that the contribution of

domestic workers to the economy in Asia is often not considered in the Gross National Product (GNP), illustrating how domestic employees are undervalued in some parts of the world. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that live-in employees often work long hours without rest, are paid very little, and are prone to unjustified termination without notice or compensation (Zungu, 2009). These challenges highlight inconsistencies in domestic workers regulations, leaving live-in female domestic workers at a disadvantage as they are vulnerable to economic hardship and maltreatment from employers.

#### **2.5.4 Long working hours and low wages attributed to domestic work**

Over the years, various documented literature has highlighted the long working hours of domestic workers, which violate fundamental human rights. However, some countries guarantee these rights and adhere to regulations guiding domestic workers, though these regulations vary globally (Poblete, 2018). In India, the national policy for domestic employees guarantees the right to minimum wage rules, set working hours, rest periods, and social security benefits (Oelz, 2014). India's case illustrates that some countries are taking the plight of domestic workers seriously and are implementing necessary protections against social and economic exploitation.

In the United States, the Fair Labour Standards Act (FLSA) provides protections for domestic workers, including minimum wage, overtime pay, and limitations on working hours (Hiller, 2009). In the United Kingdom, the Employment Act provides certain employment rights for domestic workers, including a written agreement on the job offer (Albin, 2012). Blackett (2019) noted that Singapore's Employment of Foreign Manpower Act covers domestic workers and establishes guidelines for their employment. Similarly, South Africa's Basic Conditions of Employment Act provides protections such as limits on working hours, paid leave, and notice periods for termination (Mudau, 2017).

Despite the importance of domestic work to modern society, its regulation remains a challenge as most employers do not comply with ILO regulations regarding domestic workers (ILO, 2016). Many domestic workers are denied proper payment, with some employers refusing to pay or paying very low wages, believing they are providing favours by offering accommodation and food (Nesbitt, 2016). Despite these circumstances, there has been an increasing global demand for domestic employees (Gobind, Plessis and Ukpere, 2012). D'Souza (2010) opined that numerous domestic workers are overworked and unprotected, making them vulnerable to exploitation.

Various socio-economic issues lead to the underpayment of domestic workers (Dinkelman and Ranchhod, 2012).

In Nigeria, the average remuneration of female domestic workers is lower than in other sectors due to salary anomalies and the nature of their employment, which determines the lowest amount they earn as informal sector workers (Osiki, 2022). Domestic workers experience social and psychological issues due to their low pay, such as stress and uncertainty. Before 2002, there was no standardized minimum wage for domestic workers in South Africa, and wages were based on negotiations. Domestic employees were often reduced to simple slaves, reliant on the whims of their employers, who unilaterally determined salaries. In recent years, South Africa has attempted to build laws and regulations to safeguard domestic workers and increase their resistance to workplace challenges. In Nigeria, ILO regulations intended to protect domestic workers' rights are not strictly followed, and remuneration is determined by employers based on the rigorous chores performed (Olayiwola, 2019).

Chen (2011) argued that domestic employees are recruited in private households, resulting in an unequal power balance favouring employers. Consequently, domestic workers are frequently subjected to various forms of abuse. It is worth emphasizing that domestic job duties are stereotypically seen as women's work and are therefore undervalued and disregarded. Du Toit (2013) argues that domestic work is highly personalized and non-standard, making regulation problematic in developing countries. This situation compels employers to oppose legal standards for domestic employees, claiming that domestic labour is a private family arrangement rather than employment.

Kumar (2017) attest to the fact that due to a lack of formal education, domestic workers are often unaware of the protective legislation in place for them, leading to continual suffering behind closed doors. The ILO (2016) noted that women dominate the domestic work sector, which requires unique considerations and protections. Therefore, it is important to engage female domestic workers in discussions about the challenges they face and methods to address the obstacles resulting from the regulation of domestic work as unrecognized labour within their employers' homes.

### **2.5.5 Striking a balance between domestic work and personal life**

Domestic workers are classified as workers in the informal or unorganized sector, where there are few or no legal contracts governing working conditions (Husni and Suryani, 2018). This has led to a high prevalence of work-life conflict (WLC) among domestic workers, who struggle with the unstructured nature of their work (Husni and Suryani, 2018; Rani and Saluja, 2017). Work-life conflict is an inter-role conflict where work and life pressures are incompatible (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Professional work-life conflict occurs when an employee's work activities interfere with their personal life, or vice versa (Adisa, 2016). Work-life conflict can originate at either work or at home (Greenhaus, 2006). In the context of domestic chores, work-life conflict arises when an employee's ability to meet expectations in one area interferes with their ability to meet them in another. It is often caused by role demands and incompatibility between work and personal lives (Bai, 2021). Job instability and high effort levels increase the risk of work-life conflict for domestic workers. Sayah (2013) highlights that women in domestic roles are particularly vulnerable to work-life conflict.

The intimate and proximate nature of domestic employment makes it challenging to achieve a work-life balance (Anderson, 2007). Lutz (2008) argues that the relationship between domestic workers and employers is emotional and personalized, characterized by power imbalances and reliance. Live-in workers, often considered part of the family, may experience complicated relationships with their employers due to this closeness and the resulting power dynamics, which can affect their remuneration (Parreas, 2001).

To balance work-life conflict, boundaries between the public and private spheres are frequently renegotiated among employers, family members, and domestic employees (Davidoff, 2003). The home is an isolated work environment, contributing to the informality of employment relationships. Domestic workers often work alone, with limited interaction with the outside world, restricting their access to domestic workers' organizations. For live-in employees, working and living conditions are intertwined; living conditions include acceptable norms and respect for workers' privacy (Kouta, 2021). Domestic work activities are often invisible and hidden from public view, making abuse and maltreatment easy to overlook (Varman, 2021). The residential dwelling is immune to labour inspections, complicating the enforcement of domestic labour laws (Paraciani, 2021). Despite these challenges, there is insufficient investigation into domestic

workers' coping strategies, especially in Nigeria. While some studies have focused on employees' work-life balance in Nigeria, none have explored the decolonial perspectives of domestic workers on the strategies they adopt to balance life and work (Adisa, 2016).

### **2.5.6 Recruitment dimensions into domestic work**

Several factors contribute to the recent increase in domestic work employment. These include changing family values due to industrialization, modernity, and greater female labour force participation (Daming, 2019). According to Taiwo (2014), the traditional extended family unit is being rapidly replaced by smaller nuclear families, though some areas are seeing a resurgence of the extended family practice (*Ubuntu*). Simpson (2004) noted that during the colonial period in Africa, domestic workers were often mistreated by their employers. Today, domestic employees often negotiate terms of employment before starting work, sometimes insisting on upfront payment for services, along with other costs such as transportation (Awumbila, 2019).

Typically, domestic workers in Africa receive their wages and any other additional benefits from their employer's (Song, 2020). They have the freedom to terminate their employment at any time, contrasting with Middle East and European countries where legal and economic conditions often restrict job mobility (Zelege, 2015). Ngwama's study (2016) on domestic work in Nigeria revealed that a majority of domestic workers lack formal employment contracts, contrary to labour laws in many countries.

In contemporary contexts, domestic work generally falls into three categories. The first involves live-in workers who reside with their employer, receive a monthly stipend, and share living space (Momsen, 2003). The second category includes workers compensated through non-monetary means such as education or skills training (Olayiwola, 2019). This form is common in Nigeria, where rural migrants seek better opportunities in urban areas by joining extended families as live-in domestic workers. The third category consists of workers employed under specific terms, measured by hours and tasks (Ahmed, 2016).

Domestic employment differs significantly from formal sector jobs, with blurred lines between employer and employee compared to conventional workplaces like offices or factories (Ticona, 2018). Domestic workers may experience isolation and lack of visibility due to the informal nature of their work, often performed outside of labour regulations and social protections (Mehta, 2019). Female domestic workers are predominantly employed in private households rather than formal

workplaces, further isolating them from the broader labour sectors (Albin, 2012). Their working conditions often depend on the goodwill or discretion of their employers (Cock, 2011).

Estimating the total number of formal and informal domestic workers in Nigeria, which includes roles like 'house girls,' 'maids,' 'houseboys,' gardeners, and security guards, remains challenging. Recent International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates from twenty countries suggest there are 5.2 million domestic workers globally (Pape, 2016). Despite increasing demand in African capitals and the Middle East, urban migration has sometimes outpaced job opportunities, prompting many female domestic workers to seek employment abroad (Romero, 2018; Fernandez, 2013).

## **2.6 THE PREVALENCE AND EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC WORKERS IN NIGERIAN HOMES**

Domestic work is prevalent in practically every society, though it is most common in developing nations, particularly in the African regions (Okafor, 2009). This form of employment is also experiencing a resurgence rather than a decline in Europe and other developed countries (Gamburd, 2020). In Nigeria, female domestic workers are often referred to as 'housemaids' or 'house helps', and their employment has become widespread across Nigerian households (Omokhodion, 2009). These workers are hired to perform daily domestic tasks within their employers' residences, in exchange for monetary or other rewards (Blackett, 2019). Historically, domestic workers often come from disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups, providing domestic and care services to wealthy families (García, 2021). More than 85% of domestic workers in Nigeria are female (Tade and Aderinto, 2014), employed through formal arrangements or informal suggestions within Nigerian society.

Nesbitt-Ahmed (2012) provides insights into the nature of domestic work and the living conditions of domestic workers, issues that still need addressing in Nigeria and other African countries. Domestic workers living with their employers spend a significant portion of their daily hours and share their lives with them (Iecovich, 2011). Tade and Aderinto (2012) found widespread trafficking of minors to work as domestic servants in affluent Nigerian homes, a phenomenon also observed in other African countries like the Republic of Benin (Okafor, 2009). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), about 47 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa are economically active, with many underage children employed as domestic workers to assist their employers, often in informal business settings (Akanji, 2013). Olayiwola (2023) discovered that

young individuals aged 19 to 21 work as live-in domestic workers in Nigerian homes, echoing a 2018 UNICEF survey that reported approximately 15 million underage children in Nigeria working in the informal sector (Oluyemi, 2018).

Based on the literature surveyed, it is evident that the majority of female domestic workers in Nigeria are known as "Omo odo" and "Carers" in Southwest Nigeria, "bawa" in Northern Nigeria, or "nwaulo" in Eastern Nigeria (Akanle, Adesina and Nwaobiala, 2018). These women are employed to perform various household tasks such as laundry, dish-washing, general cleaning, childcare, and cooking, while their male counterparts are often employed as drivers, gardeners, and gatekeepers (Nesbitt-Ahmed, 2017).

The demand for domestic workers has increased significantly as professional women spend limited time at home (Taiwo, 2013). According to Okafor (2006), this trend helps professional women maintain family stability and career success. It has also been argued that professional women employ domestic workers primarily to manage household chores and childcare, enabling them to focus on their careers (Oyeleye, 2014). Changes in family values and desires, particularly among women pursuing careers, also contribute to the employment of domestic workers. Additionally, it has become increasingly challenging for families to subsist on a single income, leading married couples and single parents alike to hire domestic workers to manage household duties (Lutz, 2002; Hertz, 2021; Tunji, 2021).

The engagement of women in paid employment outside the home has improved their social standing in terms of financial independence and monetary benefits (Bay, 2019). However, this shift has also led to concerns about the impact on women's roles as wives and mothers, potentially affecting the stability of African family units. Consequently, live-in female domestic workers often manage all household tasks, from laundry and childcare to meal preparation and general cleaning for the entire family (Namuggala, 2015).

Domestic workers are expected to perform a variety of tasks, often multitasking to alleviate poverty in their lives (Boersma, 2016). Despite many being uneducated, the economic hardships they face further impact their living standards (Ntoimo and Abanihe, 2014). However, there is limited documentation on the coping strategies employed by domestic workers, highlighting the need for further research from a decolonial perspective and drawing on indigenous African knowledge.

### **2.6.1 The exploitation and coping mechanisms of domestic workers**

African female domestic workers face numerous challenges, including working without contracts, experiencing sexual harassment, receiving low wages, enduring heavy workloads, and suffering mistreatment, all of which significantly impact their well-being (Mudau, 2017). Thobejane (2016) highlighted that female domestic workers encounter more challenges compared to their male counterparts. Van (2019) observed that domestic workers in various households adopt coping mechanisms such as enduring physical assault, abusive language, and curses from their employers. Additionally, Thobejane (2016), in a study conducted in Mpumalanga province of South Africa, noted that domestic workers often cope by remaining silent and composed in the face of challenges, a strategy aimed at managing stress levels. Tolla's (2013) research similarly revealed that domestic workers choose to remain quiet to avoid verbal and physical abuse from their employers, constantly monitoring their employers' moods to prevent conflict. Despite these strategies aimed at maintaining peace, they often contribute to unhealthy employer-employee relationships.

Nisrane (2020) suggested that employees frequently accept their circumstances and adhere to their employers' rules and regulations, even in the face of abuse or oppression, reflecting the hierarchical structure between employers and domestic workers. Moreover, Musaya (2013) argued against the silence adopted by domestic workers, advocating for communication as a vital coping tool that enables both employers and employees to voice their concerns and resolve issues. However, domestic workers are often hesitant to engage in discussions or disagreements with their employers out of fear of losing their jobs.

Religion and spirituality also served as significant coping mechanisms, providing domestic workers with a sense of connectivity to their spiritual beliefs (Van, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to explore these coping strategies from a decolonial perspective, drawing on African indigenous knowledge to understand domestic workers' perceptions and coping mechanisms in academic discourse. This approach aligns with Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2020) call for decolonizing methodologies that challenge Western-centric knowledge and empower marginalized groups to become active participants in shaping research agendas. To address these gaps comprehensively, further exploration of coping strategies from an African perspective is clearly necessary, particularly within contexts such as Nigeria.

### **2.6.2 Decolonization in a broader context**

The term decolonization refers to the changes colonized countries undergo upon achieving political independence from Western colonizers (Jackson, 2019). It encompasses more than just political autonomy and includes economic and cultural shifts away from colonial legacies, such as retaining economic structures and educational systems established by former colonial powers (Mamdani, 2016). Consequently, the production of knowledge about Africa often focuses on cultural representation (Grosz-Ngaté, 2020). However, the incomplete nature of decolonization is evident in persistent stereotypes portraying Africa as chaotic and plagued by illness and disorder (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018), stemming from the imposition of Western ideals. Fanon (2008) characterizes decolonization as a liberation of the mind, emphasizing the need to overcome psychological effects lingering from colonialism. This notion, termed "decolonization of the mind," seeks to free Africans from the complexities inherited from colonial rule (Fanon, 2008). Creary (2012) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) argue for centering African discourses in scholarship as a continual struggle for decolonization and the development of indigenous African knowledge. Oyewumi (2011) asserts that African thought cannot be solely based on Western intellectual frameworks, which historically dominated African perspectives. As part of the decolonization process, understanding how colonialism exacerbated marginalization, particularly of African women, is crucial (Ruysen, 2018). Gender discrimination, a global issue affecting women disproportionately in developing countries like Nigeria (Klasen, 2018), underscores the need for African perspectives to address patriarchal norms that perpetuate female inferiority (Chan, 2020; Nkenkana, 2015).

Central to achieving decolonization is amplifying African voices in intellectual discourse, countering historical biases favouring Western ideas over non-Western perspectives (Ndlovu, 2018). African feminists and scholars must leverage academic spaces influenced by postmodern, postcolonial, and cultural studies to validate African intellectual contributions (Creary, 2012). This approach allows for decolonial reflections on diverse phenomena, transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries to encompass the arts, media, and philosophy. Ultimately, decolonization is a quest to affirm African humanity on its own terms, necessitating robust intellectual engagement and the assertion of African narratives across various domains of knowledge.

Before the decolonization project gained prominence, colonial practices in Africa included the conquest and occupation of foreign territories, the enslavement of indigenous peoples, economic exploitation, and the introduction of Western knowledge and education designed to denigrate the humanity and cultures of colonized peoples, thereby perpetuating structural and socio-cultural hegemony (Alabi, 2023; Kelley et al., 2000). Colonial oppression disrupted and destroyed people's history, lives, and dignity globally, particularly in Africa (Heleta, 2018). According to Tuhiwai Smith (2019), indigenous African peoples were thoroughly disorganized by imperialism and colonialism, severing them from their indigenous practices, significantly impacting their histories, languages, social networks, and unique ways of feeling, thinking, and engaging with the world (Smith and Millspaugh, 2015).

In this study, decolonization involves reconstructing Africa and African societies from their historical civilizations, political economy, and political systems (Heleta, 2018). Decolonization perspectives, as highlighted by Fanon (2008), are primarily about reclaiming humanity violently eroded by the colonialists. Jeppesen (2017) noted that the decolonization process typically involves negotiating new political arrangements, transferring power from colonial authorities, and establishing new institutions and policies that reflect the aspirations and needs of the population.

Sium (2013) further explained that decolonization can be a complex and rigorous process associated with struggles against colonial norms and practices. It also involves the reclamation of cultural identity and heritage within a community. It often involves confronting the legacy of colonialism and Eurocentric perspectives, including exploitation, cultural suppression, and social inequalities (McGibbon et al., 2014). Decolonization is positioned in this study as a critical component of the movement for social justice and human rights, especially for indigenous people from marginalized societies, who navigate their intellectual constructs from decolonial narratives (Hargreaves, 2014).

It is significant to draw from knowledge marginalized at the periphery to contribute to an in-depth understanding of decolonial reflections, navigated from indigenous knowledge perspectives. These perspectives are adopted as coping strategies by female live-in employees in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. One objective of decolonization is to liberate African complexities; thus, this study explores diverse cultures and coping strategies from the decolonial perspectives and thinking of live-in female employees in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Wilson (2004) concluded that decolonial

reflections also involve examining how indigenous knowledge surpasses colonial ideologies and power structures by centering on the various perspectives and experiences of those marginalized within society.

Ultimately, decolonial reflection seeks to challenge and disrupt dominant power structures and worldviews (Eurocentric perspectives) to create more equitable societies that recognize and value the diversity of African marginalized cultural traditions and practices (Jimenez-Luque, 2021).

Through the investigation and objectives of this study, critical themes emerged from discussions with the participants. These discussions revealed the live-in employees' perspectives on indigenous knowledge and their thoughts on decolonized methods of thinking. Critical decolonial reflections on the coping strategies employed by female live-in domestic workers were also explored in the study.

### **2.6.3 African indigenous knowledge system contextualized**

It is essential to elucidate the concept of African indigenous knowledge from a decolonial perspective. African indigenous knowledge lacks a singular definition; however, there is a generally accepted understanding of what constitutes it. It encompasses ethno-science, folk knowledge, traditional knowledge, local knowledge, and Aboriginal knowledge. According to Warren (1996) and Njoh (2016), indigenous knowledge refers to local knowledge specific to particular cultures. It is a systematic body of knowledge acquired by local people through accumulated experiences, informal experimentation, and profound awareness of the environment within a specific cultural context (Rajasekaran, 1993; Owiny, 2014). Terms like indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge describe the long-standing traditions and practices of regional populations (Dahl, 2020).

These forms of knowledge are considered unconventional, evolving beliefs, practices, and technologies without direct input from contemporary formal scientific establishments (Adedipe, 2004; Salami, 2020). Indigenous knowledge (IK) has gained global popularity and varies in interpretation across regions, generally recognized as local or traditional knowledge passed down orally through generations of indigenous peoples. Terms such as indigenous technical knowledge and traditional environmental knowledge describe these ideas within traditional communities. Lipe (2019) defines indigenous knowledge as "a body of knowledge built over generations by a group

of people living in close contact with nature." Such knowledge is context-specific, tailored to local needs and conditions.

Godfrey (2019) further describes it as a systematic body of knowledge acquired through local experiences, informal experiments, and deep environmental knowledge within a specific culture. Despite challenges and changes over decades, indigenous knowledge persists (Nyon, 2007), deeply connected to its environment, as native peoples adapt to environmental changes with cultural resilience. In contrast to contemporary science, which is theory-driven, indigenous knowledge relies on sensory learning and practical experiences (Ogunniyi, 2007). Learning begins with concepts evolving into philosophies, tested through sensory perception. Unlike contemporary scientific methods, indigenous knowledge evolves through dialectical reasoning, where divergent ideas lead to principles or theories (Popper, 2005; Osborne, 2010).

Indigenous knowledge shares commonalities with modern science, employing concepts, ideas, philosophies, and principles in similar scientific methods (Turnbul, 2000). Verification through sensory perception—seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, experiencing, and moving—is fundamental to scientific understanding. This knowledge often passes through generations orally, encompassing stories, folklore, rituals, songs, and laws, distinguishing one society from another (Khanyile, 2021). Anton (2013) emphasizes the significant role of indigenous knowledge in community interests and survival strategies, crucial for aboriginal peoples (Mercurieff, 2020).

Finally, sustainability forms the bedrock of indigenous/traditional knowledge, rooted in a holistic understanding of human-nature interactions (Bodh, 2022). Recognizing and supporting local knowledge and cultures can enhance environmental conservation's efficacy and relevance (Sillitoe, 2009). Embracing African indigenous knowledge can empower African scholars to develop and apply intellectual theories and concepts grounded in African experiences, fostering deeper understanding and accurate representation.

#### **2.6.4 Contributions of indigenous knowledge to humanity**

Indigenous knowledge connects human survival to the natural world and its life-sustaining elements (Morojele, 2017). It describes how communities interact with their environment and offers solutions to their challenges (Son, 2019). Shaping worldviews, indigenous knowledge guides social, economic, political, and spiritual survival (Bruchac, 2014), explaining cultural evolution as people adapt to their surroundings. Al-Roubaie (2010) emphasizes that its significance

lies in its ability to simplify understanding of the world, starting with self-awareness. Its enduring relevance throughout generations underscores its value (Iloka, 2016), encompassing education, economics, politics, religion, sciences, and technologies within indigenous societies. Although basic, this knowledge provides a robust foundation for modern societal development (Sillitoe, 2009).

Indigenous knowledge significantly empowers local communities for two primary reasons (Imoro, 2022). Firstly, integrating it into research and management plans enhances validity and credibility, fostering cultural pride and local innovation in addressing community issues (Von der, 2016). Secondly, indigenous peoples possess crucial insights into local environments and sustainable resource management (Tom, 2019). Amidst global ecological crises, which stem from unsustainable resource exploitation, interest in indigenous knowledge systems has grown (Berkes, 2009). These systems offer potential alternative strategies for resource management (Dudgeon, 2003), emphasizing social desirability, economic feasibility, and sustainability in resource conservation (Mwantimwa, 2008).

Acknowledged for its role in long-term natural resource management (Ngara, 2013), indigenous knowledge contrasts with scientific knowledge, which has sometimes exacerbated social and environmental losses (Veblen, 2017). Indigenous peoples utilize natural resources sustainably, leveraging intimate knowledge of plants, animals, climates, and seasons not to exploit but to coexist harmoniously (Sen, 2005). Kgari-Masondo (2014) illustrates how animal emblems contribute to environmental conservation and social cohesion among Africans, reflecting how indigenous knowledge integrates into daily life. Social cohesion remains pivotal for survival in many indigenous cultures, often supported by complementary gender roles and consensus-based decision-making (Alabi and Olonade, 2022; Mulat, 2013).

Indigenous peoples often possess extensive knowledge of local flora and fauna unrecognized by scientific taxonomy (Obico, 2014). For instance, the Hanunoo people of the Philippines identify more plant species than documented by scientists in the same region (Famulusi, 2019). Traditional areas of indigenous peoples harbour a vast majority of the world's plant species (Pan, 2014), contributing significantly to medicinal resources (Sam, 2019). Adebobola (2004) notes how women in villages rely on indigenous knowledge for healthcare using local herbs, influencing family dynamics and societal norms (Mavhura, 2013). Some scientists believe indigenous

knowledge may hold critical insights for new medical breakthroughs, including treatments for diseases like AIDS and cancer (Pal, 2003).

Embracing indigenous knowledge is crucial for local communities to engage actively in environmental assessments, appraisals, and conservation efforts (Olatokun, 2008). It forms the basis for self-sufficiency and self-determination, fostering a resurgence of indigenous practices (Gaudry, 2018). Local communities utilize indigenous knowledge to rebuild and adapt to challenges (Munsaka, 2018). In Nigeria and across Africa, women possess extensive knowledge of agriculture, traditional medicine, land management, and family health, transmitted orally across generations (Anthony, 2020; Olatokun, 2009). This knowledge permeates various sectors such as medicine, agriculture, food processing, chemistry, textiles, architecture, biology, geography, engineering, history, and literature (Emeagwali, 2014), yet it remains underutilized in development projects, especially in Nigeria.

This study investigates Nigerian female domestic workers' perspectives on coping strategies through a decolonial lens. It integrates indigenous knowledge as a crucial cornerstone of decolonization. It aims to contribute to academic understanding of decolonization's role in development.

## **2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Grant (2014) stipulates that theories in research help construct and identify ideas relevant to the research problem under study. Therefore, theoretical understanding broadens knowledge scope, enabling a comprehensive understanding of key research areas. This study focuses on the perspectives of Nigerian live-in female domestic workers on coping strategies from a decolonial lens. It draws upon three theories: Cohen and Lazarus' theory of coping strategies, intersectionality theory, and African feminism theory. These theories expand the body of knowledge and relate to the perspectives of Nigerian live-in female domestic workers on coping strategies, thereby aiding in understanding human phenomena from an African feminist perspective.

Donald (2006) maintains that various researchers have influenced approaches to addressing oppression and marginalization in the female domestic work sector. Studies addressing the challenges and rural-urban migration among female domestic workers have also been conducted (Atnafu, 2014; Awosusi, 2012). Nonetheless, the study of females working as live-in employees ("house-helpers") has been ongoing for decades and still requires further investigation. Therefore,

there is an urgency to understand the coping strategies of Nigerian live-in female domestic workers from a decolonial perspective.

Before applying each theory, it is crucial to note that this study is situated within feminist epistemologies reflecting African indigenous knowledge through a decolonial lens. The study aims to produce knowledge derived from the day-to-day experiences of a group traditionally excluded from contributing to academic knowledge (Collins, 2000). Theorizing provides an alternative conceptualization by centring on previously neglected experiences and voices.

### **2.7.1. In-depth Understanding of Cohen and Lazarus' Coping Strategy Theory**

Coping describes how societies and individuals deal with crises (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). It is also referred to as the “struggle” against all forms of external and internal adversity. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) were considered the founders of the related research on coping, which is defined as an ongoing cognitive behavioural effort used to manage specific demands. Also, Snyder (1999) explanation of coping strategy or process involves the concept of defence mechanism which plays a vital role in the coping strategy as it outlines numerous psychological manoeuvres that individuals use to deflect, distort or disguise undesirable thoughts and feelings. Cohen and Lazarus (1973) mentioned two dimensions in the coping strategies which are emotion-focused, and problem focused coping strategies. This became relevant to the research as they encapsulated the coping strategies adopted by the live-in female domestic workers recruited during the study. The coping theory is relatively adopted in a wide-range of stress related fields, such as health, psychology, counseling, social work, care-giving and domestic work (Aldwin, 2018). This complements the argument of Bondarchuk (2024) that the theory allows researchers to examine coping strategies across diverse populations, including in the context of chronic illness by providing insights into the adaptive coping strategies.

Cohen and Lazarus (1973) argued further that the problem-focused coping involves attempts to solve, re-conceptualize or minimize the effects of stressful situations while emotion-focused coping involves self-preoccupation, fantasy or other conscious activities related to the effects of regulations. This theory is relevant in the concept of understanding different forms of coping strategies adopted by live-in female domestic workers. It gives a clearer understanding of domestic workers' coping strategies at various employers' homes. However, this theory is more Eurocentric in that it excludes African traditional cultural coping strategies. The coping theory has been

critiqued for its limited consideration of cultural and social factors that influence coping strategies. Wong (2006) affirmed that in collectivist cultures, social support and community-based coping are highly valued, suggesting that the theory may not fully capture culturally specific coping mechanism. This cultural gap has led this study to incorporate the intersectionality theory and African feminism theory into the study. Therefore, this study also draws upon intersectionality to navigate the diverse class, and inequalities experienced by female domestic workers. African feminist theory also delved into the cultural practices of African females' live-in domestic workers. This further brings to the forefront an explanation from the cultural and historical context of African women.

### **2.7.2 Application of Cohen and Lazarus' coping theory by live-in domestic workers**

Over the decades, the process by which people cope with challenges has grown dramatically (MacIntyre, 2020). The coping strategy theory is embedded in two different distinctions namely emotion-focused, and problem focused coping strategy. Liang (2019) opined that the problem focused coping involves solving problems or altering the source of stress while the emotion focused coping strategy was applicable whenever live-in female domestic workers feel that stress is something that must be endured (Senarath, 2020). Based on the data analysis, interpretations and findings, the study suggests that live-in female domestic workers adopted several strategies from a decolonial lens to alter stress resulting from their daily chores, which is beneficial to them. The coping strategies drawn from the investigation were in-built indigenous knowledge of female domestic workers which includes the spirit of *perseverance, cultural practices, spirituality, social interaction, telling jokes, patience and adopting some pleasant gestures such as cooking the employers' favourites meals*. Man (2020) postulates that the second term of coping as an emotionally focused coping which is aimed at reducing or managing the emotional distress that is associated with the situation. This became applicable as some female live-in domestic workers were employed majorly to nurse employers' emotional well-being when the need arises. There are several situations in which domestic workers are required to endure the stress of their employers, which also applies to female domestic workers who live in the home.

Carver and Scheier (1989) developed thirteen conceptual distinct scale to explain the concept of coping strategies and how it can be adopted into human daily lives. The first scale is the positive reinterpretation and growth which focuses on the positive aspect of planning in difficult situations

to foster growth and self-development (Carver, 2000). The second scale deals with mental disengagement which involves the suppression of competing activities by distracting oneself from a stressful situation either by engaging in outdoor activities for mental relaxation. The third scale focuses on emotional distress. Trudel-Fitzgerald (2024) suggest that the emotional distress centers on releasing the feeling of anger and frustration either by talking to a trusted friend or seeking for other support and help. The fourth scale gives insight about instrumental social support by seeking advice help, advice or resources from others to handle a stressful situation. The fifth scale, active coping is a direct action to address the cause of stress and focuses on resolving issues actively. The sixth scale is the denial strategy of refusing to acknowledge the reality of the stressors. The seventh scale is religious/spirituality which is a method of relying on faith and religious practices to cope with stress. The eight scale has been noted as humor which are often applied to deflect stress and tensions. This brings a lighter perspective to challenging situations. The ninth scale is called behavioural disengagement which is a strategy that helps in reducing effort in the face of stress and effectively giving up on trying to solve the problem. The tenth scale involves the emotional social support from others, this involves networking with peers and social networks. The eleventh scale is the restraint coping which is a strategy used while waiting for the right moment to act rather than responding impulsively to stress. This involves adopting the practice of patience, self-control and taking time to assess a situation before deciding on the course of action. The twelfth scale involves the use of substances by using alcohol, drugs or other substances to cope with stress. The thirteenth scale is the acceptance strategy of coming to terms with the reality of the situation as it is and by focusing on what can be controlled and letting go of what cannot.

From the thirteen conceptual distinct scales eight (8) became relevant to the study as each of the eight scales were incorporated by female live-in domestic workers who participated in the study. The first scale which became relevant and applicable to live-in female domestic workers is called active coping which involves the process of active steps to get rid of stress through elimination (Choi, 2019). It relates more to domestic workers trying all possible means to get rid of stress by fully submitting themselves to please their various employers. During the investigation, it was found that female domestic workers were fully committed to their daily tasks as live-in employees. The second scale which is planning involves thinking of methods to cope with stressors, hence, planning involves in-depth thinking of favourable action strategies that can handle a situation (Finlay, 2021). Live-in domestic workers use these strategies to plan before setting out

favourable and adaptable coping strategies as live-in employees. The third scale is called suppression of competing activities which is a method of putting other daily activities aside or trying to avoid distractions (Carver, 1989). From the data analysis and interpretation of the study, domestic workers adopted suppression of competing activities as a method of letting other things slide in order to maintain amity within their place of work/ employer's homes. This was mostly adopted in cases where domestic workers were falsely accused of stealing or blamed for an incident. The fourth scale, restraint coping, explained the appropriate skills needed to hold oneself back and not act prematurely in difficult or misunderstanding situations. In the study, the live-in employees refrained from any form of stress or argument leading to misunderstanding. Live-in employees in the study acted according to their employers' discretion. The fifth scale involves a method of seeking emotional support, advice and assistance with information (Shannon, 2006). Based on the data interpretation in the study, domestic workers shared their experiences as live-in employees, along with the challenges encountered, seeking assistance for supporting one another in coping with the change. The sixth scale is the step of acceptance. It is arguable that acceptance is a functional coping response by marginalized women working as live-in employees. The seventh scale adopted in the study is humor which are often applied by female live-in domestic workers to deflect tensions of their employer's. This was achieved by telling jokes to bring a lighter perspective to the challenging situations. These women accepted the challenges attached to their daily duties and live with these obstacles as live-in female employees. The final scale adopted in this study is the method of turning to religion or spirituality as a coping response. It was indicated that some domestic workers utilize religion and spirituality as coping mechanisms on a daily basis in order to cope with the daily challenges they face. Religious and spiritually motivated live-in employees believed that the supreme being is watching over them and will reward them for their patience and perseverance at the right time, thereby rescuing them from their situation.

### **2.7.3 In-depth explanation of intersectionality theory**

This study also adopted the intersectionality theory of gender and class in society to understand issues that affect female domestic workers. The theory of intersectionality was developed by Kimberle Crenshaw in the late 1980s which examined how overlapping social identities of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities interact to create distinct experiences of privilege and

discrimination in the society (Cho, 2013). The theory emphasizes how intersecting identities interact within the system of power resulting in different forms of discrimination and oppression (Atewologun, 2018). Dill and Kohlman (2012) has highlighted the relevance of the theory stating that the theory is suitable for policy changes and social justice initiatives for marginalized groups in the society. In order to promote more inclusive and thorough research methods, intersectionality calls on academics to take into account the distinct experiences of diverse marginalized identities. This approach has led to the development of targeted interventions in areas social justice (Hankivsky, 2014). The study adopted the intersectionality theory to understand the diverse experiences of female live-in employees in regardless of their ethnicity, age years of experiences in domestic work and level of education. This elucidates how race, gender and class are interconnected in the society (Ghavami, 2016).

Interrogating the lived experience of black women on the African continent has stimulated various debates that have challenged and redefined gender, class, and the oppression of women over the years (Collin, 2019; Farmer, 2020). Collins (2000) noted that intersectionality explains the relationship between gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class and nationality. Collins (2020) and Cooper (2016) further noted that intersectionality also connects and interconnects cultural patterns. The theory suggests that part of the primary goal of using intersectionality is to analyse and critique the existing system of power and privilege in society as reflected in social class (Carastathis, 2014). Furthermore, intersectionality is suitable to comprehend female domestic workers' experiences as they come from different ethnic groups with different indigenous knowledge and beliefs. The fact that female domestic workers suffer most is seen as a confirmation of the idea that domestic work is racial and gendered towards women across the globe (Christian, 2018).

Sayce (2012) also explains that intersectionality cannot occur or be explained without the class dimension. Feminist scholars, suggested that inequalities was originated from the social class dimension and the inferior status of women in the society (Littlejohn, 2017). Feminists condemn the inequalities women encounter in their daily lives. However, domestic work is dominated by females who are constantly exposed to difficulties at work. Thus, exploring the perspectives of female domestic workers requires a critical theoretical framework that would provide a deeper understanding of their perspectives on coping strategies by reflecting on indigenous knowledge against their lived experiences as live-in employees. Maqubela (2016) suggests that intersectionality is a suitable theoretical framework that which explored the domestic work sector

as the experience of domestic workers represents the interplay of multiple identities including race, ethnicity, gender, and class. Intersectionality became a crucial concept for this research as it enabled the research to consider the rich and complex identities people can have at a time, based on their ethnic groups and different indigenous knowledge systems. The theoretical framework unravels the different narratives of oppression and class in the domestic work sector as it was able to give a broader perspective on the power structure between the domestic workers and the employers in the study. However, the intersectionality theory have been critiqued by scholars despite its intellectual values (Carastathis, 2014). Nash (2008) argued that the theory focuses on multiple intersecting identities that can lead to overly complex analyses that may be difficult to operationalize in research or policy making. Thus, the African feminist theory was employed into the study to bridge the limitations of the intersectionality theory.

#### **2.7.4 Application of the intersectionality theory**

Intersectionality was introduced as a concept centred on the oppression of women which is actively working towards the liberation of women's rights who have been oppressed and marginalized (Harris and Leonardo, 2018). Crenshaw (2017) discussed the uniqueness of female experience and the intersections between racial, class, and gender inequalities. Collins (2000) explained that oppression is shaped through the complementary interaction of intersectional and interlocking processes central to intersectionality arguments. Therefore, it critiques all forms of oppression and violence against women and as such, one key area to focus on intersectional research is understanding how women experience all forms of oppression. The intersectionality theory helps to understand how the intersecting identities of gender, class and ethnicity shaped the experiences of domestic workers.

In the study, intersectionality was identified as an important aspect as it allowed to examine the diverse experiences inequalities and power structure between live-in female domestic workers and their employers. Acker (2006) stipulated that inequalities in the societies has created an unequal hierarchy of class as most live-in female domestic workers are not on the same pace and economic valuation with the employers. In this study, the domestic workers under investigation were female live-in employees from marginalized communities who were recruited to render assistance or services which entails taking care of chores in other homes.

The social hierarchy of class manifests itself in all forms of oppression perpetuated on live-in employees in this study. Additionally, Duque's study (2023) reports that women are oppressed in all facets, therefore, they are subjected to lower job opportunities. From the investigation, it was found that the push and pull factor coupled with poverty are part of the main factors why females are subjected to low wage jobs such as the domestic work. Domestic labour in Nigeria is a symbol of gender class and inequalities as the majority of domestic workers in Nigeria are females from marginalized communities.

Economic inequalities are also connected to gender and race naturalization (Acker, 2006). From the investigation of the study, the domestic sector is highly dominated by females and as such, workers in this sector are not well paid because it does not involve special skills, and the duties are within the household. Nevertheless, females employed into this sector are overly exploited which are not visible since the duties are behind closed doors (Swar, 2012). The double exploitation has been reported to be perpetuated to females from developing countries where domestic workers are underpaid or render domestic service in exchange for other commodities. This theory became relevant to this study as the Nigerian live-in female domestic workers under study explained their diverse live-in experiences, numerous forms of double exploitation by working as live-in employees who are exploited to monitor employers' businesses and other family functional responsibilities such as preparing for ceremonies which is beyond the core duties of female live-in domestic workers. However, the main responsibility of a live-in female domestic worker is to maintain the household's well-being and chores. In summary, the intersectionality theory explained the interconnected race, class, gender and colonial histories of oppression experienced by women in domestic work who are often exposed to multiple layers of oppression that include not just gender, but also economic exploitation, ethnic marginalization and poverty.

### **2.7.5 In-depth explanation of African Feminist theory**

This study explores African feminist perspectives, focusing on how African women cope with challenges through a decolonial lens. Drawing on this theoretical framework is crucial as it provides a solid foundation for addressing issues affecting African women on the continent.

African feminism emerged within an intellectual paradigm aimed at addressing African women's diverse challenges, contextualized within their history, culture, and environment (Ahikire, 2014). Through the African feminism, West African feminism, in particular, has been conceptualized

through frameworks such as snail-sense feminism, motherism, femalism, and negro-feminism (Nkealah, 2016). These frameworks analyse how African-descended women navigate their lives, emphasizing the networks they utilize as survival strategies to overcome obstacles.

Examining traditional African societies' values reveals how they have evolved over time while retaining core elements. African feminist theories advocate for self-reliance through female networks and the development of strategies that have become institutionalized in many African and African-descended communities worldwide.

Central to African feminism is the discussion of African women's experiences, recognizing the intersections of race, ethnicity, age, status, national history, trajectories, and individual historical experiences (Ahikire, 2014). Chigwedere (2014) notes that African feminism incorporates models aiming to preserve African traditions and cultures. Kolawole (1997) argues that womanism, which situates feminist ideals within African women's confrontations with culture, colonialism, and other forms of dominance, remains contentious. Motherism emphasizes the significant roles of African women in nurturing societies at large (Acholonu, 1995), a practice exemplified by live-in female domestic workers who oversee the well-being of their employers. However, the African feminism has also been critiqued by scholars. Gafour (2024) stated that African feminism is not monolithic entity and the difference in priorities, approaches and ideologies can create fragmentation which can also hinder the movement effectiveness and create confusion.

### **2.7.6 Application of African Feminist theory**

The African feminist movement addresses the experiences and needs of women across the continent (Mekgwe, 2008). It considers the diverse history, cultural perspectives and challenges faced by African women in their daily lives, rooted in historical injustices experienced both within Africa and beyond (Atanga, 2013). There is a dynamic and intricate connection between African history, its struggles, and culture (Busia, 2023). Africa's diverse cultures have not only survived historical adversities like colonization, slavery and post-colonial economic struggle (Lumas-Wright, 2024). The strong bond between history and cultural identity throughout the continent is reflected in African culture's adaptability and capacity to absorb external influence in both local and global contexts. Hence, culture plays a crucial role in African feminism (Atanga, 2013; Stuhlhofer, 2020). African women's cultural heritage serves as a critical resource in crisis management, with traditional roles playing significant roles in household well-being. This cultural

heritage reflects indigenous women's knowledge, essential for approaching problem-solving from an African perspective.

This theory gained relevance through understanding the experiences of female domestic workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. It highlighted their coping strategies through a decolonial lens and leveraging indigenous knowledge. African feminism viewed through a decolonial lens emphasizes the need to reclaim African women's experiences and cultural practices while challenging both legacies and patriarchal structures (Bouka, 2021). This approach is critical for addressing issues and survival of female domestic workers in indigenous communities. African feminism challenges the Eurocentric notions that marginalized indigenous practices such as traditional healing, communal support systems and matriarchal leadership (Ajiboro and Etieyibo, 2023). Reclaiming these practices is crucial as a part of coping strategies for female live-in domestic workers as they offer culturally rooted methods of addressing trauma, conflict, and community survival. Osome (2020) suggests that African feminism is inherently community oriented, unlike Western feminism which focuses on individual liberation. Meanwhile, in the African in the African contexts, women's empowerment is linked to the well-being of the entire community, which includes men, children and the elderly. Through a decolonial lens, African feminism supports the argument that women's struggle is interconnected with broader community challenges and that healing, and survival are collective processes. Therefore, it remains significant for investigating how these workers integrate indigenous knowledge to navigate challenges such as oppression, exploitation, and violence.

In Nigeria, gender dynamics are deeply rooted in traditional cultures, characterized by patriarchal family structures and adherence to traditional gender roles (Makama, 2013). These patriarchal norms encourage women to embody values of endurance and submission for family harmony, expecting them to prioritize roles as self-sacrificing mothers, wives, and daughters (Jaiyeola, 2020). Discussions on female subordination in Nigeria and across Africa reflect the realities faced by female domestic workers regarding their dignity and roles within households. This study is grounded in indigenous knowledge and practices, exploring how these workers cope with the challenges, oppression, and subordination they encounter.

In order to confront colonial and patriarchal structures, African feminism in this research highlights the necessity of recovering African women's indigenous knowledge. It encourages the

adoption of indigenous coping strategies such as community support, spiritual practices to resist historical and ongoing oppression while preserving cultural identity and promoting resilience. The intersectionality theory buttressed on how multiple forms of oppression-race, gender, class and colonial history-shaped the lived experiences of marginalized groups such as the live-in female domestic workers. The coping theory developed by Cohen and Lazarus concentrated on how people employ a variety of strategies of coping and cognitive assessment to handle stress. Through the African feminist lens, the study from culturally specific coping mechanism, which is rooted in indigenous knowledge, to navigate the unique challenges domestic worker's encounter. The decolonial perspectives allows us to challenge Eurocentric notion of coping and center the voices and experiences of these women. Applying these concepts as coping strategies from a decolonial perspective entails acknowledging the effects of historical oppression and the significance of recovering culturally based coping strategies to cope with stress and adversity.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reviews the literature on domestic work across Africa and beyond. It focuses on the prevalence of women and children in domestic roles in Nigerian cities. The literature identifies various dimensions of domestic work globally, highlighting its role as a survival strategy and poverty alleviation tool in rural areas. Additionally, domestic workers often experience triple forms of oppression and abuse at the hands of their employers, reflecting patriarchal attitudes towards household chores and the subordinate position of women in this field.

Furthermore, the literature explores the historical context of domestic work, particularly its prevalence in developing countries such as Nigeria. Despite numerous reports of abuse and maltreatment of domestic workers, these issues persist. The study specifically addresses female domestic workers, touching on topics such as trafficking and migration within this workforce. However, there remains a scarcity of studies examining coping strategies from the perspective of Nigerian female live-in domestic workers through a decolonial lens. Therefore, this study investigates live-in domestic workers' coping strategies from their own perspectives.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Creswell (2009), methodology is the science that examines how research is conducted scientifically. Research methodology are the techniques and strategies researchers employ throughout their research operations. The term research methods refers to the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyse data in a study (Tracy, 2024). Research methodology can also be defined as the procedures and methods used during the research process, including the justification for certain data collection methods, the types of data collected, the location where the data was collected, the methods adopted during data collection, and the steps taken during data analysis (Panneerselvam, 2014). By explicitly using qualitative methodology, the researcher investigated the perspectives of Nigerian female live-in domestic workers on coping strategies as live-in employees in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This chapter begins with the adopted research approach for the study, following is the explanatory case study design and research paradigm. The epistemology philosophy that informed the qualitative research and strategies for conducting a phenomenological study was discussed in detail in this chapter. The study population, sample size, methods, sampling techniques, recruitment of participants were discussed in details. Lastly, ethical considerations for the study, trustworthiness, positionality and reflexivity as a researcher, strategies for gaining access to the field, and data analysis procedures were discussed accordingly.

### **3.2 THE ADOPTED RESEARCH APPROACH FOR THE STUDY**

Qualitative research was adopted in the study as it encompasses various strategies aimed at understanding human perceptions of social realities. This design is suitable for capturing meaningful details of reality, which are valuable for examining social problems using human subjects (Sarantakos, 2012). It is also useful for describing, generating, and testing theories related to the phenomenon under study (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes numbers and statistical analysis, qualitative research seeks to explore complex meanings, perspectives and experiences through in-depth, often open-ended data collection methods like interviews, focus group, observation and text analysis (Lim, 2024). This study adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate the diverse perspectives and experiences of female domestic workers on coping strategies from a decolonial lens.

Sarantakos (2012) proposes that qualitative research should be adopted when investigating a social problem. Thus, in line with Sarantakos (2012) argument, the quantitative research design should be adopted when investigating a social problem that is relatively unexplored and lacks a comprehensive theoretical knowledge frame. Therefore, this study explored the research phenomenon and was able to understand the circumstances for the adoption and examination of female domestic workers subjective evaluations on coping strategies. In a nutshell, Glaser and Strauss's (2017) buttressed further that qualitative research design gives an opportunity to understand the subjective nature of reality. Qualitative study is aimed to explore and offer a quality understanding of the meanings constructed by participants of the study. Thus, the research did not aim to provide the ultimate truth, but rather to investigate the varying knowledge on coping strategies adopted by female domestic workers. Bowling (2014) buttressed further that qualitative research is a multi-dimensional research method that adopts an investigative and naturalistic approach to social issues of concern. Therefore, the adoption of this multidimensional nature permits researchers to attain a comprehensive knowledge of a social problem being investigated. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to understand the distinct nature of the research problem and its impacts on participants. The study aimed to bring to the fore, new knowledge and narratives to understand the different perspectives on coping strategies of female live-in employees.

### **3.2.1 THE EXPLANATORY CASE STUDY DESIGN**

A research design is a complete set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analysing measures of variables specified in a research problem (Creswell, 2017). It can be understood as a road map that guides the gathering and analysis of data (De Vaus, 2001). A variety of research designs are used in social science, including case study designs, causal designs, descriptive designs, exploratory designs, explanatory case study designs, and historical designs.

This study adopted explanatory case study research design to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context (Schoch, 2020). The explanatory case study research was chosen because it helps investigate and explain why certain phenomena occur, especially when information is limited (Haverland, 2012). This study explores the perspectives of Nigerian female domestic workers on coping strategies as live-in employees from a decolonial lens. Specifically, the study sought to identify the perspectives of Nigerian female domestic

workers on the use of coping strategies as live-in employees in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria. Explanatory research design focuses on collecting either secondary or primary data using an unstructured formal or informal procedure to interpret them. In nutshell, the major aim of explanatory research is to attain in-depth explanatory knowledge about a certain phenomenon (Noor, 2008). It is because of the explanatory nature of the phenomenon's live-in experience that this study adopted an explanatory research design in order to explain the Nigerian female domestic worker's perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees: towards decolonial reflections. Using an explanatory design helped to address the research questions and objectives by finding out how and when domestic workers adopt the coping strategies as live-in employees in Ibadan city, Oyo state Nigeria. It is within this growing social concern about decolonization that this study seeks to contribute to the current debate. Adopting an explanatory case study research approach provided a critical understanding on the perspectives of female live-in employees on coping strategies.

### **3.2.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A research paradigm is described as the collective knowledge of reality that people experience, providing a lens through which a phenomenon may be studied (Gelo, 2012; Petty et al., 2012). Paradigms are worldviews that serve as filters through which knowledge is screened in research. There are four broadly applied research paradigm namely, positivism, interpretivism, critical and pragmatism paradigm (Kankam, 2019). The selection of a paradigm implies certain assumptions regarding the method used in the research process or a particular worldview regarding the nature of social reality (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). This study adopted a critical research paradigm, based on its ability to interpret social realities of human phenomena. Horkheimer (1982:44), one of the founders of critical theory, defined the critical paradigm as a “theory that seeks human emancipation to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them.” The critical research paradigm is particularly concerned with power relations within society and the interactions of race, class, gender, education, economy, religion, and other social institutions that contribute to a social system. The critical paradigm aims not only to highlight and explain these social factors that cause oppressive and powerful groups to dominate the suppressed and repressed sections of society but also to strive for a social setup based on equality for all members (Asghar, 2013). The critical paradigm was adopted in this study, which became relevant because it contributed to the in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of female domestic workers and

indigenous ways of life which are often ignored or stereotyped in the official arenas of knowledge production.

Researchers who use critical paradigms are interested in how participants interpret their lived experiences. In this sense, qualitative research strives to understand the meanings and unpack the process of knowledge construction and to "describe how people interpret what they experience" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016:15). It is critical that qualitative researchers gain an understanding of the research phenomenon from the participants' perspective, rather than from their own. To gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of domestic workers, qualitative research was undertaken to explore the participants' perspectives in their context and their construction of meanings based on their daily experiences.

### **3.2.3 THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY THAT INFORMED THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH TO THE STUDY**

The use of a qualitative research approach in this study was necessitated by an epistemological philosophy that considered objectivity as emerging, rather than as a collection of universal explanations or propositions, especially from the perspective of individuals experiencing it (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Epistemology remains a critical pillar of research paradigm which strengthens the ways to gain knowledge and how to validate them (Gringeri,2013). This exploratory nature of the research allowed the researcher to provide a thorough explanation of participants' experiences that could support or refute theoretical assumptions (Glaser and Strauss, 2017).

The literature review chapter (Chapter Two) provides the historical documentation of domestic work practices in homes and businesses in African countries (Cheung, 2022). De Silva (2006) noted that during colonialism Africans served as slaves, servants, and housemaids to the Europeans in the African regions. As such, there was a dearth of literature on the coping strategies practiced by women who engaged in these activities from a decolonial perspective. Firstly, the researcher used a holistic strategy to investigate most parts of the selected social problem to gain insight and develop new narratives. Marshall and Rossman (2014) also postulated that qualitative studies should ideally look at the social, historical, and political narratives connected to the research problem under investigation. Therefore, it was crucial to consider how the phenomenon being investigated could be related to other issues within the participants' environment. This study

explored how domestic work intersects with other aspects of the lives of female live-in domestic workers. Consequently, it was necessary to develop an all-encompassing strategy grounded in the narratives of the participants. It included their live-in experiences, why and when employees applied coping strategies daily. Hence, the research approach sought to understand participants' personal experiences. This suggested that the shared experiences of the research participants informed how their reality was conceptualized within the context of the study. Marshall and Rossman (2014) explained that this was a subjective process that concentrated on participants' perspectives and meanings, which created different realities; therefore, the focus was to understand the identified social problems and not to make predictions about them.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that qualitative research enhances our understanding of human subjective experiences such as rejection, anger, care, love, helplessness, and pain, among others. Consequently, the subjective experience extended beyond the categories listed above, since it may have implied meanings that were attributed to them by the individual. Also, considering the nature of the experiences listed above, it remained difficult to quantify or assign numerical values to them. The qualitative approach was generally the best method for understanding human experience, especially when there was a dearth of information available. Qualitative research also aims to comprehend different viewpoints regarding a given social phenomenon, which is in accordance with the tenets of social sciences since it is concerned with the study of human behaviour. The in-depth investigation of this study required the researcher to pay close attention to participants' subjective narratives. Therefore, the researcher developed a conceptual thinking process based on the participants' perspectives in relation to theoretical tenets. However, Lewis (2015) identified some limitations of qualitative research design, including the fact that it takes a considerable amount of time and is difficult to implement when it comes to carrying out the fieldwork (gathering data). As well, the data collection process involves a great deal of handwritten notes (field notes), which require a rigorous process for sorting and organizing the transcriptions and themes. However, there are usually no fixed systematic guidelines to replicate the study.

The exploratory qualitative research design is typically applied when participants' lived experiences are required to understand or explain a social phenomenon. As Creswell and Creswell (2017) explain, research is conducted to gain new insight and knowledge regarding a particular social phenomenon. The researcher approached the subject with curiosity from a novice perspective, taking into consideration the objectives and goals of the study. As stated by Lewis

(2015) and Merriam (2015), one of the key characteristics of qualitative research design is that it incorporates a variety of methodologies as well as a variety of methods of analysing data. Therefore, this study was conducted within the qualitative phenomenological lens.

### **3.2.4 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF FEMALE DOMESTIC WORK**

Phenomenology refers to a method of investigation that provides a detailed description of various experiences without reproducing assumptions or advancing traditional philosophical questions (Dowling, 2007; Van Manen, 2016; Wojnar, 2007). The study of phenomenology emerged during a time when neutralism was critiqued and deemed inadequate for expressing and understanding human experiences. Zahavi (2003) recognized the need to develop distinct and rigorous methods to understand humans' different reality perspectives. The phenomenological perspective aims to describe individuals' experiences without drawing conclusions from preconceived notions and existing assumptions about the objective reality being studied (Giorgi, 2008). This study seeks to answer questions about the live-in experiences and the coping strategies adopted by female domestic workers. Therefore, phenomenology seeks to make sense of the various perspectives on a phenomenon that participants reveal when discussing their own experiences (Van Manen, 2016).

Researchers face challenges in making appropriate decisions due to qualitative research's diversity of methodologies. It is important to know when to adopt or incorporate phenomenology as a major component of the research design. In relation to the aim of this study, it was appropriate to utilize a phenomenological research approach to build a comprehensive understanding of the live-in experiences of female domestic workers who have adopted and incorporated coping strategies from a decolonial lens into their daily lives. This approach also allows a detailed understanding of the challenges of live-in employees. The phenomenology strategy in this study developed a deeper understanding of human experiences by understanding specific phenomena, encouraging human responsibility in creating realities, and understanding the relationship between experiences, concepts, and theories in the study.

Phenomenology often uses two methods to explain human experiences. Firstly, it captures participants' lived experiences; secondly, it applies the hermeneutical approach to interpreting texts and shared experiences (Kafle, 2011). After thoroughly reviewing both classical and modern phenomenological literature, Vilakati (2009) highlighted five crucial processes in a

phenomenological investigation. These processes improve the quality of the data gathered and research findings. These processes are included in this study as they are relevant to the research.

The first is descriptive phenomenology, which involves investigating, analysing, and describing social reality from an instinctive perspective free from all forms of assumptions (Giorgi, 2012). Descriptive phenomenology organizes participants' lived experiences into a systematic description to effectively communicate the core of such phenomena. It adopts an intuitive approach to analysing complex phenomena.

The second is the phenomenology of essence, which explains that researchers explore the gathered data to identify recurring themes and establish patterns of relationships in participants' shared experiences (Giorgi, 2008). The third approach is constitutive phenomenology, which investigates social phenomena as they emerge or are incorporated into human consciousness. It is a method through which individuals make sense of the meaning or significance of phenomena in their lives (Sadmeyer, 2009).

Vilakati added a fourth part, reductive phenomenology, an ongoing process throughout the phenomenological study. This approach outlines a technique for the researcher to bracket themselves from the study process, preventing personal narratives, biases, or attitudes from influencing participants' narratives. It ensures that reports of participants' experiences are not distorted. In this study, the researcher reflected properly to check for any biases, sentiments, or beliefs about female domestic workers that could influence the research. This process involved critical reflection, self-examination, and consideration of personal instincts and hearsay that could affect the research outcome.

Lastly, Vilakati (2009) explains the interpretative aspect called hermeneutic phenomenology. This aims to build an essence of the phenomenon by interpreting hidden meanings not explicitly observable through direct investigation but through the narratives of the researcher's experience shared by participants. It relies on the subjective experiences shared by participants. From the processes described above, the research design emphasizes participants' subjective experiences to gain knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial for the researcher to preserve critical objectivity as far as possible to keep biases in check. The researcher defined his personal description of the phenomenon under study and set aside the opinions, sentiments, and biases about the phenomenon. Additionally, the researcher conducted the fieldwork to interview participants in a manner that

allows for an unrestricted narrative of their perceptions. Hence, the positionality of the researcher was clearly defined throughout the study. The phenomenology of essence seeks to find common themes and patterns through participants' narratives, providing a detailed and informed discussion of the observed phenomenon. The following section of this chapter discusses the crucial steps for conducting a successful phenomenological study.

### **3.2.5 STRATEGIES FOR CONDUCTING A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

One of the most significant methods to emphasize in a phenomenological investigation is intuition (Chudnoff, 2013; Alabi, 2020). This research defines intuition as an unbiased, critical reflection on data, achieved through accurate analysis and ensuring that participants' experiences are thoroughly documented and captured (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007). When intuitioning, the researcher immerses themselves in the phenomenon, examining it critically without layering it with preconceived notions. This process allows the researcher to develop a critical interpretation of a phenomenon. This study utilized an intuitive process, involving probing, investigating, and carefully interrogating the captured data. This resulted in an in-depth understanding of domestic workers' perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees.

Bracketing is another crucial technique, involving the separation of assumptions and presuppositions from the research process (Chan, Fung, and Chien, 2013). To explore the selected social phenomena accurately and without bias, bracketing was essential throughout the research process. This ensured that the researcher remained unbiased about the acceptance or rejection of the phenomena under study.

In a phenomenological investigation, the analysis stage is vital. At this point, both the previously discussed dimensions and strategies need to be considered. Phenomenological analysis involves identifying common factors and recurring themes in participants' narratives describing their experiences. This approach involves listening to and comparing the various narratives provided by participants to describe the phenomenon. Emerging themes and related patterns were then discussed. After fieldwork and interviews, the researcher reviewed the transcripts multiple times to identify recurring patterns and themes. This immersion allowed the researcher to uncover similarities and differences and discover emerging narratives about female domestic workers' coping strategies.

The final phase of a phenomenological study includes providing a detailed description of the phenomenon, either through a written or oral report (Van Manen, 2016). This description should be distinct and insightful, revealing unexplored narratives about the social phenomenon. Although this is a crucial stage, the researcher avoided premature description, which can obscure other important themes that emerge from the phenomena being examined. In this study, the description involved classifying and exploring all significant factors common to the participants' narratives as live-in employees.

### **3.3 STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The population for this study comprised females working as live-in domestic workers in both Egbeda and Ibadan North-East local governments of Oyo state, Ibadan city, Nigeria. The justification for selecting this population is that females dominate this sector, and Ibadan city has been identified as a hot spot for female domestic workers in Nigeria (Tade and Aderinto, 2014). As this is a phenomenological study, it is important to collate the numerous coping strategies adopted by various domestic workers in their employers' homes. Domestic work has become a daily activity in various homes in Nigeria, providing employment for many unemployed and uneducated people (Ogbechie, 2019).

According to Creswell (2007), the sample for a phenomenological qualitative study should be between 5 and 25 participants. Therefore, the researcher interviewed 20 females working as live-in domestic workers in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria, specifically from Egbeda and Ibadan North-East local governments. The areas chosen for this study are both residential and commercial areas in Ibadan city which is highly dominated by elites and business owners who employ domestic workers into their homes. During the fieldwork, 12 participants were recruited from Ibadan North-East, and 8 participants from Egbeda. The population of Ibadan North-East surpasses that of Egbeda, which is justified by its central location in the city, with many residential dwellings and various commercial activities. Egbeda is located on the outskirts of the city with primarily residential homes.

The study included participants aged 18 years and above, as the age of 18 is considered adulthood under the Nigerian constitution. Most live-in female domestic workers fall within the age range of 18 to 60 years. Female live-in domestic workers from the Ibadan North-East and Egbeda local governments were open-minded and willing to consider new ideas, suggestions, and opinions,

which facilitated their participation in the interview process. The narratives shared by the participants were captivating. At the beginning of the fieldwork, the researcher contacted two key informants who had in-depth knowledge of domestic work over the years. They informed the researcher that the organization of domestic workers had changed from the past, with domestic workers now classified into various groups: those employed for elderly care, general home chores, child well-being, and overall household well-being (either health or emotional). Nevertheless, domestic workers were also recruited from family members residing in villages or through contractual agencies. The key informants informed the researcher about the informal association and a WhatsApp forum for domestic workers, which serve as channels for recruiting female domestic workers. This network became an essential link for gaining access to the live-in domestic workers who participated in the study. Despite the difficulty in recruiting female domestic workers, referrals facilitated the recruitment process and were instrumental in conducting the interviews. The selection of the sampling strategies discussed earlier in this chapter was crucial for assessing the participants' first-hand knowledge and facilitating a deep exploration of the phenomenon being investigated (Smith, Colombi, and Wirthlin, 2013).

The selection of samples for the study was influenced by the nature of the research problem, design, and purpose, aimed at addressing the research topic. Thus, the nature of the research problem and the social issues being addressed were essential elements of sample selection (Mason, 2010). All participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, as clearly stated in the informed consent forms that were voluntarily signed before the interviews began. The study adopted two sampling strategies, namely purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling relies on the judgment of selecting a particular population, making it a non-probability sampling technique. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) noted that purposive sampling is used when the required information is confined to a specific group of individuals. Females serving as live-in domestic workers were purposively selected for this study because they possess personal experiences of domestic work life, particularly regarding its effects on their daily lives. Even though purposeful sampling can be useful in gathering information to answer research questions in areas where very few people have the relevant information, it has been criticized for its inability to allow findings to be generalized to the entire population (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009).

The second sampling strategy adopted was snowball sampling. This method is important when investigating a hard-to-reach or unavailable population, as it requires referrals from identified contacts (Sadler et al., 2010). Once a suitable participant is identified, they can refer others who share similar characteristics related to the investigated phenomenon (Noy, 2008). This study focused on a relatively neglected group of females in the domestic work sector, which is often overlooked despite the tedious activities performed by domestic workers in various homes. The daily duties of live-in female employees are hidden from the public in Nigeria, separating them from society. As such, these participants were classified as a hard-to-reach population, making it crucial for the researcher to identify participants who could provide referrals to other female domestic workers willing to participate in the research.

The inclusion criteria of this study were based on the knowledge and duties of female domestic workers, specifically those who were live-in employees. In-depth interviews were conducted with adult females who demonstrated good knowledge of domestic work life and experiences. The nature of this study required informed participants in a phenomenological research design.

### **3.4 INTERVIEW PROCEDURES**

The interview guide was developed to contain flexible research questions aimed at addressing the study's objectives. It included key questions investigating employees' live-in experiences and coping strategies from a decolonial perspective, incorporating indigenous knowledge and practices. This procedure sought the opinions of live-in female domestic workers. The guide was designed to be flexible, allowing the researcher to probe beyond the listed questions for clarification or expansion as needed. This further probing involved follow-up questions to deepen the understanding of participants' experiences related to the research.

The interview procedure began with questions about the participants' biographical information, such as age, education, duration of employment and whether the participants had experience working as live-in domestic workers and for how long. These questions helped create a comfortable environment for the conversation. Building rapport was essential before moving into more detailed discussions related to the study's aims. Responses varied, with some participants giving detailed descriptions of their daily activities and others immediately narrating their experiences with various employers. Regardless of the approach, all participants eventually covered all questions listed on the interview schedule.

Follow-up questions were asked based on participants' narratives to address a range of topics emerging during the interviews. It was discovered that participants frequently discussed themes related to the application of indigenous knowledge as coping strategies. Probes were added to the interview schedule as needed to understand these emerging issues better.

The interviews were crucial for understanding female domestic workers' experiences and coping mechanisms. Many participants linked their employment as live-in domestic workers to poverty and financial challenges. A new trend emerged: some live-in domestic workers were trained as auxiliary nurses, especially older participants. This finding highlighted different categories of domestic work, including caring for the elderly, nurturing children, and general household well-being. Some workers were recruited from villages by family members or through agencies, revealing essential categories of female domestic workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder after obtaining participants' consent. In cases of WhatsApp interviews, the recorder was placed near the phone to capture the conversation. Notes were taken during the interviews to highlight key points, ensuring the validity of the recordings. These notes were crucial for the research study, especially during transcription.

Gray (2021) stated that observation involves the systematic viewing of people's actions, providing an in-depth interpretation of their behaviour. My role as a researcher included keeping detailed field notes throughout the data collection process. These notes and informal conversations broadened my understanding of domestic work-life patterns and categories, serving as valuable resources for the study.

### **3.4.1 Data presentation and analysis**

Data presentation refers to the ways in which researchers organize, display and interpret data to communicate findings effectively (Tracy, 2024). In both qualitative and quantitative studies, data presentation is crucial for clarity comprehension. After the data has been presented, data analysis follows. Marshall and Rose (2014) defined data analysis as a process of organizing, structuring, and deriving meaningful insights from collected data in a study. This study employed thematic analysis to sort the data collected from the field. Castleberry (2018) describes thematic analysis as a process in which data are identified and analysed to find patterns or themes within a data set. Thematic analysis allows researchers to explore complex phenomena and experiences by

systematically identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Vaismoradi, 2016). This is particularly useful when dealing with rich, detailed data that cannot easily be quantified.

Thematic analysis provides a systematic and transparent approach to data analysis, enhancing the rigor and transparency of qualitative research (Mackieson, 2019). By clearly documenting the analytical process, including coding procedures, theme development, and interpretation, the trustworthiness and reliability of findings are ensured. The emerging themes and patterns were then critically interpreted and analysed in the study.

The data analysis began with the researcher listening to the interview clips at the end of each data collection session. This was done to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the questions and the participants' responses. After listening to the clips, the researcher coded the recorded data and translated them into themes.

Slembrouck (2007) opines that transcription in research involves close observation of data through repeated careful listening, an important step in data analysis. This process was repeated several times to ensure the reliability of decoding information from the audio recordings of the in-depth interviews. The rich and valuable information from the interviews led to the identification of essential themes and topics. Thematic analysis became the primary instrument for this study. Responses from the interview sessions were transcribed and categorized into different themes for easy analysis and identification of recurrent patterns. This helped me as a researcher to identify the major and emerging themes from the content of the interviews.

### **3.5 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

According to Briscoe (2020), one of the major elements of qualitative research is the researcher's ability to become a research instrument for the study. This procedure relies on the reflective ability to become a crucial instrument for data collection. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that this approach allows researchers to acknowledge and clearly state their biases and ideological preferences pertaining to the study. For example, during fieldwork, the researcher faced an ethical dilemma related to my positionality as a young male researcher investigating the lived experiences and coping strategies of female domestic workers confined as live-in employees in various homes.

Investigating the living experiences and coping strategies of female domestic workers was challenging for the researcher. Consequently, it became crucial to incorporate a female research

assistant into the study. Her presence facilitated the free flow of participation among female participants, making them comfortable sharing their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies, especially regarding emotional and physical abuse from employers. Some participants were initially reluctant to share their perspectives and daily struggles as live-in domestic workers, highlighting the necessity of a female research assistant.

During the interviews, the researcher became conscious and critical while investigating normative biases, sentiments, and assumptions often held when domestic workers discuss their employers. It was fascinating to hear participants describe their daily routines, from morning to night, as live-in domestic workers. Maintaining this critical approach helped me understand the background and lived experiences of these workers. Throughout the data collection, the researcher engaged with city dwellers in Ibadan, initiating discussions about domestic workers. Observations and informal conversations provided insights into narratives about female live-in domestic workers, including instances of them overtaking the roles of wives/mothers or being mistreated by employers. These interactions helped identify key themes and issues for the study. Most of the interviews were conducted in the Yoruba language, as the participants, predominantly Yoruba, felt more comfortable sharing their narratives in their mother tongue. Due to the researcher's proficiency in Yoruba, Pidgin English, and English, the researcher easily translated these interviews into English during transcription. The interviews were accurately translated from Yoruba and transcribed into English, the language of instruction at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The translation was done by the researcher and proofread by trained personnel proficient in both languages.

The narratives shared by the participants were very insightful. Many expressed comforts in discussing their experiences, noting they had never had the opportunity to share their stories due to the nature of their work. One participant used the phrase "suffering and smiling" to describe the mix of sad stories and wonderful moments they experienced. Older participants with longer work experience shared their insights on coping strategies and the importance of intertwining indigenous knowledge into their work life. This was underscored by a Yoruba proverb shared by a participant: "*Enu onikan la tin gbo kan,*" meaning to hear the truth from the person involved in the situation.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) emphasize that a researcher is an essential component of the qualitative research process, actively engaging in data collection, interpretation, and report writing. Therefore, it is important to carefully outline how sentiments are managed during the study to

ensure coherence. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) discuss the nature of value-free qualitative investigation, arguing that it is difficult to separate a researcher's values from the process and findings. They assert that the validity of a qualitative study requires deliberate, mindful effort. Acknowledging subjectivity is crucial to account for the approach adopted in a study. Hence, the researcher made a conscious effort to bracket my thoughts, perceptions, and biases about the coping strategies and lived experiences of domestic workers to avoid distorting or influencing the participants' narratives.

### **3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

One of the most popular credibility procedures for qualitative studies is member checking. This process allows research participants to view their interview transcripts as part of a quality control measure, ensuring that their experiences are accurately reflected as expressed during the interviews (Harper and Cole, 2012). Typically, member checking involves the researcher summarizing the key topics from the interviews at the conclusion of the session to verify the accuracy of the participants' narratives for the study. Yin (2015) explained procedures for ensuring reliability and credibility in qualitative research. He argued that the researcher must clearly define and document the study process so that others can easily examine and understand it. This is a fundamental aspect of the methodology chapter, as it describes the procedures and techniques used in research. From another perspective, Yardley (2009) stated that trustworthiness involves writing a research report that withstands scrutiny and external review. Accordingly, this study employed a rigorous approach that allowed free-flowing discoveries and unexpected events.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Ethical considerations are crucial in any research study as they ensure adherence to established procedures, preventing the exploitation or endangerment of research participants (Silverman, 2009). In the social sciences, ethical issues are especially significant when dealing with potentially vulnerable groups such as female domestic workers. This research underwent a rigorous review by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Faculty of Humanities Higher Degrees Committee before commencement. Ethical considerations were meticulously addressed during the proposal development phase to ensure compliance with ethical standards. The ethical application was approved on January 28, 2022, and fieldwork took place from February to November 2022.

The patriarchal inferiority complex is a fiercely debated topic across many cultures, particularly indigenous African cultures, which have historically subordinated women to minority roles in various spheres of life. Consequently, live-in female domestic workers, who were the primary participants in this study, have been neglected in research. These workers are often confined to environments that prevent them from sharing their daily experiences, as doing so could jeopardize their employment. Therefore, the researcher took serious precautions and adopted a careful approach during interviews to avoid exposing participants to stigma and endangering their employment status.

The first step was identifying a study site in Nigeria, specifically Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State. My familiarity with Ibadan, having grown up there, was advantageous. My knowledge and experience of the city's dynamics facilitated easy communication with participants through shared language and cultural connections.

The informed consent document for this study contained a detailed explanation of the measures taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants. These measures included the use of pseudonyms in research report writing, voluntary involvement, and the ability for participants to discontinue their participation at any time if they felt uncomfortable. The purpose of the research was explained in detail to each participant, and they were informed that they could withdraw from the interview process at any point. Additionally, consent was sought to record the interviews. Participants were reassured that the information provided would remain confidential, accessible only to the researcher and the supervisor.

At the end of the interview process, the researcher engaged participants in an informal feedback session to assess their experience and ensure that the process had not negatively impacted their employment or caused regret. As outlined in the sampling procedure, participants were selected based on referrals of individuals who work as live-in female domestic workers.

### **3.8 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE STUDY**

The ethical approval phase was challenging because it required a rigorous review by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethical Committee. The committee raised several questions and concerns, such as how to access participants for the study, considering they are live-in female domestic workers, and how to protect their confidentiality. The researcher addressed these concerns by explaining that participants would be interviewed during their spare time and not in their employers' homes,

to avoid jeopardizing their employment. Consequently, all interviews took place in the vicinity of the domestic workers, but not in their employers' homes. The ethical application was approved on January 28, 2022, and fieldwork was conducted between February 2022 and November 2022.

The timing of the interviews varied according to each participant's spare time or time off from work to safeguard their employment. Given the nature of the research, it was necessary to recruit a female research assistant. The assistant, recommended by a key informant who had extensive experience as a domestic worker and oversaw the domestic workers association in the Ibadan central axis area of Oyo State, Nigeria, helped gain access and made the participants feel more comfortable during interviews.

Before the research commenced, a training session was organized for the research assistants. During this session, the researcher thoroughly explained the study's aims and objectives to ensure the assistant understood the research's intent and purpose. The assistant was also briefed about the interview procedures before the main interviews began. Despite the comprehensive briefing and training of the research assistant, the researcher remained involved in the entire process during fieldwork.

During the field work, interviews with young adult female domestic workers (aged 22-25) were more complex, as they were reluctant and fearful to participate. The key informant mentioned that some live-in domestic workers had been emotionally maltreated, affecting their confidence, self-esteem, and interactions with others. These workers were more comfortable confiding in the research assistant. Each interview lasted an average of 40 minutes, providing descriptive information about their daily activities and common chores. Nevertheless, two participants were hesitant to share their experiences and coping strategies. This was due to the presence of a key informant who works as an organizational leader for domestic workers. This led to conducting one-to-one interviews without third-party involvement. As part of ethical considerations, participants were asked if they felt comfortable sharing their experiences, and they expressed comfort in discussing their private matters with the researcher and the research assistant. During the course of the interview process, some of participants could not meet up with the researcher and research assistant based on their busy schedules, thus from the 20 participants of the study five participants preferred to communicate via WhatsApp and telephone calls due to their busy schedules. Understanding their opinions and perspectives on issues like these became crucial.

Their experiences provided new insights into the investigation of live-in domestic workers and their coping strategies in Nigerian society.

### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter began with a discussion of the justification for adopting a qualitative research approach for the study. The chapter highlights the significance, merits, and demerits of the research design while also exploring its contextual relevance to the study. Following this was an in-depth discussion of the community selected as the research location and the definite study population. A full description of the geographical and socio-cultural milieu of the study site is provided to give an in-depth insight into the reason for selecting Ibadan city as the study site.

The various methods and research tools aligned with qualitative fieldwork, including choosing participants, collecting data, and analysing interviews, are discussed in detail, highlighting their relevance to the research process. A comprehensive discussion of my positionality as a researcher conducting a study of live-in female domestic workers in Nigeria is provided. The discussion highlights the ethical challenges the researcher encountered during the investigation, reflecting on the choices made in the early stages and throughout the study.

Later in this chapter, a detailed discussion of my positionality and how it was handled during fieldwork and data collection is presented. This includes addressing ethical questions and issues that arose during the research process. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity was crucial during data collection to protect the rights and identities of the participants and avoid exposing them to unforeseen risks. Informed consent forms were essential for the study, with the purpose and aims of the research explained in detail to each participant before every interview. Thus, participants recruited for the study participated voluntarily.

To comprehensively understand this phenomenon, the study employed open-ended questions, allowing participants to express themselves based on their indigenous way of life, which is often silenced or stereotyped in official knowledge-making arenas. A qualitative research approach, case study design, and thematic analysis were deemed most appropriate for the study because they focus on human phenomena and the living experiences of female domestic workers.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: INSIGHT INTO FEMALE DOMESTIC WORKERS' LIVE-IN EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter begins with an overview of female live-in domestic workers. Data were presented and analysed accordingly, and this provided a deeper explanation on the live-in experiences of female domestic workers on the use of coping strategies as live-in employees from a decolonial perspective. It begins with an overview of the live-in experiences of these workers (Objective 1), critically examining the categories of female domestic workers, methods of employment, daily duties, lived experiences, challenges, and testimonies of female live-in domestic workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

The chapter sets the scene for the interviews, presenting data on participants with pseudonyms and classifying the female domestic workers in the study. It then delves into the main themes and sub-themes of their live-in experiences and perspectives. The main themes include the recruitment methods, dominant experiences of female live-in domestic workers, the experiences on challenges encountered by domestic workers, the experiences on exploitation and mistreatment. Sexual assault and harassment was also discussed and lastly the accomplishment of female live-in domestic workers was also achieved. Data from primary and secondary sources are interwoven to strengthen the narrative, with data presented and analysed in accordance with themes. This approach enhances the understanding of female live-in domestic workers' lived experiences as revealed by the investigation.

### **4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FROM THE STUDY**

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Years of service</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Dependants</b>
1. Sekiola	7 years	Married	54	Yoruba	High School	4
2. Bolatito	6 years	Married	48	Yoruba	HSE	3

3. Eniola	4 years	Married	35	Yoruba	NCE(Nursing)	2
4. Esther	1 year	Single	22	Yoruba	High School	0
5. Felica	12 years	Married	47	Yoruba	High School	3
6. Omolara	5 years	Married	55	Yoruba	Primary School	6
7. Boluwatife	2 years	Single	24	Yoruba	Polytechnic	0
8. Mary	2 years	Single	28	Yoruba	Bachelors Political Science	0
9. Alice	3 years	Married	30	Yoruba	High School	2
10. Omolola	5 years	Married	55	Yoruba	Master's Degree	4
11. Iyabo	6 years	Widowed	56	Yoruba	None	4
12. Sade	4 years	Married	35	Yoruba	HND	2
13. Nafisat	4 years	Widowed	50	Yoruba	Elementary School	3
14. Mopelola	9 years	Married	51	Yoruba	Elementary School	4
15. Iyameta	6 years	Widowed	42	Yoruba	High School	3
16. Ayisha	7 years	Single	25	Hausa	High School	0
17. Patricia	3 years	Single	30	Akwa-Ibom	NCE	0
18. Bisi	4 years	Single	35	Yoruba	High School	0
19. Folake	7 years	Single	23	Yoruba	High School	0
20. Apeke	5 years	Single	25	Yoruba	High School	0

Source: Researcher's compilation (2024).

This study interviewed twenty live-in female domestic workers from Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria. The participants were given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. The terms “house-help”

and “housemaid” were used interchangeably to refer to these live-in domestic workers. Table 4.1 provides the pseudonyms and biographical data of the participants.

According to Weinstein (2015), a demographic table is a crucial component of data presentation and analysis, as it provides a systematic summary of the participants' characteristics. Such a table allows researchers to present key information, such as age, sex, ethnicity, educational level, and other relevant variables (Fernandez, 2016). In this study, the demographic table enabled the researcher to evaluate whether the sample adequately represented the target population. It also enabled the researcher to identify any biases or limitations in terms of inclusivity or diversity. This promoted transparency, generalizability, and study findings interpretation. The demographic table above highlights the 20 female domestic workers recruited for the study. From the findings of the study, the age range of the participants varies from the age of 22 to 56 years, with different years of work experiences from 1 year to 12 years of service as domestic workers. Through observation from the demographic table eight (8) participants were single while (9) nine were married and 3 were widowed during the interview process. Majority of the participants were from the Yoruba tribe with 18 in number from the 20 participants of the study while other tribes namely Hausa and Akwa Ibom were represented accordingly in the study. In terms of educational qualifications, majority of the participants recruited for the study had high school qualifications with a representation of 9 participant. Three (3) of the participants represented the elementary education and one of the participant with no formal education. From the demographic data gathered, it was found that Eight (8) participants had no dependence while 12 have dependence.

Using qualitative data analysis methods, the data from this study were presented and thematically analysed. The qualitative analysis aimed to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon and compare various views on commonalities and differences within the study (Flick, 2013). Thematic analysis was used to identify significant themes and patterns that addressed research problems (Braun, 2006). Joffe (2011) noted that themes are patterns derived from data sets that are crucial for describing a phenomenon and are linked to specific research questions derived from the study objectives. The emerging themes from the participants' explanations were compiled to form a comprehensive narrative of domestic workers' perspectives. The study found diverse narratives regarding female domestic workers' live-in experiences. It became crucial to have an icebreaker question with participants to share their recruitment methods into the domestic work life and the dominant narratives surrounding the domestic work. This enabled the researcher to delve

information from participants which enhanced the free flow of conversation as participants were able to express themselves by giving insights into the daily chores and factors predisposing females into domestic work life.

#### **4.2 RECRUITMENT METHODS OF LIVE-IN DOMESTIC WORKERS**

The focus of the study is to investigate and unpack the female domestic workers perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees. However, during the field work, the researcher found a significant component which laid a foundation for the study. This was the recruitment methods of live-in domestic workers. From the study, it was observed that the organization and methods of recruitment into domestic work have evolved over the years. This is classified as forced labour, as domestic workers are often trafficked females and children from marginalized communities to cities for employment (Adepoju, 2005). Adesina (2014) further noted that some domestic workers are recruited from parents or family members in villages, under mutual agreements for their children to receive tertiary education in major Nigerian cities in exchange for their labour in domestic chores. Additionally, domestic workers are recruited from neighbouring countries such as Togo and the Republic of Benin (Moses, 2009), also in exchange for education and a better standard of living in Nigerian cities.

However, the study found that domestic work had become more organized in recent times. Recruitment methods are now mostly handled by agencies that assign domestic workers to different homes, where they work as live-in employees or day-to-day workers. Some domestic workers are still recruited from extended families in villages or through community recommendations.

Understanding the current recruitment methods for domestic work in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, remains crucial in the study as it examines the new narratives of the diverse methods and reasons why female domestic workers are often recruitment into domestic work. Domestic workers are recruited based on the specific needs of employers, whether for household chores, health care, emotional support, or assisting those with physical challenges. Interviews with participants highlighted that the vast majority of live-in employees were recruited through agencies. Omolola, a leader of a domestic work agency who also serves as a domestic worker, explained the agency's recruitment methods as follows:

*I work as a domestic worker and a recruiter at the same time. Although there are different methods of how people get into this job. People get involved through suggestions from friends who needs a job. But for us we have an agency, so employers come to us when they need domestic workers because we have a lot of people, we can connect these employers with who render domestic services (live-in employees). Part of the first thing we do before connecting or suggesting a domestic worker to an employer is to carry out an interview with the candidate (female domestic worker) by asking some questions, afterwards we do some training for a week before they are connected to an employer. There are a lot of job seekers who come to me stating that they are ready to work as a domestic worker. Once we can tell that an individual is qualified to work as a live-in employee, we keep in touch with them. The agency also serves as a place to report any form of incidence or misunderstanding between the live-in domestic workers and employers, it is part of our duty to take note of the well-being of our workers and those who come to us to recruit domestic workers (Omolola, live-in female domestic worker).*

As a further support to this point, Sekiola further explained her experiences as a live-in domestic worker who was recruited through an agency.

*I was recruited by an agency to work as a domestic worker and I feel it's very safe because they are able to monitor if we are not treated very well in the employer's homes and whenever there is a problem we have where to report too because we hold meetings at least once in a month (Sekiola, live-in domestic worker).*

The narratives above provide vivid accounts of how some employers rely solely on agencies to connect with disciplined live-in female domestic workers who undergo training before employment in the domestic work sector. This practice is crucial for managing the domestic activities and job descriptions of these workers, as the agency serves as a structured body to report any form of unpleasant behaviour by the live-in domestic workers. Therefore, the agency creates an avenue for control, checks, and balances for both the live-in domestic workers and the employers. Additionally, Tsikata (2011) suggests that the employment agencies of domestic workers adhere to the rules and regulations of international labour standards to safeguard the live-in employees in the informal sector.

Another participant shared a different perspective on how she was employed in the domestic work sector from her hometown. She stated as follows:

*I was recruited by from Badagry area of Lagos State (Ajase village) very close to the border between Nigeria and Cotonou (Republic of Benin). There was a man who use to come to my hometown who has farmland and my father used to work on his farm. This man has been helping my family for a long time by providing an avenue for my father to do some jobs on his farmland. He suggested that I should come to the city to work and live with his family when I was younger and promised me that I would also continue my education over there. Although he told my father too and we thought about it very well before making the final decision because at home I was not really doing anything serious, because I was out of school for a while due to finances. After the back-and-forth argument with my family, I left with the man to meet his family by working as a live-in domestic worker and going to school and ever since then, I have been working in Ibadan and studying at the same time. I visit home occasionally too especially during the festive period (Folake, live-in domestic worker).*

From a similar perspective, Ayisha also shared her own experience of getting involved in domestic work after she had been recruited from northern Nigeria to the south-west.

*What brought me to Ibadan city was the emergence of Boko-Haram crisis in the northern part of Nigeria, my family lost almost everything, and we had no option than to run for our lives from Borno state. Besides that, I was unable to go to school during those times because we were all scared of what could happen to us. Although I was very young but was able to understand what was happening at that time. For my sanity, my parent took me to our relatives in Ibadan who reside around Sabo. We were all struggling at that point and it was suggested by my relatives that I should start working as a live-in domestic worker and if I do that I will be able to go to school because people who will employ me would also be able to see me through school because they value education so much around here. And ever since then, the people I work for as domestic worker have been helpful to my life and I am grateful for that (Ayisha, live-in female domestic worker).*

From the assertions above, it can be inferred that young females from marginalized communities, whose parents or guardians are unable to sponsor their education, are often encouraged by their families and relatives to venture into domestic work to support themselves. It was also found that young female domestic workers frequently meet favourable employers who are capable of sponsoring their education while they work as live-in employees. Additionally, the findings also

revealed that domestic workers were often recruited based on recommendations from friends and other female domestic workers. From findings, Omolara shared how she was able to gain employment as live-in female domestic work through suggestions.

*I was suggested by one of my friends who works in the next street because she knew I was struggling, and she is loyal to her employers, and they are also very good to her. The family members and neighbours could see that my friend was a good person. Meanwhile people who needed domestic workers in that area stated asking her if she has anyone to suggest for domestic work since she is a nice person. That was how I got involved into the domestic work life as my friend suggested to an employer and that was how I was able to get myself into the domestic work life (Eniola, live-in female domestic worker).*

As highlighted in the discussion above, there are several ways to gain employment in the domestic work sector. The data gathered indicated that placement agencies play a major role in recruiting domestic workers. These agencies typically handle recruitment, screening, and initial employment arrangements. Once a match is made, the domestic worker is employed directly by a family. Additionally, domestic workers often found employment through recommendations from friends and relatives. Employers sometimes sponsor the education of young female domestic workers, with the expectation that these workers will provide free domestic services in return for this support.

#### **4.3 DOMINANT PERSPECTIVES SURROUNDING DOMESTIC WORK**

The employment of females as domestic workers in homes has become a common practice among elite and well-established households worldwide (Qayum, 2020). Bishop (2020) noted that the challenges of live-in female domestic workers are emerging as an issue in African countries, including Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated the various narratives and perspectives of female domestic workers on coping strategies. Through semi-structure interviews, female live-in employees were probed, and their narratives were developed into themes and sub-themes. These sub-themes provided more insight into the daily chores of live-in domestic workers, the challenges, and the factors leading women to domestic work. This emerged from the semi-structured interviews conducted in the study. Data was presented and analysed as participants shared diverse narratives based on their daily lives as live-in domestic workers. Notably, the study found that

female live-in employees acknowledged the cumbersome nature of domestic chores and that the tasks varied significantly based on the employers' needs.

Domestic workers' duties and reasons for employment are classified into various groups. These include workers recruited to care for elderly individuals, such as septuagenarians, in their homes. Duties of live-in workers typically encompass household chores and attending to the health and well-being of these individuals. Domestic workers are also employed for the general well-being of households or for childcare, especially in situations where parents struggle with the workload pressures from their careers. Female domestic workers may also be employed to monitor the emotional well-being of their employers, such as widows or widowers. Lastly, some domestic workers are employed to care for individuals suffering from illnesses, integrating their duties with those of auxiliary nurses. According to d'Souza (2010), the employment methods of domestic workers vary by country, region, and specific labour regulations. It has been noted that the activities of domestic workers are often conducted behind closed doors without proper contractual agreements, making live-in domestic workers vulnerable to unfair dismissals (du-Toit, 2013). Parrenas (2021) attests that domestic work can be either full-time or part-time, depending on the agreement between workers and employers.

#### **4.3.1 An exploration of the daily chores of live-in female domestic workers**

In this study, the importance of understanding the daily chores and experiences of live-in female domestic employees in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria, was paramount. The data presented and analysed revealed various classifications of domestic workers based on employers' needs. This also provided a deeper insight into the study, highlighting the variations in answers regarding daily chores of live-in female domestic workers. Sekiola, a 52-year-old live-in domestic worker who has been employed for over seven years, provided an in-depth explanation of her daily chores and duties in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria.

*I take care of an old woman as a female live-in domestic worker. In the morning when I wake up, it is part of my duty to go to the old woman's room (Grannies room) to greet her which is part of our culture; this is a form of respect in the Yoruba culture. After that, I will have to check her blood pressure; and once in a week, I check the sugar level.*

*I have a note where I keep the records. After we are done with the morning check-up, I have to start preparing the break-fast, and we eat together as a family, afterwards I wash the dishes and clean the house. Lastly on Saturdays I do the laundry.*

She went on to explain her responsibilities as a live-in employee. As well as performing daily chores in the household, a domestic worker's essential responsibilities include keeping close watch over the health and well-being of all the employees in their care. In her narrative, she mentioned the following:

*The family of this woman hired me to work in her house because they don't want her to stay alone since her husband who built the house is now late and all her children are married and working in different locations across the country while some are abroad too. Besides that, the house is very big and there are tenant's downstairs but in the woman's section we are two, just me and her. Although, there are two of us working for this woman. The family hired two workers, myself and the other worker who looks into other duties of buying groceries and running basic errands for the house. (Sekiola, female live-in domestic worker).*

The data analysed and presented indicates that the duties and essential responsibilities of domestic workers vary depending on employers' needs. Another participant in the study, Patricia explained her essential duties as follows:

*When I wake up in the morning, I clean, cook, take the children of my employer to school, pick them up after school. Afterwards, I wash their school uniforms immediately, we get back home together. I help them with their assignments too and put them to bed when it's time to sleep. Their parents do not have time for this because of their busy schedule at work. Sometimes they get back home very late at night around 11 PM, because they work at the bank" (Patricia, female live-in domestic worker).*

Patricia's description portrays colonial characteristics of domestic workers responsibilities which was to look after the employer's children. This indicates that domestic workers are employed for a variety of reasons within the home. With the hectic schedules of some parents and guardians or employers, they prefer to hire live-in domestic workers to monitor the well-being of their children as well as the overall home duties. As Taiwo and Oyeleye (2014) point out, parents, particularly women, who hold high-demanding jobs often employ domestic workers into their homes to assist in pursuing career goals for the working-class employer.

Probing further, Sade who has worked as a live-in employee for 4 years in Ibadan North-east local government noted the following:

*In the morning when I wake up, I must clean the house of my employer, take care my employer who I call (client). I was employed to take care of the household and to cheer-up and bring life to my main employer's life. It is very important to note that sometimes these employers go through a lot of life problems even when they are old. I cheer her up by cracking jokes which makes her happy. I also check the heart rate, sugar level, blood pressure, clean- up the house and cook for the day (Sade, live-in female domestic worker).*

Another participant, Esther, described her daily duties and chores as follows:

*My responsibility as a live-in employee only involves the well-being of the house and majorly the health of my employer. Once I am done with the normal morning routine by checking up on my employer when we wake up, the next in line on my agenda for the day is to cook. I don't really play a major role on the chores of the household because there is another person who visits 3 times in a week to clean the house. Although sometimes I also assist when the person is unavailable (Esther, live-in female domestic worker).*

Considering the narratives shared above, it is apparent that the primary duties of live-in female domestic workers are determined by their employers' needs. The narratives also revealed that there are both live-in and live-out domestic workers who provide daily services. This further emphasizes that the scope of domestic services is largely determined by employer needs. Additionally, Meht et al. (2017) clarified the distinction between live-in and live-out domestic workers, noting that live-in workers are employed full-time by a single family, whereas live-out workers serve multiple households on a daily or hourly basis. This study provided an opportunity and platform for live-in domestic workers in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria, to share their perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees.

The experiences shared by participants provide substantial evidence that live-in female domestic workers' daily chores are diverse. These duties include household chores, caring for the elderly and infants, and attending to household members' emotional and health needs. Nesbitt-Ahmed (2020) further supports this by noting that female domestic workers' tasks typically involve household functionality. The data presented and analysed confirms that while domestic workers

are hired for various reasons, their job descriptions and responsibilities remain centred on the household.

### **4.3.2 Factors predisposing females to domestic work**

Chapter 1 highlights that the domestic work sector is predominantly occupied by women worldwide, rendering it a feminized sector (Gutierrez-Rodriguez, 2014). This trend is observed across all societies, but particular emphasis is placed on marginalized communities, especially in the African region. In these areas, women engage in domestic work to support themselves and their families. Furthermore, women in Africa face numerous challenges, including poverty, limited access to quality education, and inadequate healthcare services.

Interviews revealed various factors driving women into domestic work. The findings indicate that some female live-in workers began their employment before the age of 18, often as teenagers, which can be considered child labour. Ewulum (2021) noted that this practice is common in Nigeria as a means of securing inexpensive domestic labour. Participant narratives identified several reasons for women's involvement in domestic work across Nigeria. These include poverty, difficulty finding other employment, and other life challenges. For instance, Bolatito, one of the study participants, shared her motivations for entering the domestic work sector:

*When life problems spring up it can affect the well-being of an individual which can be very challenging. Before I started this job as a live-in domestic worker, I was training to be a nurse at some point, I also had a small chemist (Pharmacy) where I sell medications, likes of Panadol, constipation medication and all that. I was able to secure my license to sell as a training medical practitioner. I had to close the small pharmacy due to the covid-19 pandemic which really affected the sales of my business which was very sad and challenging for me although I did not allow that to push me down. I did not give up on myself based on what I have been through recently. So, I decided to work as a live-in domestic worker because I have all the necessary skills required including the health aspect of the job and I have been able to render domestic chores services and the health- well-being of the household I work as a live-in employee. I did not give up because I have a lot of responsibilities on myself, and I have bills to pay. Besides that, my children are in school, I also need to support my husband so we can be successful in life together as a family (Bolatito, female live-in domestic worker).*

From Bolatito's narrative, the effect of the pandemic lockdown period in 2020 (Covid-19) affected her business sales which motivated her to pursue a career in the domestic service in Nigeria. It was also discovered that her experience as a medical practitioner was also valuable in the domestic work sector as she could render both domestic chores and monitor the health and well-being of her employer effectively.

Eniola's narrative further substantiates the popular opinion regarding the push and pull factors that lead women to work as live-in domestic helpers. She explained as follows:

*At first, I worked as a domestic worker for 2 years when I was still very young as a lady. This was because I was sponsoring my education myself. I come from a very poor background, so I must push myself through all the financial obstacles alone. After a while I stopped rendering domestic services when I got married because I had a business, I was managing at that point but at some point, the business folded up. Afterwards, I went for a short midwife/nursing training which entails taking care of people in their homes. So, from there I was able to make good use of the networks I have as my elder sister is one of the key stakeholders of the present organization I work as a live-in employee in Ibadan. In total, I have spent 4 years working in the domestic work sector, 2 years as a live out daily domestic worker and 2 years counting as a live-in employee (Eniola female live-in domestic worker).*

A live-in female domestic worker, Patricia, also explained the reason for her decision to work as one:

*After graduating from the University, it was very hard for me to get a job so there was no other option than to opt for this. At least it is better off than doing nothing or even stealing. It is very sad, but I know things would not continue like this forever for me, something better will surely come someday (Patricia, live-in female domestic worker).*

From the narratives above, many issues are brought to the fore as unemployment remains a concern in Nigeria. As a consequence of unemployment, graduates are unable to secure employment related to their field of study. However, participants in the study noted that females employed in the domestic work sector undergo thorough training before work placement in employers' homes.

In her interviews, Iyabo also discussed a critical challenge, in addition to the lack of formal education that led her to seek employment in the domestic service sector. She noted:

*I have no formal education and the only choice of work I have is to do informal jobs by rendering domestic service. At first, I was working with some bricklayers in a construction site. I use to help them carry sand, cement and building blocks. After some time, the work became very tedious for me because I was getting old. Thereafter, I was selling some local traditional herbs that cure (Hemorrhoids) (Jedi, Opaeyin) especially those herbs for erectile problems for men. You see, I know about indigenous knowledge and practices. After some time, I felt very sick, my feet were so painful due to the rigorous work I was doing before as a construction worker on sites. I needed some financial support to take care of myself. I didn't want to stress my children because they are also trying to find their ground too in life, so there was no choice than for me to work for my money and take care of myself and from there I became a live-in domestic worker. After I got the job, I was able to take care of myself (Iyabo, Live-in female domestic worker).*

An additional dimension was presented by Apeke, a live-in domestic worker who discussed her experience as a live-in domestic worker from the age of 14 (child labor) until the age of 18.

*I am from a very poor family in a village from Oke Ogun area of Oyo State. I was only able to complete my primary education and started secondary school. Although I could not continue at some point, which was based on financial challenges. My cousin works for a very rich family in Ibadan, so there was a time whereby the family friend of the people my cousin used to work for that time needed someone and she suggested me. She already told me that it's going to be an opportunity for me to continue my education because these people would not want me to be alone in the house during the day doing nothing when they are off to work. The family I work for, have been very helpful to me because they sponsored my secondary school education, apprenticeship as a tailor and now, I am applying to a Polytechnic to further my studies. They are more like my parents now because I have lived with them for a couple of years (Apeke, live-in female domestic workers).*

Apeke's narrative reveals that livelihood struggles manifest in various ways. Young females working as live-in employees have become increasingly common in Nigeria over the years. Some of these young women take up such positions due to poverty, often at their parents' behest. Conversely, young females from marginalized communities who cannot complete their education may seize this opportunity to pursue further education in urban areas. Atkinson (2023) notes that

young females, especially those from marginalized and socially excluded communities, often lack access to their basic childhood rights, such as education, health care, and nutrition. This deprivation results from economic exploitation and sociocultural discrimination. While some employers of live-in domestic workers offer support by encouraging and sponsoring their education, child labour remains illegal and should not be endorsed as a means to combat poverty in rural communities. Ngwamma (2018) reports, citing UNICEF findings, that thousands of Nigerian and migrant children from neighbouring countries continue to work as live-in employees. This exposes them to various forms of exploitation and violence at a young age.

Another participant buttressed further, stating the following:

*Well, some of us have no choice than to work as a live-in domestic worker (Helpers). My brother!! You see in this life, no one knows tomorrow and what one is destined for or to become. Some of us also wish to be Doctors, Engineers, Directors and even government officials but what life has for us is different. Considering that, my prayer is for my children to be greater than me in life. I am not saying I am not happy o... but that's just life because while growing up my parents were very poor, so the opportunities were limited. In fact, I was unable to complete my formal education because of that although I went through with elementary school education (Mopelola, female live-in domestic worker).*

From the narrative provided, Mopelola, a female live-in employee, shared that poverty was a significant barrier to continuing her formal education. This limitation restricted her career aspirations, ultimately limiting her to working as a live-in domestic helper for many years.

The findings revealed that many female live-in employees are independent women striving to improve their living standards for themselves and their families. Despite limited formal education, these women work diligently to make ends meet and aspire to greater achievements. Participants highlighted several factors contributing to female vulnerability in domestic work. These factors include poverty, challenging life circumstances, lack of access to education, and difficulties in finding employment aligned with their field of study at tertiary institutions. These factors are major motivators for females entering the domestic work sector in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Consistent with the study's findings, Dinkelman and Ranchhod (2012) noted that many women in the domestic work sector are poorly educated. Furthermore, rural poverty has increased in many African

countries due to the decline of the agricultural sector and limited employment opportunities (Zungu, 2009).

#### **4.4 EXPERIENCES: CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY DOMESTIC WORKERS**

Despite the duties and responsibilities of live-in employees in modern societies, these workers also face severe challenges. It is crucial to understand that the duties of live-in domestic workers are often invisible, as they are performed behind closed doors, making regulation difficult (Anderson, 2007). According to interviews, the challenges encountered by live-in employees are determined by the needs of the employers or the household, and thus, the challenges of live-in domestic workers vary. Felicia, a live-in female domestic worker with over 12 years' experience, provided insight into these challenges, stating that:

*What I have experienced so far is that one should know that there are various challenges attached to this job. What one would experience in house (A) would be different from house (B). Therefore, one needs to endure” (Felicia, female live-in domestic worker).*

From the explanation given, it is clear that the challenges faced by live-in domestic workers are determined by the household chores and the needs of employers. This study established that the primary duties of domestic workers include managing household chores, caring for children, and tending to the elderly. However, the data gathered also revealed that live-in domestic workers often focus on a specific area of specialization, such as monitoring the well-being of the household, caring for children or the elderly, and attending to the emotional and health needs of household members or the employer. Therefore, the challenges are varied and influenced by the intimacy of the work environment (Thobejane, 2019).

This research provided a platform for female domestic workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, to share their experiences as live-in employees. Female live-in domestic workers recruited for the study expressed their narratives, highlighting their challenges. Omolara, a live-in employee, shared her major challenges, stating:

*Most of the time in my employers' home what I do most of the time is to take care of my employers' father, he is an elderly man so the challenge I battle with every now and then is to wake up at least 3 times in the midnight to assist him whenever he wants to urinate because he uses a urine bag which has to be disposed very early in the morning. Then in the middle of the night around 2 AM, I will have to go to his room to check if he*

*is asleep again and the last check-up will be around 4:30 AM so I barely sleep at night and by 5:30 AM I will have to start cleaning the house and cooking for the day for everyone in the house. After that, I will serve everyone then start with the laundry by washing the clothes which is always a lot and remember, the reason I was employed is to take care of the household and their grandfather so there are times I will have to wash some clothes which has some urine stains sometimes (Omolara, female live-in domestic worker).*

Omolara buttressed further and noted the following:

*That also remind me, there are some days where I must assist him to the bathroom even to dress up sometimes which is very demanding and uncomfortable to me. The man also complains a lot. For instance, he can complain that his room is not well ventilated, after opening the windows he would request that the windows should be close and complain about the ventilation that it is too windy. These scenarios are always confusing and draining. The time he is resting is when I get a chance to move freely to rest although at times, he can call me to do some minor tasks like to lift his legs or to bring some fruits for him from the kitchen (Omolola, live-in female domestic workers).*

The challenges described by Omolara highlight that live-in employees work around the clock, leading to a variety of workplace challenges unique to each individual. These challenges are often known only to the live-in employees themselves. Omolara's explanation supports Pitso's (2019) argument that the duties of domestic workers are cumbersome, undervalued, and poorly regulated. Many live-in domestic workers are poorly informed about their rights, making them vulnerable to undefined duties and long working hours.

Alice, a mother of two and a live-in employee, also shared one of her challenges. She stated that live-in employees have limited excuses to justify absences from work. She recounted an experience when she fell ill while on the job.

*The major challenge I encountered was when I got very sick, at that point in time I was down with typhoid fever which was life threatening. I had no choice than to carry out my daily task as a live-in employee. I can remember vividly on this day; I was stooling from the night till morning, I also had a serious constipation and during the day I had no energy to do anything, so I forced myself to work. If I don't do that, I know my payment at the end of the month will be cut short. Since I work on shift as live-in*

*employee one day and the other day off, I had to wait for the next person on duty before I could go home to my family. I had to call my husband to find a way to come and get me from work even if we didn't have a car. He was able to negotiate and plead with our neighbours to help him out by coming to pick me up from work. This incidence remains one of those days I can never forget because I felt lifeless because I was very sick and force myself to work, my employer had a birthday and I was assigned to do some tedious catering service, I also don't want my sickness to affect my pay because I need the money, I only depend on this job for now, I have no option than to work (Alice, live-in employee).*

On the same note, Nafisat stated that:

*When I am sick, I do my work because there is no one who is going to help me since I am the only one working here although I get some days off like a day or two which is based on the discretion of my employer. Sometimes I have second thoughts of leaving this job, but it is very unpractical and impossible for me since I solely depend on this. I'm trying all my best to manage the place I work right now although it is not conducive for my sanity because my daily task there is more than the pay. The workload is a lot for me even in situations where I fall sick, I still must do some work, and If I don't, I would not be compensated for that day which is unfair as it will affect my remuneration by the end of the month. Just imagine when the salary is not even enough, and you are not well compensated simply because you missed a day from work. Haaa!! It's a bad case (Nafisat, live-in domestic worker).*

From the narratives above, it is evident that there are many challenges associated with domestic work. During the interviews, it was noted that unforeseen illnesses often impact live-in employees' daily chores. Despite these challenges, live-in employees strive to perform their duties, even when dealing with health issues. Godwin (2014) asserts that live-in domestic workers juggle many activities, even when it is uncomfortable.

Iyameta shared one of her major struggles: lack of time with her immediate family. She stated the following:

*This job is very demanding which has been affecting the intimate relationship I have with my family. I am not always available to spend time with my children, family functions during festive period and other notable ceremonies. This is because most of the time, I am always at work. When we planned my son's graduation, I was present*

*there until late in the evening when the celebration was almost over. It is very painful although I have accepted my fate (Iya-meta, female live-in domestic worker).*

Bolatito also discussed her experience as a live-in employee and the challenges she has faced over the years. As a live-in employee in Nigeria, Bolatito has worked in Lagos and Oyo states.

*There are positive and negative narratives about this job, actually it is always based on the discretion of the employers and how a live-in domestic worker communicates with them. It is also crucial to study the employers and know more about them. There was a period I was transferred from Old Ife Road in Ibadan and posted to another place within Ibadan city, I really enjoyed myself so much over there because the employer then does not give me any problem so there was no major difference between the old Ife Road employer and the new place I was posted. But the time I was posted to Lagos state, I was surprised and noticed that homes and employers differs. In Lagos it was very different as part of my morning duties is to clean and wash the two cars of my employers around 5:30 am before they go to work, afterwards I prepare the food and if there is no electricity it is part of my duty to turn-on the generator which requires a lot of energy because it is operated manually. Apart from all these, there was a time my employers' father was brought to the house when he was not feeling too well. I must cook for him separately because he was on a strict diet, do the laundry separately because I was told by my employer's wife to always separate the old man's clothes. Towards the evening, after cooking between 6:30 and 7:30 pm, I get my employers' father is ready to sleep, I have to sit close to his bed by monitoring him until he sleeps off. There are instances when I will sit from 8PM till 5:30 AM in the morning when the Muslims clergy calls for prayers in the neighbourhood, that is the time he allows me to go to sleep. Can you tell me, how does he expect me to sleep around 5:30AM in the morning. (Bolatito, live-in domestic worker).*

Several issues emerged while discussing female live-in employees' challenges in this study. One key issue was the unspecified duties attached to their daily chores. This lack of clarity extends to concerns about long working hours with short or no breaks, which significantly impacts their well-being. These workers often struggle to fulfil their personal needs and achieve self-satisfaction.

The data presented from this study also highlighted the reluctance of female live-in employees to ask questions about their job descriptions due to the power dynamics between domestic workers and employers. This power structure often leads to live-in employees being assigned duties outside

their job descriptions as domestic workers, broadening the scope of the research by revealing the authority employers hold over live-in employees.

Inquiring about the additional duties assigned to live-in employees revealed that these extra tasks become burdensome, preventing them from having specified rest periods. Tolla (2013) notes that domestic workers are often part of the invisible labour force because they work in private households. Despite domestic work's crucial role in modern society, its regulation remains a challenge (International Labour Organization: ILO, 2012).

Female live-in employees' reluctance to question their job descriptions is rooted in the power structures between live-in domestic workers and employers. Findings indicate that these workers are frequently assigned duties not originally part of their job descriptions. These challenges are linked to class intersection, leading to inequalities. In this study, the hierarchy of power is the organization or structure of authority vested in employers of domestic workers (Tear, 2020). As a result, live-in female employees are often forced to meet their employers' needs.

During the discussion, it became apparent that live-in domestic workers avoid engaging in conversations that might interfere with their employer's family or household members. Consequently, participants raised concerns about their own well-being.

#### **4.5 EXPERIENCES: EXPLOITATION AND MISTREATMENT OF DOMESTIC WORKERS**

Crane (2013) and Dickens (2010) emphasize that labour exploitation involves individuals being forced or manipulated to work for little or no wages. This makes it the most common form of modern slavery. Domestic workers constitute a large vulnerable group due to their lack of education and other challenges, leading to their subjugation to domestic work. The menial labour in domestic work is classified as unskilled labour, with workers earning very low compensation, controlled by employers' jurisdictions. As a result, domestic workers lack autonomy and are often expected to be servile (McKeown, 2016). In Nigeria, the majority of female live-in employees' experience class and gender discrimination due to their social position (Osiki, 2022).

Several studies provide evidence that domestic workers occasionally endure violence at the hands of their employers (Basnet and Sandhya, 2020; Anwar and Brukwe, 2023). The exploitation and mistreatment of domestic workers are often perpetuated by employers' dominant power structures

over live-in employees (Sexwale, 2012; Gothoskar, 2013). This power dynamic subjects' live-in employees to prevalent forms of abuse (Cohen, 2000; Mkandawire Valhmu et al., 2009). Furthermore, it has been established that most live-in employees reside in disadvantaged communities, leading them to seek better opportunities despite the risks of exploitation and mistreatment (Zahreddine, 2014). Narratives gathered from the study reveal that domestic workers experience physical assault, emotional manipulation, long working hours, low wages, sexual assault, and psychological traumas. The study provided a platform for live-in employees to share their experiences, highlighting sub-themes such as physical assault by employers, emotional manipulation, long working hours, low wages, sexual assault, psychological traumas, and the hearsay about the mistreatment of other live-in employees.

#### **4.5.1 Physical assault perpetuated by employers**

From the study, physical assault emerged as a recurring theme. These assaults are perpetrated against live-in employees between the ages of twenty and thirty. The data presented revealed various forms of physical assault, including slapping, hitting with objects, depriving employees of food, and pouring liquids or food items on them out of anger. Live-in employees provided detailed accounts of these assaults, highlighting the vulnerability of domestic workers.

Omolola, a live-in domestic worker and leader of the Domestic Workers Organization in Ibadan North-East Local Government, shared a report based on the experience of a female live-in employee who was physically assaulted and maltreated in Ibadan. She stated:

*There are several instances of physical assaults. A report was given to me last week, were an employer slapped the house-help. This was because the house help said the woman was raising her voice at her. I visited this particular home to get more information from the employer because the lady working there already reported to me, so it was important for me to also hear the employer's side of the story by asking the cause of the problem. Part of the reason for the physical assault as stated by the employer was because the live-in employee did not obey her instructions on time. Thereafter, the woman started shouting that the domestic worker doesn't do her job properly. What was reported to me by the female domestic worker was that employer (woman) wanted her cook and do other chores at the same time which was confusing the innocent young lady as she was confused on what task to do first. So, on her way to*

*the kitchen to start the food preparation, the employer gave her a hot dirty slap. In fact, when she came to report the incidence on the day it happened, I saw the reddish scar on her face. I felt bad about it, I was also worried about the well-being of the young lady*

She further stated that:

*Some employers don't even give some of their house-helpers food to eat which is a form of maltreatment. To think about it, where will the live-in employee get the strength and energy to perform the chores in the household. We have also noticed that some of the live-in domestic workers often fall ill because of things like this (malnutrition). There was a report on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2022, one of the domestic workers opened to me that her employer threw ceramic plate at her because the employer was angry at her and whenever there is a misunderstanding between the domestic worker and members of the household, she might be given food to eat even when she cooks for the entire household members. Tell me, would someone like this not want to poison such employer and other members of the house? The domestic worker I am talking about has been very ill for a while, this is because of the malnutrition which has really affected her well-being. Although she is no longer part of us due to the maltreatment she experienced, it really affected her interaction with people, and she was 21 years of age. She has a good heart and the spirit to persevere for a while until she could not take it anymore and left (Omolola, Live in domestic worker).*

Omolola describes the experience of a live-in domestic worker who was brutally assaulted by her employers, leading to her being denied food, which severely affected her health. She noted that in the early stages of the physical assault, the live-in employee remained aloof and did not report the incident. It was only later that she shared her experience with the leader of an organization for domestic workers in Ibadan Northeast.

It is vital to note that live-in female employees often find it very difficult to leave their jobs even in situations of maltreatment, as they solely depend on the income from domestic work. Similarly, Priffas (2021) confirms that domestic workers are reluctant to quit their jobs despite experiencing maltreatment in the workplace. Furthermore, Tolla (2013) reports that live-in domestic workers are often denied food whenever their employers are dissatisfied with their daily performance. The data presented and analysed revealed that physical assault on live-in domestic workers manifest in

various ways. For instance, Nafisat described the assault she experienced while dishing and serving food in the household. She expressed her distress about the unpleasant treatment, stating:

*Yes, there are different types of maltreatment at the place I work as a live-in employee. There was a day I gave the woman the food she asked me to prepare. Immediately after dishing for her, she poured the food on me. I spoke to her in a pleasant manner by asking her what I have done wrong. She stated that I was instructed to make pounded yam, but I made white rice with beef stew. However, before making the white rice and beef stew, I told her that the yam available in the store would not be enough, so I don't how she expects me to perform a magic very late at night by going to the market to purchase yam. Even, if I decide to go, I won't be able to get food items. I had no option than to make the white rice and beef stew (Nafisat, live-in domestic worker).*

Apeke also narrated a similar experience, she noted:

*There was a place I used to work before in this Ibadan, there are some experiences and memories that are still in shock to me till today. There was a day we made Miomio (beans cake) to eat that evening so there were leftovers of two (2) wrapped Miomio in nylon which was kept in the fridge for consumption the following day. I picked one to eat in the afternoon the following day, then took cold water from the fridge to drink Garri. Mind you, I refilled the water container and kept it in the freezer for it to get very cold quickly before, the mommy I work for arrives (employer) from work. She got back after an hour plus after I finished eating. Immediately she got back, she went straight to the fridge to get water to drink and found out that I took the water earlier. Although the water refilled was not iced like the previous one, I took but it was also very cold. She got so angry that day and threw the water bottle container on me. I didn't even know when the big water bottle container landed on my head. It even got worse when she noticed that one of the Moimoi was also gone. Everything happened very fast that day (Apeke, female live-in domestic worker).*

Another participant stated the following:

*There was a day I was pushing the wheelchair from the toilet for the man I was taking care. While we were on our way, he wanted to branch a room in the house to rest, then I told him that the bed(mattress) in that particular room is not good enough for him to rest his back. Meanwhile, I did not stop pushing the wheelchair and before I knew it, he*

*pushed on the breaks and threw his elbow on my spine and I was hurt (Boluwatife, live-in female domestic worker).*

According to the narratives captured, there are a variety of thoughts and types of violence against live-in female domestic workers. It is, however, clear from the narratives of the live-in female domestic workers that employers may have some inbuilt anger against domestic workers at times when they are dissatisfied with the service provided by the live-in employees, which results in physical assault on the female domestic workers. Donald and Mahlatji (2006) condemn the violence faced by female domestic workers by stating that it is often caused by marginalization, low socioeconomic status and poor education of live-in workers.

Sekiola provided a brief insight into what contributes to some employers' anger at domestic workers. She stated the following:

*My brother, it is vital to be informed about where one is going to work. For instance, my duty as a domestic worker is to perform the house chore and take care of an elderly woman. You should know that these people sometimes behave like babies and can also switch on you anytime because of their old age. It is sad to say this, some of the people we take care; (I mean those who we call clients) suffer from dementia and intermittent explosive disorder (IED). So, it is very important for live-in employees to be aware of the health conditions of people especially the employers or the people they are watching after which is part of the responsibility of a domestic worker (Sekiola, live-in domestic worker).*

Several priorities are placed on live-in domestic workers according to Heng (2019), such as providing physical and emotional support to elderly individuals, people with disabilities, or those recovering from illness. A critical assessment of these narratives on physical assault revealed that the live-in female domestic workers experience severe physical assault at work, which is becoming more prevalent especially for those domestic workers who are responsible for caring for elderly individuals and maintaining their chores. It is interesting that some female domestic workers believe that the physical assaults are manifested because of a socioeconomic hierarchy of class. This makes female domestic workers more vulnerable to such outrageous exploitation.

#### 4.5.2 Manipulative strategies of employers over domestic workers

Emotional manipulation refers to tactics or strategies used to influence or control others' emotions for personal gain or to achieve a specific outcome. It involves exploiting an individual's feelings, insecurities, or vulnerabilities to attain a desired result (Mace, 2022). The emotional manipulation of domestic workers by employers is a concerning and unethical behaviour. This manipulation involves exploiting power dynamics, guilt-tripping, and blackmailing.

During interviews, participants shared insights about the emotional manipulation they experienced in their daily chores as live-in employees. Several narratives provided a deeper understanding of how some live-in employees are treated by their employers. Bolatito stated:

*The people I work for look down on other people so much. It was very bad before, but it seems better now. I have experienced emotional manipulation and gas-lighting very well from different employers which happens frequently even at the place I currently work. They blame other people for their wrongs which I will say is his habitual character for them. I was employed to work as a domestic worker to carry out daily chores of the house and take care of elderly man who happens to be the father of my Boss. I was already informed even before coming here I was told that I have to be very careful with them in the house because this particular family blame other people for their problems which is an habitual characteristics of everyone in the household (family). In fact, I was also informed that the old man can be very aggressive which is true because I have experienced such from him. There was something that happened in the house some time ago. I was blamed for damaging the toilet seat while we all make use of the same toilet. I feel very bad about the accusation because why will they put the blame on me since we all make use of the same toilet. (Bolatito, female live-in domestic worker).*

Bolatito's narrative sheds light on the manipulative strategies employed by employers over domestic workers. As a result, domestic workers who live in their employers' homes are at risk of various forms of manipulation and control by their employers over the long term. According to Parreñas (2021), employers and domestic workers should develop a relationship characterized by fairness, respect, and compliance with labour laws. Despite the existence of these laws, most employers fail to adhere to them (Hunt, 2020).

As a live-in domestic worker in Ibadan city, Sade narrated her horrendous experiences as follows:

*I have one horrible experience, there was a house I worked which was owned by one woman so at that point in time I was working for her. One must not say an (adult) is stubborn, that woman was extremely stubborn to the core. She curses me every day and would still blames me for her own mistakes for no reason. She will always say it's my fault. For instance, let's say she asked me to cook something for everyone in the house I obey immediately and while cooking she will send on errands to buy some vegetables while cooking in the kitchen. Whenever I am leaving, I often reduce the heat so that the food doesn't get burnt but the funny part is that she doesn't monitor the food while I am away and whenever the food gets burnt, I will be put to blame. She rains curses all over me which I don't find pleasant. I always keep quiet in situations like this because if I should say a word it would lead to another problem and can turn out to be a physical assault. I don't want her to slap me for something like this. This people can do and undo anytime and I will be the one to lose at the end so the best for me is to keep quiet" (Sade, female live-in domestic worker).*

However, another participant shared more insights regarding the manipulative strategies used by employers to take advantage of domestic workers in the same view:

*You see, this people; ehn they can mess with someone's brain at times. There was a day a phone was missing in the house where I work and all they could ever think of was that I stole the phone, I felt so sad about it. I cried that day because I did not steal the phone, they made me feel so less of myself. The room I stay was searched thoroughly but nothing was found. Late in the evening that day, the phone was later found in the living room inside the big couch. I remember vividly that the man (employer) was on a call with one of his children studying overseas and left the phone on the couch which later slipped into the couch. The funny part of this was that I was still blamed for this because I did not place the phone on the table after my employer and his wife finished using the phone. You can see how I was put to blame for their own problems. I couldn't say anything because I was shocked that day" (Iya-meta, female live-in domestic worker).*

Mopelola shared her experience with a retired septuagenarian employer:

*There was a house I was employed to work last year, I had to run to our coordinator because I could not stand it. I was employed to work as a live-in domestic worker for a retiree's couple in their early seventy's (70s) years of age. The husband is diabetic, and*

*he loves taking carbonated soft drinks which he will take behinds closed doors so that no one knows about it. Although the soft drinks were bought to the house for guests which is always in the kitchen store. Whenever the wife finds out that the drinks are missing or reducing without having guests in the house. She knows that I don't consume soft drinks and the only person who craves for that is her husband. Whenever she finds out that her husband has been taking soft drinks, she come to me saying that "If my husband dies now, I will blame you for this" Please can I control his mouth or cravings? The best I could do was to advise him and inform him about the impact of the soft drinks on his health. I had to leave that household. I told their children that employed me about the current situation which was beyond me because I cannot be blamed for someone's death (Mopelola, female live-in domestic worker).*

From the narratives, it is clear that the exploitation and mistreatment of female live-in employees takes several forms. The stories highlight how manipulative strategies by employers instil fear and subservience in female live-in domestic workers, rendering them helpless even when legal protections are in place. This section explores these manipulative tactics, noting that live-in domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to accusations of stealing, blaming, gaslighting, and guilt-tripping by their employers. Such mistreatment raises numerous questions for domestic workers, who often become increasingly confused about their employers' sanity over time. When live-in employees find it difficult to cope with their employers' attitudes, they often choose to leave the job.

In addition, cultural and societal norms in Nigeria contribute to these manipulative strategies. Akoleowo (2021) affirmed that Nigeria is a deeply patriarchal society structured around religion and traditions. This cultural backdrop creates significant setbacks for women, as they experience inequalities, stereotypes, and oppression, which exacerbate the manipulative behaviour of employers towards live-in female domestic workers.

#### **4.5.3 Threats and intimidation of live-in domestic employees**

In the absence of physical assault, employers use threats and intimidation to control live-in employees. These coercive tactics are applied consistently over time. Study participants shared their narratives, reflecting on their experiences accumulated over the years. Iyabo, for instance,

recounted the experience of her granddaughter, who also works as a live-in domestic worker, and stated the following:

*One of my grandchildren was working as a house-help like me too at some point. She was maltreated like a slave at the place she worked, I had no option than to go there and pick her up after I noticed that she was intimidated and threaten several times. In my family, we are not financially stable and that is part of the motivation for the job. If we had money, such incidence of intimidation and threats would not have happened to her because she would have enrolled in a school to further her education. The employer does not allow her to make use of the toilet in the house, so whenever she wants to use the toilet, she must leave the house and walk towards a dumping ground or a bush to excrete. Provision was not made concerning where she will be sleeping, she was instructed to be sleeping on the floor. A different plate and spoon were also given to her to eat which entirely different from the set of utensils in that house. The employer instilled fear in her to a point where she could not even speak about the situation to anyone. I was only about to know when she came to spend some days with me. I noticed that on the day she was leaving, she was crying, and I thought that she was being childish or lazy to work. I did some under-ground investigation about the employers and found that they have a very bad reputation in the area. They intimidate less privileged people a lot and with this information I knew my grand- daughter was a victim. It was after I went there to pick her up. (Iyabo, live-in female domestic worker).*

Furthermore, Iya meta discussed her experiences as a live-in female domestic worker in a palace. According to her narrative, the grandchild of her employer threatened and oppressed her. According to her, the incident occurred as follows:

*There was a point in my life when I use to work as a live-in domestic worker at a palace in Osun state for a king. I was always intimidated by the royal family even the grandchildren of the king to the same. There was a day I was instructed to carry a school bag for a young boy in the house meanwhile he was just walking freely to the car. I saw that as a form of intimidation because this boy was less than 15 years old, even my own children are so much older than him. Besides that, members of the household intermediate the workers in the house which makes an individual feel less as human. Gone are those days when I always think about it and cry (Iya meta, live-in female domestic worker).*

Further corroborating this, another participant narrated the threats she received from her employer:

*The first place I worked as a live-in domestic worker, my employer use to threaten me a lot. Any small mistake at the house comes with a threat. Let's say I don't cook on time or did not take part in the major chores; she keeps reminding me with threats that I won't be paid because I have not been doing my job properly. Sometimes these chores are tiring and stressful. There was a time I was sick and could not work for two days and by the end of the month my salary was not fully paid. I asked my employer the reason for that. I was told that it was because I did not work for two (Bisi, live-in female domestic).*

The narratives discussed thus far provide an in-depth explanation of the threats and intimidation faced by live-in female domestic workers. This is often caused by employers misusing their authority to intimidate these workers, leading to an unhealthy power dynamic within the employer-employee relationship. Most female domestic workers are economically dependent on their employers. This makes it difficult for them to speak up against intimidation and threats due to the fear of losing their wages, jobs, and livelihoods. Maboyana (2014) noted that live-in domestic workers often experience emotional and psychological abuse in their place of work through deliberate acts of intimidation, threats, harassment, shame, exertion of power, deprivation of rights or benefits, and inappropriate non-verbal behaviour by employers. According to Abdullahi, Adedolapo, and Alabi (2022), stigma leads to discrimination and prevents individuals from seeking assistance; shame leads to social withdrawal, which results in social exclusion.

While employers often victimize and threaten live-in domestic workers, the study also found instances of domestic workers threatening their employers and members of the household where they work and live. Mopelola shared an account of a female live-in domestic worker victimizing an employer in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

*I have heard of numerous cases such as beating of domestic workers while there are also instances where domestic workers victimize their employers. In fact, some live-in female domestic workers possess some spiritual powers to control and threaten their employers. For instance, those young girls recruited from Badagry area close to Togo have very attitudes. My younger sister who has a shop around Gbagi employed a girl from that area who worked for her as a domestic worker at home and in their shop.*

*There was a day this young lady was caught adding urine to the food she was asked to cook. Let me explain further, she was asked to make Cassava flour meal in the evening. While eating my younger sisters husband noticed that the food smelt very bad and noticed that the Togolese house-help was not eating. She was asked why she was eating from the food she cooked. Her response was that she does not feel like taking the Cassava flour meal and she would prefer rice. Then she was asked to take a small portion of the food to taste but she refused then the family stopped eating. She was instructed to take a scoop then she became very nervous and confessed that she added her urine while cooking the food. She said it was a pay back because the employers stress her too much and she has not been treated fairly. She was sent packing that day because she tried to poison her employer and other members of the household (Mopelola, female live-in domestic worker).*

Following the detailed discussion above, it is important to approach the relationship between domestic workers and employers with sensitivity to avoid generalization. The dynamics between domestic workers and employers can vary widely based on factors such as cultural norms, legal frameworks, and individual circumstances (McCann, 2010). Therefore, in some cases, live-in female domestic workers may react negatively towards their employers when they are dissatisfied with the employer's sentiments.

#### **4.5.4 Long working hours/time off**

Long working hours for domestic workers have been a longstanding concern in the domestic sector, as highlighted in the literature (Osiki, 2022; Casale and Posel, 2020). Many live-in female domestic workers experience excessively long working hours, with their time off often determined by their employers. Consequently, employers monitor the tasks performed by live-in female domestic workers and decide whether these employees are entitled to time off. The majority of these female live-in workers spend more than 12 hours each day performing duties at their place of work. During the investigation, participants voiced complaints about the extensive working hours required of them. Sade, a female live-in domestic worker, expressed her concerns about these long working hours as follows:

*At the place I work, there are some days I don't even sleep. I was employed to perform the general chores of house duties and the house I work; my employers are couples and*

*close to their retirement age, so I help them with all the cleaning, cooking running of errands and other notable activities including family functions since all their children are grown and out of the country. There are times I would be asked to cook very late at night, and I work around the clock because I clean the house every day. It's a very big house with a very wide yard with a poultry. It is also part of my duties to feed and monitor over 500 livestock chickens. Besides that, I will still cook for the house and the dogs. There was this particular evening where I was asked to prepare pounded yam with some vegetable soup which takes a lot of time. I was only able to complete the cooking around 11PM. There was a day I wanted to take a time off from work, it was not possible for me because my employer expect me to be available to feed the livestock and monitor the chores of the house. It is just too much but what am I to say when I need the money (Sade, female live-in domestic worker).*

Sade's narrative critically examined long working hours and employers' dependence on domestic workers. Consequently, it was challenging for live-in employees to get time off, as they were often required to perform additional household duties. Despite their demanding schedules and strenuous tasks, the domestic work sector has remained undervalued over the years (Sinha, 2020; Pandey, 2021). Rai (2019) asserts that the domestic sector is crucial for maintaining economic balance. Further insight into the issue was provided by Bisi, who highlighted the extended working hours of female domestic workers in Ibadan city and stated the following:

*I am employed to take care of the household and my employer's children. I take them to school and later in the afternoon to pick them from school, prepare food for them, wash their school uniforms, and even put them to bed. In fact, I'm more like their parents now because the parents always have a busy schedule during the week so most times these children don't get the chance to see their parents during the day except for some weekends when they are free. Concerning the long working hours, I work every day in fact there is no break at all except for festive periods. Whenever my employers get back very late at night, I still must cook for them because my Boss does not like left over food except for fresh food, so I work around the clock. Whenever the family I work for go for a family function outside of the city, I'm always excited because I will be alone in the house and no one will disturb me for anything, as I will be able to sleep very well. I always put that in my prayers for them travel out of the city for days so I can rest (Bisi, female live-in domestic worker).*

Bisi's explanation highlights that employers in the city of Ibadan heavily rely on live-in female domestic workers due to their demanding work schedules. Taiwo and Ajayi (2013) note that business owners and professionals often struggle to manage household chores and family responsibilities because of their busy careers. To mitigate this challenge and avoid conflicts of interest, domestic workers are employed to handle these home duties. Consequently, there is an increasing reliance on female domestic workers, particularly those tasked with caring for their employers' children. As a result, domestic workers are assuming significant parental roles, taking on substantial responsibilities for their children.

Supporting this perspective, Ayisha shared her experiences as a young student working as a live-in female domestic worker. Despite her employer sponsoring her secondary education, she found it challenging to balance her school commitments with household chores. She recounted how long working hours impacted her ability to focus on her studies:

*This people employed me to take care of their home, I am so grateful that are sponsoring by education but at the beginning it was not easy for me at all because I will have to wake up very early around 4AM to cook , after that bath the children, make sure they eat and then take them to school first after that, I will have to walk to my school too which is very far away. After school I will go and pick them up from their school then we go home together from there. My employer gives me some money for transportation although it is not always enough because during the rush hours the transport fares is always increased which really affects me because I will have to take a long walk. I always arrive at my school very late like around 9:30 AM-10 AM while the school opens by 7:30AM, and classes begin by 8:00AM so most times I miss the first class, or I arrive in-between the first period of class (Ayisha, female live-in domestic worker).*

Ayisha faced significant challenges balancing her roles as both a student and a live-in employee. Child domestic labour is a pervasive issue across many African countries, with profound implications for the well-being and development of those involved (Lo-oh, 2014). Olayiwola (2023) describes its prevalence in the south-western part of Nigeria, particularly in the city of Ibadan, Oyo State. Furthermore, Klocker (2007) argues that factors such as poverty, age, and gender shape children's agency in such contexts. There are some employers who hire live-in domestic workers and support their education or skill development as apprentices. However, managing both responsibilities proves extremely challenging for these domestic workers.

Additionally, the extended working hours of live-in employment remain a significant global concern (McCann, 2010).

Another participant added the following:

*It is very hard to get a time off from this our job because we are always needed by the employers. Whenever I ask for a time off from work my employers take their time to think about it before the time off from work can be granted. Although let's say there is an emergency that can allow one to go it will be granted very fast. There was a time when my son was very sick and my attention was needed, I told my employers and they could see that I was panicking that when I was able to get the time off from work (Eniola, live-in female domestic worker).*

Based on Eniola's narrative, it is evident that time off from work for live-in female employees is typically only granted by employers in emergency. However, such breaks are seldom given because these workers are essential for performing crucial household chores. According to Adisa et al. (2023), the informal nature of domestic work poses challenges for live-in workers in private households, particularly in obtaining adequate time off. Magayi (2020) further notes that domestic labour regulations are often disregarded by employers, compounded by informal employment practices that disproportionately affect workers without formal education. Consequently, these workers face obstacles to understanding formal employment contracts and guidelines governing working hours and leave entitlements.

Lastly, Boluwatife shares her insights from her experience as a live-in female domestic worker in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. She states:

*The tasks sometimes are super training because one works every time, during the day and night. It has also come to my notice that employers do not appreciate it when they notice that the live-in domestic worker is less busy doing nothing or resting. I am talking from my own personal experience which is very common among employers. There was a time I cleaned the house, did the laundry, prepared food for the day and other chores in the house. So, I decided to rest and when my employers saw me, they were upset because there was nothing for me to do. Afterwards I was sent to make a delivery and buy some food items for the house. They always want domestic workers to be very busy. I think it's a common trait among employers simply because we are paid to render home services (Boluwatife, live-in domestic worker).*

From the narrative, it appears that employers of live-in domestic workers are displeased when these workers are idle. Consequently, employers often assign major duties to them during such times. As a result, live-in domestic workers are prone to long working hours and lack adequate time to rest from their demanding tasks. In addition to these issues, domestic workers frequently face low wages or even no pay from their employers and recruitment agencies.

#### **4.5.5 Low wages /remuneration of live-in employees**

Low wages emerged as a significant sub-theme in the study. Marchetti et al. (2021) argue that low remuneration for domestic workers is a concern globally. Domestic workers often receive minimal or no pay, making them vulnerable to economic hardships (Hunt, 2019). Gutiérrez (2010) contends that both the nature of the work and power dynamics are factors contributing to the inadequate remuneration of domestic workers. The study provided insights into participants' wage experiences and how these relate to their demanding daily activities. Five participants expressed their dissatisfaction with their income levels compared to the extensive hours required of live-in employees. The investigation revealed the following statements from participants:

Sade began by stating the following:

*I have been serving as a live-in domestic worker for years and the pay has been very low although it varies which is based on the employer's discretion. So, I am speaking for myself, the pay is even below minimum wage in the country. Although I have been making a living out of it for a while now, but it is not enough. I complained to my employers but the response I got from them was that they provide shelter and even feed me so in nutshell, the salary cannot be increased from their response (Sade, female live-in female domestic worker).*

Sade's statement highlights the issue of poor remuneration for live-in domestic workers in Nigeria, noting that their wages often fall below the minimum wage. According to Dauda (2023), the minimum wage in Nigeria is 30,000 Naira per month, which is approximately 19 USD. It is disheartening to learn that many live-in domestic workers earn less than this amount each month, as many employers do not adhere to labour regulations. Employers often justify low wages by arguing that providing shelter and food should offset higher compensation. This leaves these workers vulnerable to exploitation and inadequate pay.

Although several policies regarding domestic workers' wages and remuneration have been documented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (ILO, 2019), these policies are not consistently enforced in Nigeria. This lack of enforcement fails to protect workers in the informal sector, such as live-in domestic workers (Olayiwola, 2019; Akinsanya, 2020). Nandjaa (2018) argues that domestic chores are private, making it difficult to monitor wage compliance. As a result, live-in employees are often subjected to low wages and other forms of exploitation.

Mopelola, a live-in domestic worker with nine years' experience, expressed her concerns about the disparity between her duties and monthly compensation. She provided the following account:

*I take care of the children, the household even their grandma, but my salary has always remained the same even with the long working hours, commitment and the tedious work I do in the house. In fact, sometimes when they have a family function like a wedding, I'm always instructed to go with them. I do all the house chores by cleaning, running errands, getting all the arrangements together for everyone in the house but the pay has never been increased. The amount an individual will be paid is decided by the employers especially when one does not get the recruitment from an agency so the wages/compensation can be very challenging. I also have my own side hustle to make earnings meet. Whenever I am free, I go to other people's homes to clean for them as a visiting domestic worker which has also been helping my finances (Mopelola, female live-in domestic worker).*

The monthly wages for domestic workers do not reflect the demanding and strenuous nature of their tasks. Instead, these wages are often determined at the discretion of employers and their relationship with live-in domestic workers. Despite the low compensation, many domestic workers continue in their roles due to a lack of alternative employment opportunities.

Another participant, Mary, a political science student with two years' experience in domestic service, offered her insights from a philosophical perspective. Analysing chores and pay, she stated the following:

*If one should calculate the long working hours and the strenuous activities, domestic workers should be one of the highest paying jobs, but reverse is the case. I think the low wages is because most of the people working in this sector are not really educated so the pay is not that much and besides that the privileged people in our society prefer to higher cheap labour which is always in their own favour. Well, in my opinion, having a*

*piece of bread is better than having nothing. Although the money is very little, the 20,000 Naira I get from this job is better than having nothing as a part-time student. Besides that, I also render a private laundry service for people and cooking for ceremonial functions (Mary, female live-in domestic worker).*

Based on the narratives above, it is apparent that female live-in domestic workers often seek additional income sources during their time off in situations where their emoluments are inadequate. These additional services may include offering laundry services, cooking for ceremonial functions, and providing domestic help to other households on a visiting basis.

Sekiola also presents an alternative perspective, explaining why some domestic workers receive inadequate pay. She argues as follows:

*The emolument differs based on the type of employment; I remember when I was working in Ibarapa area in Ibadan. I was a visiting domestic worker that time, so I was paid 10,000 Naira per month then after I joined an agency as a live-in domestic worker it increased to 30,000 Naira but I feel the agency might be cheating us because the employers don't pay us directly only the agency makes the monthly payment especially when an individual is recruited by an agency. It is also very difficult to ask the employers how much they are paying to agency every month (Sekiola, female live-in domestic worker).*

In the same view Alice stated:

*It is better to be recruited by an agency than private individuals because domestic worker agency pay more attention to the well-being of live-in domestic workers. At the same time there is also a uniform set of payment/monthly remuneration for each domestic worker so that no one feels cheated or left out (Alice, female live-in domestic worker).*

Following the various discussions of the participants concerning low wages, it has become evident that low remuneration in the domestic sector remains a concern (Dinkelman, 2012; Elias, 2016). Despite the low wages they receive, live-in female domestic workers remain dedicated to their duties. Furthermore, Mohamed (2022) also asserted that domestic workers are underpaid despite their daily chores. Blackett (2011) asserted that domestic work is often regarded as an informal sector, which makes it difficult to regulate. Both Budlender (2011) and Palumbo (2016) assert that the low wages are a consequence of the devaluation of domestic workers. Nevertheless, over the

past few years, countries such as South Africa and Costa Rica have been advocating for the formalization of domestic work at minimum wage (Bosch and McLeod, 2015; Oelz and Rani, 2015). The next theme emerging from the investigation was the sexual assault perpetrated on female live-in employees in Ibadan, Oyo State.

#### **4.6 EXPERIENCES: SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT PERPETUATED ON FEMALE LIVE-IN EMPLOYEES**

Sexual harassment emerged as a major theme from the presented data of the study. Pan and Yang (2012) noted that the sexual harassment remains a global issue affecting female live-in domestic workers across the world. The study partially aims to understand the experiences of Nigerian female live-in domestic employees, with sexual assault identified as a key theme. The analysis focuses on the reactions of women to sexual assault and their resilience within the broader context of social oppression. Sexwale (2012) also supports the notion that sexual harassment and assault of domestic workers is a worldwide problem, particularly prevalent in countries with histories of slavery and colonialism, such as Nigeria. The investigation revealed that only a few participants shared their experiences of sexual assault in their workplaces.

One participant described the following:

*There was a time I was taking care of an old man, and I could tell he wanted something I could not offer to him. This happened when I use to assist him in the bathroom to take his bath. He asked me to wash his private part (Penis) which I have never done before. He insisted that I should wash it and massage that area for him because he wants to know if his manhood is still functioning. Immediately he said that I responded by telling him that it is not my duty but his wife's duty since I also belong to someone else. Ever since this particular incidence, whenever he wants to go to the bathroom to bath, I always give him the sponge to wash himself. Sometimes, he asks why I don't want to help him out by washing the private part which is always awkward to me. Although, before the incidence I use to assist him by washing his back and feet for him since he is unable to bend due to his health challenges. There was another incidence were the man asked me to help him lift his penis, I told him the same thing that it's not my duty to do that and not knowing his wife was also listening to our conversations from behind that day. It is very important to use initiatives when making a decision in this line of work.*

*Let's say I listened to the man by doing what he wanted. That would have been a big problem for me, and I might even lose the job (Iya-meta, live-in domestic worker).*

From Iya-Meta's narrative, it is evident that the old man was recovering over time. He frequently asked the live-in domestic worker to massage his private parts to check if they were functioning. Hershcovis (2021) argues that sexual assault and harassment can be perpetuated in various ways, including manipulative strategies aimed at convincing and coercing victims to comply with the perpetrator's demands.

Additionally, Mary elaborated on the study findings by sharing her own experiences of sexual harassment and uncomfortable remarks at her workplace. She highlighted the distress she felt while working for her employer.

*Something strange happened to me at the place I use to work. At that point, I was working for a young couple who were in their late 30s. The children were also very young. So, part of my duty is to render domestic service to the household and take care of the children. There was a day I was playing with the children in the garden. Their father joined us to play football while the wife was away from home. While playing with the children I noticed that their father grabbed my waist and touched my buttocks by grabbing and making commitments that it is soft, and he likes that. This was when the children went inside to take some water while we were waiting for them to come out so we can continue. At that point, I didn't know what to say because I was in shock and didn't feel comfortable about it. Ever since then, I kept the distance with him whenever he is at home. I didn't speak about it to anyone because I don't want to be the cause of the downfall of the marriage (Mary, live-in female domestic worker).*

Following the detailed discussion, Esther provided a brief insight based on her past experiences with sexual harassment and assault in the workplace. She explained as follows:

*I did not experience any form of rape but sexual remarks from my employers' grandchildren especially when I am cleaning or even just walking in the house they stare at my buttocks and start making comments. They are all grown-up boys, so they normally come to their grandmother's house for some time, they can stay two nights depends on them but whenever they are around, grandma prefers that I sleep in her room whenever they are around because they can do and undo. Although there are*

*plenty of rooms in the house but when the boys are around, grandma prefers that I should sleep in her room with her which is safe (Esther, live-in female domestic worker).*

Although female live-in domestic workers are often subjected to sexual harassment and assault by their employers, official complaints are rarely made, causing these incidents to remain hidden within the family or household where they occurred. Due to the isolation of domestic workers in the workplace and the social stigma attached to sexual assault (Alabi and Akindele, 2024; Naidoo, Adeagbo and Alabi, 2024), Nazneen and Huq (2023) contend that sexual assault and harassment are under-reported. As a result, choosing to be silent about sexual harassment could be influenced by class and social privileges (Alabi, 2023a; Ribeiro, 2019).

#### **4.6.1 Silent hearsay's pertaining to female domestic workers relationship with employers**

In this study, participants shared silent narratives that are not often discussed in the public sphere. These narratives revealed both positive and negative aspects of domestic work. It was noted that some live-in domestic workers have good, cordial relationships with their employers. However, there are instances where live-in female domestic workers take advantage of these relationships by engaging in sexual relationships with their employers or members of the household. This shifts the power dynamics, allowing live-in domestic employees to control and victimize such employers. Participants in this study shared brief narratives about the relationships between domestic workers and their employers, stating that:

*I have a good relationship with the person I work for, although she is a bit old and the behaviour can never be the same because, old people tend to behave like children sometimes. As one is getting older and older, one can become very aggressive and gently at the same time especially when one is having a decent conversation with them. She can say something else entirely, so it is very important for one to understand this set of people very well. I know how to handle people like that which is one of the reasons why I have a good relationship with her (Sekiola, live-in female domestic worker).*

Another participant shared a different narrative stating the following:

*I would say my employers are good people, but we don't really have a good cordial relationship because sometimes they think I am rude whenever I don't agree to certain things. I was even told by the neighbours that there was a lady who use to work for my current employer last year before I came in here. I was informed that she ran away*

*because she could not withstand somethings. For example, she will carry out all the house chores and they will still be complaining so she ran away. Whenever I am tired, I tell them I want to rest and that I cannot kill myself so most of the time I speak out that's why they say I am rude (Bisi, live-in female domestic worker).*

Arguing from another perspective, Omolara shared what she heard about how live-in female domestic workers take control of an employer's home. In the study, it was found that food and sex are often used by these workers as tools to influence and control the hearts and minds of male employers. Additionally, Akanle (2016) contends that live-in employees are often suspected of having supernatural powers, such as witchcraft, to manipulate the homes of their employers to their advantage. Omolara provided an example of a domestic worker who allegedly used Voodoo to take control of an employer's home.

*I have heard about live-in female domestic workers taking the positions of wives in the house, however in most of these cases its beyond anything natural because some people in this our profession go extra mile to get some supernatural powers either to snatch other women's husband or to take control the employers' home so they can get whatever they want anytime. There are also valid instances of domestic workers having sexual affairs mostly with the man of the household at their workplace. This is mostly done to get what they want very quick, and you know men love sex, so they are vulnerable to fall into that trap (Omolola female live-in domestic worker).*

Finally, Patricia noted:

*Since an individual is working as a live-in employee, such domestic worker is expected to have diverse knowledge of cuisines because as part of the job, we are also asked to cook for the household. There are a lot of controversies concerning the cooking as a live-in domestic worker. Sometimes when I cook my boss wife is not always happy about it and would always want to be around when I decide to cook, and I think the reason behind this is that she is trying all her possible best to guide her home so that her husband is not snatched or carried away with the food. I don't have any bad agenda; I am just doing my job. Although I don't blame her because there are several stories, we have also heard about on how live-in employees add love portions to the food of the Boss (Male employers) afterwards, they lose their memory by forgetting about their actual wife and children and focus on the female live-in domestic worker only (Patricia, live-in female domestic worker).*

Shahid (2007) and the narratives presented earlier in the study highlight some of the often-unspoken issues concerning relationships between female live-in domestic workers and their employers. These narratives provide insight into the promiscuous activities that some live-in female domestic workers engage in within the workplace in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Domestic employment relationships involve cordial agreements and compensation for ongoing activities within employers' private homes (Kennedy, 2012). These relationships can be highly interdependent, shaping how both parties—employers and live-in domestic workers—define, evaluate, and situate themselves within the household (Masterson and Hoobler, 2019). Calas and Smircich (2011) noted that domestic employment relationships are deeply embedded in historical societal power disparities based on gender, race, and social class. Today, these relationships are a common means of household management (Hochschild, 2012). Domestic employment relationships are pivotal as they "make all other work possible." Hence, the dynamics of these relationships can profoundly influence the health and well-being of both workers and employers (Malhotra et al., 2013; Seierstad and Kirton, 2015). Despite the pervasiveness and impact of domestic employment relationships, certain areas remain invisible (Peterson, 2007).

From the live-in experiences narrated by female domestic workers it is vital to note the relevance of the African feminist theory to the study. From findings the theory was able to reflect the unique realities, experiences and struggles of African women within the context of the Nigerian societies with the reflections on intersectionality of class and cultures of female live-in domestic workers in Ibadan city of Oyo state Nigeria. The live-in experiences, challenges of female domestic workers denotes the struggle of African women in the labour sector and the dehumanization's of women into menial jobs as domestic workers. In as much as the domestic labour is a marginalized sector, female domestic workers still expressed compassionate care and mothering nature. Motherism emerged from the African-centred feminist thought, particularly in the works of Nigerian feminist theorist Catherine Obianuju Acholonu (Nkealah, 2016). Alemayehu (2020) denotes that motherism focuses on the role of women as life-givers and nurturers, with emphasis on the centrality of motherhood and the community-oriented nature of African societies. Hence, the Motherism relies on indigenous knowledge system which reflects the decolonized concept into the study. The African feminist perspective critics the western feminist ideology as it dismissive of cultural values and does not adequately address the lived experiences of African women.

Apart from the live-in experiences and challenges of female live-in domestic workers, participants also shared wonderful insights about their achievement and recruitment methods into the domestic work life which was out of the scope of the study. Hence, it is crucial to give a brief insight into the testimonies of females into the domestic work life as this gives a broader perspective into the live-in experiences of female live-in employees in Ibadan city, Oyo state Nigeria.

#### **4.7 EXPERIENCES -ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FEMALE LIVE-IN DOMESTIC WORKERS**

The data presented and analysed highlighted the outstanding success and accomplishments of live-in female domestic workers. While live-in female domestic helpers face outrageous challenges and are exploited, a small number of live-in female domestic workers have narrated their stories of accomplishment and success over the course of their working life. The following testimonies were narrated by participants:

*I Thank God, what I can say is that I have been able to achieve a lot. One of my children have been able to do an apprentice freedom as a tailor, I am also supporting my husband by sponsoring our 3 children's education and other living expenses. Apart from working as a live-in domestic worker, I also do laundry services whenever I am free. This has really helped me to build my saving which has made me to achieve a lot through these (Felicia, Live-in domestic worker).*

Another participant described how the loss of her husband contributed to her decision to enter the domestic work industry. Through her domestic work duties, Nafisat has been able to support herself and her children. She explained as follows:

*When my husband passed on several years ago it was difficult for me to move on since I was a full-time housewife with limited educational achievements. I had no job and family members were not willing to support me because I did not abide with the traditions and customs of the family which was to marry my late husband's brother immediately after my husband passed on. It was difficult to carry on with 3 children, I was able to get into the domestic work sector and with the small salary, my children were able to attend schools. I made a promise to myself that all my children will get the valuable education I could not get because I was able to learn from my own mistakes and I don't want that to happen to any of them. Besides that, I have been able to build*

*a small house with two rooms although this was also achieved with the help of my first born who is now working. Most of the money I made from this job I was able to use it to sponsor their education although I am still paying school fees and supporting the other two with the help of my first born (Nafisat, live-in domestic worker).*

Folake also shared her experience as a live-in employee over the past seven years.

*Living as a female domestic worker, I was able to go to school with the help of my employers because they sponsored my education while I was in secondary school because I started working as domestic worker because my father could not sponsor my education. When I came to Ibadan to start working, my employer sponsored my secondary school education. If not for my employer, I won't be able to complete my secondary school education not to even talk of pursuing tertiary education (Folake, female live-in domestic worker).*

Finally, Bisi discussed the benefits she has gained from the household chores. She stated the following:

*Being a live-in domestic worker has been helpful to me in some ways. I have cultivated the habit of reading novels and in my spare time, I also learn the basics of sewing because there is a tailor's shop opposite the place I work so whenever I'm free I go there to relax and in-between relaxation I'm able to watch and learn on how to sew clothes. I can now make a skirt for myself now (Bisi, female live-in domestic worker).*

According to these testimonies, live-in employees can make significant achievements through domestic work despite the extensive chores and duties associated with the position. Moreover, rather than being subjected to superiority and struggling with inferiority complex, women provide domestic services to sustain their families. A comparison can be made between their characteristics and those described in narratives of African feminism, which focuses on the pursuits of women's rights and freedoms (Mama, 2019).

This chapter solely focused on objective one of the study which sparked numerous debates and discussion on the experiences of the Nigerian female live-in domestic workers. From findings, it was discovered that there are new organized methods of recruitment which are mostly carried out by agencies compared to the previous methods of organized trafficking of females and children from marginalized communities into the domestic work sector. This commensurate the argument of Manbe (2016) stating that children and young females are trafficked into the domestic sector

across Nigeria. The organized recruitment agencies have been able to limit chances of females falling as victims of forced labour and trafficking across the country. Female live-in employees felt safe and secured about their employment status since the agencies monitor the well-being of these workers. However, with the thorough recruitment methods, the vulnerabilities of maltreatment and violence on female live-in domestic workers still persisted. From the findings, the recruitment methods also included suggestions from friends and relatives. In situations where, young female live-in domestic workers are recruited through suggestions or from relatives, such live-in employees made use of the opportunity to further their education as most employers were also eager to sponsor the education of female live-in employees as a reward for the contractual domestic service favour rendered. Probing further on the findings from the study, the dominated perspectives surrounding the domestic work sparked numerous discussions on the chores, duties and factors promulgating females into the domestic sector. It was indicated that the job description of each domestic workers differs. Literature confirms that the duties of domestic workers includes general cleaning, cooking, washing clothes, dishes, ironing caring for the children and elderly and lastly running basic household errands (Marchetti and Garofalo, 2021). Nevertheless, the demands of employers determine the core duties of female live-in domestic workers. The rigorous chores and duties of female domestic workers gave an in-depth understanding on the responsibilities of each female live-in domestic workers in the study. Since the duties are held behind closed doors which makes it very difficult to comprehend the silent pain and agony of female live-in domestic workers were broad to limelight in the study.

Poverty became one of the major push and pull factor of females into the domestic work sector, leading females from marginalized communities into the domestic sector. This created a positive avenue for female live-in domestic workers to strive by making a living and boosting their economic status rather than to venture into crimes. This elucidate the arguments of Parreñas (2015) stating that the domestic work sector has created an avenue for low income earners to make a living and contribute to the economy. Despite the rigorous duties and responsibilities of female live-in employees, the findings suggest that there are numerous challenges attached to the domestic work. However, the female live-in employees in Ibadan, Oyo state Nigeria have not been able to challenge the authorities of their employers based on the hierarchy of class between the employers and female live-in employees. In spite of these challenges, female live-in domestic workers still

performed their core duties and responsibilities. Rather than been laid off or rendered jobless, female live-in employees applied coping strategies into their daily lives as live-in employees.

From the experiences on exploitation and mistreatment, the findings from the investigation revealed that despite the organization of agencies recruitment in present day, numerous exploitation and maltreatment still surrounds female live-in domestic workers. This include physical assault, intimidation, manipulative strategies of employers, low wages, and long workings hours were perpetuated by employers as participants from this study were able to elaborate on these issues. It was found that in the presence of these circumstances, female live-in employees suppressed the different forms of exploitation and maltreatment associated with the job. It was also discovered that female live-in domestic workers were also threaten by their employers which makes such workers adjust and obey the employers out of fear. Nevertheless, findings from the study discovered that some male employers were seeking for sexual favour from female live-in employees in the study, thus the sexual assault on female domestic workers has been a reoccurring pattern in the domestic work sector (Ruiz, 2020). In as much as some of the male employers tend to ask for sexual favours from female live-in employees, it was also noted from findings that sex and food was a critical tool adopted by female live-in employees to control the heart and minds of male employers.

Apart from the difficulties and challenges experienced by female live-in domestic workers, the findings from the study was able to delve the accomplishments of female live-in domestic workers in the study. In as much the employment of female domestic workers do not include other employment benefits, female live-in employees try their best to thrive in this sector either academically or financially.

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter introduces the first phase of the analysis of female live-in domestic workers' perspectives on coping strategies within a decolonial framework in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Engaging with the participants provided insight into the daily chores of live-in domestic workers and the factors that lead women into domestic work, prompting a critical discussion on the challenges these workers face. The chapter sheds light on the employment methods of live-in female domestic workers in Ibadan, revealing significant correlations with existing literature on domestic workers recruitment methods.

In the first part of the chapter, the recruitment methods and the various dominant narratives about the daily chores of female live-in domestic workers were explored. It was found that domestic workers are employed for various reasons within households, resulting in slightly different duties for each worker. These duties include daily cleaning chores, cooking, laundry services, attending to employers' emotional and physical well-being, providing services for the physically challenged, catering to the young and elderly, and running basic errands. These services are provided based on each employer's specific needs.

After understanding the various categories of live-in domestic workers and their daily tasks, the chapter delves into the push and pull factors that draw women into the domestic work sector and the challenges they have encountered over the years as live-in female employees. Participants also shared their testimonies about what they have achieved through domestic work over the years. The chapter discusses exploitation and maltreatment, with emerging sub-themes including physical assault, manipulation strategies, threats and intimidation, long working hours, and low wages.

The study's findings reveal that women are exposed to various forms of maltreatment and oppression at different levels of society. It is surprising that low wages and long working hours remain major problems in the domestic work sector, as these issues have been frequently highlighted in existing literature (Bhattacharjee and Goswami, 2019; Silvey, 2020). The narratives and arguments further explore the sexual assault and harassment of female live-in domestic workers and the silent hearsay about their relationships with employers, based on participants' accounts.

The next chapter, which is the second phase of the analysis, provides a deeper exploration of decolonial reflections within the study. It highlights emerging themes from a decolonial perspective on female domestic workers' coping strategies.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE COPING STRATEGIES**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provided an in-depth investigation to the live-in experiences, challenges, maltreatment, and employment methods of females in domestic work, addressing objective one of the study. This chapter explores objective two, three and four, which navigates the decolonial perspective by narrating the various coping strategies practiced by female live-in employees. This facilitated an in-depth understanding and applications of the indigenous coping strategies among females working as live-in employees in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria. The exploration enhanced understanding of cultural heritage preserved and practiced by female live-in employees. Further insight into the effectiveness of indigenous coping strategies adopted by female live-in employees was gained from this discussion. Indigenous knowledge systems have been suppressed through colonization, leading to the loss of traditional practices and cultural identities (Masenya, 2022). The decolonized perspective in this study is a call to restore indigenous knowledge systems by ensuring that these knowledge systems are adopted, respected and integrated into modern context as coping strategies.

This chapter is structured by presenting the data and analysis simultaneously which enhanced insightful meanings into the research findings. According to Bandara (2015) presenting and analyzing in research provides clarity by linking the findings with the literature's simultaneously. In the previous chapter (four), the live-in experiences, challenges, mistreatment has broadened the scope of understanding on the injustice and challenges experienced by female live-in domestic workers. Therefore, it is important to understand how these female domestic workers navigate themselves through the challenges associated with domestic duties.

Throughout various cultures, coping strategies differ across generations, and such knowledge is often passed down through families. Knowledge of this system is ingrained in the minds and lips of custodians, reflecting its transmission across generations (Kanu, 2020). African indigenous knowledge was highlighted in the study through various cultural practices, social interactions, healing, recovery, and spirituality.

From the data presented and analysed findings, several themes emerged. In this study, participants shared their individual perspectives on indigenous knowledge before delving into the indigenous

coping strategies adopted by live-in employees, application of these strategies and lastly the collective voices of live-in employees advocating for coping strategies from a decolonial lens.

## **5.2 LIVE-IN EMPLOYEES PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE -A DECOLONIAL REFLECTION**

Indigenous knowledge encompasses the wisdom, practices and cultural insights developed and sustained by indigenous people over generations (Mazzocch, 2020). Bihari (2023) stated that it is often rooted in specific cultural context, providing the unique perspectives on the interconnectedness of humans, traditional practices and nature. Different scholars have analysed and defined indigenous knowledge from various disciplinary perspectives laying a strong emphasis of the richness, value and potentials for addressing global challenges (Sharma,2021; Abidogun, 2020). Nelson 2018 also shared from another perspective focusing on the cultural perspective by stating that indigenous knowledge refers to traditions, values, beliefs system that guide people in their daily lives and the interaction with their environment. This stresses the cultural and spiritual dimension of indigenous knowledge and reflects on how knowledge is interwoven with identity and cultural heritage. Debnath (2023) made it known that indigenous knowledge emerged as a tool for decolonization as it strives to reclaim cultural autonomy over colonial practices and structures. The concept of resistance and resilience in indigenous knowledge emphasizes its role as both a protective and trans-formative force against the colonial legacies.

The history of domestic work in many African nations dates back to colonial times, when it was carried out under repressive and racially hierarchical structures (Dawood, 2023). Due to the persistence of these structures, African domestic workers frequently endure poor wages, maltreatment, abuse, unstable employment, and few labour rights (Adisa, 2023). Hence, advocating for African female domestic workers requires addressing the colonial legacies and systematic challenges that affect their rights, dignity and working circumstances which must be addressed. Therefore, to build a decolonized approach and uplift indigenous strategies, it is essential to recognize the unique challenges experienced by these female live-in workers and to culturally apply appropriate solutions that are based on workers cultural practices.

In the study, live-in employees shared their thoughts on indigenous knowledge from a decolonized perspective. Indigenous knowledge is recognized as a rich, sophisticated, and essential system of knowledge that challenges colonial hierarchies by offering an alternative worldview rooted in deep

interconnections with the environment, spirituality and cultural practices. These perspectives emphasize the need to respect, preserve, and actively integrate indigenous knowledge system into broader conversations and as coping strategies. It became essential to seek domestic workers' opinions about their perspectives on indigenous knowledge before delving deeper into the study. This approach facilitated a free flow of conversation between the researcher and the participants. Indigenous knowledge often involves deep-rooted connections to communities, spirituality, and cultural practices. This study ensured that participants insights reflect these intricacies rather than imposing external interpretations. In this study, participants individual thoughts were probed about indigenous knowledge. Sekiola shared her thoughts on indigenous knowledge:

*In my opinion, indigenous knowledge is very powerful and useful for our normal daily lives. It is an in-built practice that we learn unconsciously from our parents, grandparents, and forefathers. You know as Africans we have our own ways of doing things even before medicine (tablets) for medication was invented, the leaves and stems of trees remain useful to us as it cures a lot of sicknesses. Therefore, it is something we learn from our environment. We become aware of the usefulness of plants and other things in our environment since they have been created by the supreme being for purpose, and they have remained useful to us. Our parents made us know about the usefulness and impact of the indigenous knowledge in our daily lives. Apart from that, the African adage means a lot too because it gives an insightful meaning and solutions to problems. (Sekiola, female live-in domestic worker).*

In support of this point of view, Esther asserted the following about indigenous knowledge:

*Indigenous knowledge is gathered through the total experience of people occupying a place over some time. After a long period of time these total experiences are gathered as a form of knowledge and practiced by the people. It is more like learning from previous mistakes (Esther, female live-in domestic worker).*

From the narratives of Sekiola and Esther, it is evident that female live-in employees understand decolonial reflections by emphasizing the importance of indigenous knowledge. Their perspectives align with the definition of indigenous knowledge provided by Hopper (2002) and Smith (2016). These authors describe it as practical common sense based on teachings and experiences passed down through generations. Among other things, Knopf (2015) affirmed that

indigenous methods of knowledge and practices cannot be compartmentalized or separated from people since they are rooted in the spiritual health, culture, and language of the community.

A participant with deep roots in indigenous knowledge shared her narrative in the following manner:

*I will describe indigenous knowledge as Ogbo awon Agba (the knowledge of the forefathers) that has been practiced since the existence of man in the world. My brother!! we are all given wisdom and need to understand when and how to apply them when the need arises. It is something we learn by observing the older generations in our environment (Iyabo, female live-in female domestic worker).*

Following the agreement on the deep-rooted narratives of indigenous knowledge, Omolara shared her perspective on indigenous knowledge as follows:

*African indigenous knowledge has to do with Voodoo of African cultural practices for ritual purposes which has been referred as a way of sustaining things such as marriage, illness, medicine, making of textiles and other practices to sustain the livelihood of people (Omolara, female live-in domestic worker).*

The narratives discussed above align with Lindstrom's (2022) argument that indigenous knowledge functions as a traditional authority system that establishes rules for the use of natural resources, respect, and obligations to share. This form of knowledge represents a dynamic and cumulative way of life, employing traditional wisdom in “good ways” by integrating both heart and head for sustainability and survival (Pandey, 2014).

Supporting this view, Alabi (2020) notes that women utilize indigenous knowledge to create natural aphrodisiacs that sustain their marriages and enhance sexual pleasure for themselves and their partners. Building on these empirical and cognitive perspectives, it can be suggested that African indigenous knowledge has a holistic approach, encompassing all aspects of life (Mapira and Mazambara, 2013). Despite this, indigenous knowledge remains fragmented, as it is not confined to a single individual or group, making it explicit yet dispersed.

Further elaborating on this, Iya-meta provides a detailed narrative on indigenous knowledge from a Yoruba perspective, stating the following:

*Indigenous knowledge is what we learn and inherit from our parents, I remember growing up, the first thing we were taught was to respect our elders by kneeling to greet*

*them as females while the males prostrate as a sign of respect. From there we began to learn other things gradually such as how to sustain and keep the household as women, bringing-up children, making of the local herbs to cleanse the system. These are parts of indigenous practices we learn and inherit from our parents. There was a time I worked for a young couple when the lady gave birth, there was a minor complication on the baby's health. The baby could not excrete properly, and they were already panicking because the doctors were suggesting an operation on the newborn baby. So as someone who grew up in a remote area and knowing what to do in such situations, I helped them out. What I did was to shower the baby and use a matchstick to massage the baby's anus. After few minutes the baby excrete came out very watery. While I was using the matchstick on the anus, the couples were scared but also believed in my instinct because I have been around for a while (Iya-meta-female live-in domestic worker).*

Furthermore, Felica's assertions reinforce Iya-meta's narratives in the following ways:

*In my opinion the Yoruba culture has a lot of indigenous knowledge, traditions and practices, in fact all of this are very important. Some are values while others involve the dependent on natural resources. Part of the values include wisdom, integrity, valour, hard work, wealth, patience, perseverance which are always included in proverbs and adages especially in the Yoruba context. While the reliance on natural resources involves an in-depth knowledge about the usefulness of specific plants, trees, stems rubbers to make things like herbs, cream such as shea butter and other ointment (Felica live-in female domestic workers).*

Indigenous knowledge is an inherited tradition passed down through generations and ancestral lineages, with practices and skills performed within cultural context and rituals. These elements include songs, dance, fashion, coping mechanisms, and harmony with nature (Younging, 2018). African indigenous knowledge emphasizes the harmonious interrelationship and interdependence of all phenomena—biological, physical, social, cultural, and spiritual (Horsthemke, 2008). Behrens (2010) asserts that indigenous knowledge is culturally bound, making it unique, as all African indigenous societies share a common respect for all forms of life in the environment.

Boluwatife also affirmed her position on indigenous knowledge, stating that:

*We are taught about indigenous knowledge to cope in every situation because as humans it is not good to depend on a particular method of coping, so it is important for*

*us to learn other things from our own traditions. Examples of these includes how to sustain and keep the house as women, raising children, and other aspects of life in the traditional ways. These are parts of indigenous practices we learn from our mothers most of the time (Boluwatife, live-in domestic worker).*

This assertion aligns with Dondolo (2005) and Nwonwu (2008), who argue that indigenous knowledge is community-based and preserved through oral tradition and collective memory. It is sustained by practices, rituals, proverbs, and oral stories, remaining dynamic and unsystematized. Consequently, the indigenous knowledge practiced by live-in female domestic workers benefits both the workers and their employers. Interviews revealed that live-in female employees shared brief insights based on their lived experiences and anecdotal evidence of African indigenous knowledge.

### **5.3 INDIGENOUS COPING STRATEGIES PRACTICED BY LIVE-IN FEMALE DOMESTIC WORKERS**

As stated earlier in the chapter, coping strategies are unique techniques or behaviours adopted to manage stress, difficulty, or adversity (Montero-Marin, 2014). These strategies vary widely based on individuals' ideologies and culturally habitual knowledge accumulated over years. Influenced by cultural background and past experiences, female live-in employees in this study shared their understanding of coping strategies used in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria.

This section of the chapter looks into the already existing indigenous knowledge practiced by female live-in employees in Ibadan city Oyo state, Nigeria. This is significant as the study intends to advocate for a decolonial action on indigenous coping strategies. In as much as these practices are in existence, live-in employees were probed on the favourable personal coping strategies applied in the domestic work. Lam (2020) argued that African indigenous knowledge is deeply rooted in cultural values. In the African system of thought, the ontological position emphasizes understanding reality through a holistic view of society, recognizing the need for harmonious coexistence between nature and cultural values (Wane, 2013). Consequently, the study revealed that some colonial/Euro-centric strategies were also applied by female live-in employees. From the data presented, some of the participants under investigation noted that indigenous coping strategies and some part of the Euro-centric strategies were adopted interchangeably by female live-in employees.

### 5.3.1 Patience, wisdom, and perseverance as coping strategies

Patience, wisdom, and perseverance were part of the fundamental coping strategies practiced by female live-in employees. These practices have been developed over generations in response to various challenges and social injustices. Pianalto (2016) describes patience from an indigenous perspective, stating that it is not passive resignation but rather silent endurance rooted in beliefs that foster better decision-making, as it allows people to thoroughly consider other options before taking actions.

From the findings, Bolatito, a live-in employee with six years of experience, shared her insights on patience and perseverance as coping strategies practiced over the years. She stated as follows:

*For this our job one must apply wisdom and at the same time very patient with the spirit of perseverance because there are times employers can annoy you or just talk anyhow to you and if one should react to that by saying nasty things or cursing them, one can lose the job. During the training program they even tell us that if we are transferred to an elderly person's home, we should expect different forms of attitudes, so there is a need for us to be very patient. For instance, when a baby needs something, if you don't give those things to the baby on time, such a baby will start crying and when it gets to a certain stage one can smack the baby to stop crying but that cannot be done to an older person (aging individual), so patient is always needed. It is also important to always take the mind off from certain things, I mean not to take everything too personal because this people will annoy you every day. In fact, when employers gossip about me, I don't pay attention to such gossips because it can ruin one's happiness so I try to avoid listening to the words that can make me sad (Bolatito, live-in female domestic worker).*

Accordingly, (Alice) shared a proverb from the Yoruba language that explained patience from a cultural perspective:

*Like they say in Yoruba "Surulere" meaning patience is a virtue. In this our work, one must be very patient with the employers because we are employed for various needs and reasons by employers, so applying patience daily is very vital because it helps to navigate the daily challenges (Alice, live-in female domestic worker).*

The virtue of patience facilitates better decision making, as it allows individuals to thoroughly examine various options before making a decision (Su, 2020). A second participant added further

detail to the same perspective by sharing another insight on wisdom as a means of coping. She noted:

*There are instances of when an individual should apply vital indigenous wisdom to address issues in this domestic work. These wisdoms are applied to sort out challenges encountered as live-in employees. For example, it is very important to understand an employer's very well, if not there would be conflicts between employers and live-in employees which can become a disaster. I understand my employer to a point that is why there is peace. I am not saying that I don't experience any challenge but applying wisdoms reduces the chances of misunderstanding (Felicia, live-in domestic worker).*

Obialo (2021) stated that wisdom plays a significant role in coping strategies, passed down through oral traditions and cultural practices. Elders and community leaders are the custodians of wisdom, which encompasses not only practical knowledge but also spiritual and cultural insights, providing a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings and the natural world (Huda, 2020).

Nafisat explained her perspective on perseverance, stating the following:

*Perseverance is needed in this job because employers will always provoke and annoy you as a live-in employee which can lead to arguments or even physical violence, so it is very important to always persevere. There is a Yoruba adage that says "Eni tegun nle ko r' oju, bo se nre eniyan beena l'onre" Meaning "He who is being pursued by masquerade should not falter, because the heavenly beings (masquerades) also get tried like humans" (Nafisat, live-in female domestic worker).*

The proverb cited by Nafisat from the Yoruba context is often cited to encourage people to endure difficult situations, with the assurance that they will eventually overcome them. King and Burrows (2021) describe perseverance as the ability to persist despite obstacles and setbacks. Live-in female domestic workers have learned to persevere under challenging conditions, cultivating this coping mechanism through a strong sense of identity, connection, and commitment to greater achievements. This involves resilience, determination, and a willingness to continue striving for positive change despite adversity.

From the participants' narratives, patience, wisdom, and perseverance form a foundational framework for coping with the challenges faced by female live-in employees. These values are

deeply intertwined with cultural identity, providing strength and guidance during difficult times. Drawing on these traditional coping strategies, live-in employees in Ibadan navigate contemporary challenges while striving to please their employers and safeguard their employment.

### **5.3.2 Conflict Resolution as a coping strategy**

The second sub-theme that emerged from the presented data revealed that resolution was a part of the coping strategy. Smidt (2020) posits that resolution addresses challenges, conflicts, and adversities within societies. Conflict resolution was applied as an indigenous cultures strategy and knowledge systems, reflecting a holistic approach to well-being that encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Brigg and Muller, 2009; Castro, 2023). The process of resolution was identified by live-in employees as a means to address conflicts at their workplaces.

The conflicts resolution highlighted in the study fall into two categories: those between employers and live-in employees, and those involving employers and other household members. Esther, a participant in the study, described a resolution strategy implemented to address and resolve conflicts involving her employer and a household member.

*There was something that use to happen at the place where I work now even before I got the placement to be a live-in domestic worker in that household, I was informed about the behaviours of my employers. Mommy and Daddy(employers) always quarrel to the point where they raise voices at each other. In fact, there was no peace in the house it was always very toxic. The man (Daddy) does something whenever he has a conflict with his wife, he will instruct me to take away the chair his wife was using to sit close to him. He was always trying to avoid meeting his wife when there is a misunderstanding between them. There are times he does not want to even meet her or even set his eyes on her. Most of the times, I always fall as a victim when they quarrel because while trying to carry the chair as instructed by Daddy, Mommy will tell me that I should not. So, I get confused with their quarrel which becomes very challenging for me. At this point they become enemies, and they irritate each other to the core. What I did was to speak to an elderly man nearby who suggested to me that when-ever they have conflicts, I don't take anyone's side of the argument, instead I try to make resolution among them. For instance, I will go to Daddy and say Mommy just asked if*

*you have eaten vice-versa. From this strategy they become more aware of the love, affection and care they have for each other which is a good way of **resolving** issues strategically in a resolution manner (Esther, female live-in domestic worker).*

Another participant narrated how resolution has been implemented on a regular basis within the home when there is a conflict.

*I apply resolution when there is a misunderstanding between myself and my employer. Since I am employed, I have to always find a way to make peace by pleading with my employer stating that I am sorry even when I am not at fault by using Yoruba idiomatic expression like proverbs to resolve the problems at hand (Bolatito, live-in domestic worker).*

Sekiola also describes how she addresses conflict with her employer by stating that:

*I try to avoid conflicts with my employer although whenever she is angry or mad towards me and I sense it, I ask if I have done anything wrong to them in the house. I am a very outspoken person and that has helped me a lot. Whenever they voice out their opinions and I note that I am not at fault, I apologize immediately because I love to resolve things like this quickly. If I don't do this on time, it might later cause a serious problem because some people pent-up anger which can lead to physical assault (Sekiola, female live-in domestic worker).*

These coping strategies are not only effective in addressing conflicts in employers' homes but also contribute to the long-term resilience and sustainability of employment for live-in employees. The narratives reveal that the hierarchical structure between domestic workers and employers often compels live-in workers to apologize, even when they are not at fault, to maintain their jobs and resolve workplace issues.

The resolution strategies identified in the study were employed by female live-in employees to address misunderstandings with employers and other household members constructively. Despite frequent misunderstandings between employers and female live-in domestic workers, these employees use coping strategies to navigate and resolve major problems. According to Choi (2019), coping strategies are methods used to alleviate stress and misunderstandings, involving favorable actions to handle difficult and challenging situations.

### 5.3.3 Social interaction as a coping strategy

Social interactions between live-in employees are one of the most controversial and recurring topics of discussion. As mentioned in the previous chapter, live-in employees often face exploitation or other forms of mistreatment at work. Social interactions provided a support system where employees shared their experiences, seek advice, and receive emotional support from peers who understand their daily struggles. Patricia, from the investigation, shared her thoughts on the importance of social interactions.

*I engage people in a meaningful conversation with fellow domestic workers which is by sharing my thoughts and pinching-in daily live-in experiences such as the way I feels at that moment and how I have been coping (Patricia, live-in female domestic worker).*

In the same view Sade noted:

*Interacting with other fellow domestic workers has been my coping strategy especially when we come for meetings, people pour-out their minds and express their challenges like I do, which has been helping me out as I get encouragement from other female live-in domestic workers. They even give insights of how to handle some employers that are proving stubborn (Sade, live-in female domestic worker).*

From Sade's narrative, it is evident that domestic workers interact with one another. Social interaction is influenced by several factors, such as domestic chore challenges and coping methods. Kumar (2021) highlights that social interactions affect structural relationships among individuals in the same profession, such as live-in female domestic workers. The exchange of coping strategies and resilience techniques within their social circles is crucial. This includes sharing tips on navigating difficult workplace dynamics, accessing resources, and utilizing support services, as expressed by the live-in employees in the study. Social interaction places a strong emphasis on the value of shared experiences and collective intelligence. Female domestic workers often share stories, advice and coping mechanisms, which helps them to feel less isolated and more empowered in their various roles as live-in employees.

Additionally, Omolola noted that many female live-in employees leverage social interactions, given their constant confinement in their employers' homes. Omolola mentioned the following during her interview:

*Since we are live-in employees the social hierarchy of class has created a gap between domestic workers and the employers in terms of interactions. It is still very important to maintain harmonious relationships. We often make use of this strategy to navigate and manage the relationships with employers. Besides that, as domestic workers we social gatherings where we come together once in a month for meetings. We make a good use of this opportunity because it is an avenue to meet other domestic workers since we all have something in common as live-in employees. There is a saying in Yoruba “Egbe eye ni eye wo tor” meaning that “birds of the same feathers flock together” We share opinions, mutual support, companion, assistance to each other as a group (Omolola, live-in female domestic worker).*

On this same note, Eniola emphasized that social interaction remains important, particularly for domestic workers recruited from agencies. She provided more details:

*For those of us recruited by agencies like this, we hold meetings to have social interaction to know what is going on with each other. It has been really helpful as a coping strategy since we can table our matter (Challenges) therefore, other people suggest or navigate the rightful step that one should take (Eniola, live-in domestic worker).*

Female live-in domestic workers adopt social interactions as coping strategies to relieve stress and distract from work challenges. Engaging with friends or peers helps alleviate feelings of isolation and distress. Liu (2017) agrees that social interactions play a crucial role in indigenous domestic workers' coping strategies by providing support, fostering solidarity among female live-in employees, relieving stress, and facilitating skill development. Encouraging and facilitating these interactions contributes to live-in employees' well-being and resilience in a challenging work environment.

For female domestic workers, the social interaction is an African humanist principle of (*Ubuntu*) which is an essential native coping mechanism, as it places a strong emphasis on the connections between people and communities, encouraging virtues like compassion and mutual support (Mukuni, 2021). The social interaction promotes the development of support systems among female domestic workers. These networks strengthen the emotional and practical assistance which helps them to cope with the demands of their jobs and the challenges of the working conditions.

### 5.3.4 Telling jokes as a coping strategy

Telling of jokes was indeed a powerful coping mechanism adopted by live-in employees facing challenges with their employers in the study. Participants in the study illustrated how humour was used and how it has been helpful. Apeke illustrated that *telling jokes* has been a coping strategy put into practice. She explained a scenario in more detail:

*For instance, if where I am going to work as a live-in female domestic worker is an elderly woman's house, let's say in her 70s, immediately I get there I tell them that I want to marry them for my father as a second wife as a joke which makes them very happy. I make use of this coping strategies because this aged (old) people behave like babies. It is important to make them excited. I learnt this while working in Lagos, there was a woman I used to work for at that time, whenever she finished having her bath and dress up, I can tell her she looks beautiful and even spice up her dressing with an African head gear (Gele) and we go out. When people begin to give nice comments on her dressing, on our way, she gets excited which improves her health and makes her like me more even when she is mad at me, she doesn't take it to heart. She forgets about hat quickly whenever she is happy. Last year December when I was going home for Christmas, the woman and her grown up children who came around gave me a lot of food stuffs even money for Christmas, this is because of the way I treat the woman. She is always happy with me when I crack jokes with her (Apeke, live-in female domestic worker).*

Bisi also highlighted the following:

*I also do somethings that are funny whenever I sense that there a problem coming for me in my employers' house. They always think I'm a comedian because I make them laugh even the children too. I do those things purposely to avoid stress and problems even when I go on holidays, they miss me very much. So, telling jokes that makes them laugh makes them like me more even when I offend them, they often forget quickly (Bisi, female live-in domestic worker).*

Buttressing further, Omolara noted that cracking jokes is a coping strategy. It was stated in the interview that whenever she cracks jokes with her employer it alleviates their state of mind and well-being. She explained in detail as follows:

*There was a family I worked with sometimes ago so there was a time one they lost one of their grandchildren to sickle cell illness which affected everyone's emotion in that house. I was working for the grandmother, and I would say that was the most challenging period for me in that house because she was unable to eat and was not happy at the same time. What I used to practice those times was to encourage her that she would have another grandson very soon. Afterwards, I crack jokes that I have heard from comedians on TV which she finds very funny. Eventually, she was able to eat with a wonderful smile. When her daughter who lost the baby came to check on her mother, she was surprised because she has been trying all possible means to console her mother which was not possible for her, then she asked me what I did to put a smile on her face when she saw her mother eating (Omolara, live-in female domestic worker).*

Lastly Mary stated that her employers found her native dialect very funny. However, this has helped her out as a live-in employee as she has been able to use this opportunity to navigate her challenges at work.

*Making funny statements has been my coping strategy whenever I notice that the home where I work at is boring. Notably, my employers find my Yoruba dialect and voice very funny. So, most times I also spice it up for them since I have become a comedian to them and it is very difficult for them to get mad at me even when they are angry and I speak, they start to laugh (Mary, live-in female domestic worker).*

According to Dundes (2017), telling jokes can help reduce tension. Traditional African societies use storytelling, jokes, and proverbs indigenous knowledge and practice for relieving stress and tension (Edosomwan and Peterson, 2016). These methods also provide a comprehensive understanding of difficult situations through proverbs and storytelling. From a medical perspective, van Berkel (2009) suggests that humour, including telling jokes, is a significant tool for alleviating depression.

Jokes and humour are used in this context to blend indigenous knowledge with the challenges faced by female domestic workers in a light-hearted manner. The expression "raising the bar," which traditionally means setting higher standards, is used here literally. Humour is applied as a creative solution to the challenges encountered by live-in female employees, symbolized by the use of a ladder as a metaphor for overcoming obstacles.

### 5.3.5 Cultural practices as an indigenous coping strategy

According to Schwartz (2014), cultural practices reflect the values, beliefs, traditions, and norms unique to a culture. These practices play a significant role in shaping the coping strategies used by female live-in employees. In the African context, cultural practices vary widely. In this study, the predominant cultural practices are from the Yoruba context, as most participants were from the Yoruba tribe. Additionally, the study was conducted in Ibadan, Oyo State, a city with a notable history in Yoruba culture. Sekilola narrated the following:

*One of the coping strategies is incision (Gbere) which serves as a good coping strategy for me in this job. I have about 42 marks of incision in the scarp of my head. There was a period I was very ill, I went to the hospital and they couldn't find anything then. I decided to follow the cultural practice and later found that I was under attack by a fellow domestic worker who wanted me out of our employers' home. We are two live-in employees serving in the house that time and there was a lot of jealousy. I went back to my family house and incision was done for me which took 7 days while other rituals was done too and I became fine again. (Sekiola, female live-in domestic worker).*

In many cultures, religious incision is a ritualistic procedure that holds great significance and is frequently linked to spiritual resilience, identity, and protection. This practice has its origins in the customs of several indigenous groups found in Africa and other places where tangible representations of faith are combined with spirituality. Religious incisions are cuts made in the skin, often in specific patterns, that are believed to carry spiritual significance. In many African cultures like the Yoruba culture from West Africa, these incisions are more than just physical marks; they are seen as powerful symbols that connect the individuals to their community, ancestors and spiritual world (Enaikele and Adeleke, 2017). The practices are typically carried out by spiritual leaders, elders, or healers who have deep knowledge of its significance and procedures. While religious incision remains a vital practice in some indigenous communities, it faces challenges in the modern world. There are concerns about health risks, such as infections, and issues related to the stigma or misunderstanding of the practice by those outside the culture. Additionally, as younger generations move towards more globalized lifestyles, the practice may be seen as outdated or controversial.

Nigerian Yoruba culture has traditional healing practices like incision, herbal remedies and rituals that promote physical and mental health. Domestic workers who are aware of these indigenous systems incorporate these practices into self-care routines to alleviate stress and maintain health well-being for themselves and others in their household. Female domestic workers who are not well informed about indigenous practices often seek guidance and support from community elders for advice and encouragement. The practice of seeking guidance and support from community elders remains an important one across most African communities (Newman, 2022).

In the same light, on the cultural practices adopted as coping strategies, Felicia a live-in female domestic worker narrated the cultural practices she has put into practice over the years as a live-in employee.

*I apply iyonu (God's favour) as a coping strategy which has been a favourable strategy for me. What I do on a daily basis is to pour some salt on my left hand and pour honey on my right hand. Afterwards I rub my hands together and at the same time I prophesy for good things to happen to me and for favour which has been a traditional practice for favours when experiencing difficulties like finances, not been loved by employers. By doing this, my employer tends to be kind towards me I am always favoured at work (Felicia, female, live-in domestic workers).*

Furthermore, Iyabo states that:

*There are lots of favourable cultural practices that one can practice in these people's homes especially when you are a live-in domestic worker. My employers are from Osun state, so I know the key to their heart. Majorly by showing respect to them and making nice food like pounded yam with Egusi soup which is their favourite meal. This food melts their heart because I know how to prepare it very well. I do this most times when my salary is delayed so whenever they are giving comments about the food, I let them know that I'm in need of some funds then from there they remember that I haven't been paid and before the end of that day I will surely get a notification on my phone (Iyabo, female live-in domestic worker).*

From the narrative above, cooking traditional dishes and sharing meals can provide domestic workers with comfort and a sense of connection. It allows them to showcase their culinary skills and bond with their employers and other household members. This interaction creates an opportunity for female live-in domestic workers to express their opinions and voice their

challenges, given their comfort level with their employers. This dynamic is rooted in the cultural practices cherished by these live-in employees.

Further discussing cultural practices, Mopelola, a female domestic worker, shared that she had heard from other female domestic workers about the use of voodoo as a coping strategy. This practice is employed to influence the behaviour of their employers. According to Mopelola, employers who fall victim to such practices often adhere to the rules set by their live-in domestic workers, thereby allowing these workers to exert a degree of control over them. Mopelola described these practices as follows:

*This is mostly done by these young girls of today who are in a hurry for wealth/money working as a live-in domestic worker in well to do homes. They make use of voodoo to control their employers even to the point of where men chase their wife's away from home and marry the female live-in domestic worker. These young ladies go as far as to Cotonou (Republic of Benin) to get voodoo which is mostly done for their own gain so that they can oversee their employers' household, ability to instruct the employers on what to do at any point especially when the live-in employee need anything from the employers. But most of the time these things just work for a while. It is not forever and sometimes it backfires and leads to the death of domestic workers especially in cases where the employers are also aware spiritually and fetish at the same time (Mopelola, female, live-in domestic worker).*

The narratives discussed align with See's (2010) arguments about how cultural values shape domestic workers' coping strategies. Similarly, Sellato's (2017) study emphasizes the role of cultural practices in adapting to challenges. It is crucial to recognize that while cultural practices can be valuable coping mechanisms, they may also be influenced by power dynamics, gender norms, and socioeconomic factors. Therefore, efforts to support the well-being of live-in female domestic workers should account for the complexities of their experiences and provide resources and opportunities for empowerment.

In addition to cultural practices, kneeling as a coping strategy among female live-in employees in the Yoruba cultural context reflects traditional norms and values. Yoruba culture values respect for elders, authority figures, and social hierarchies (Abiolu, Alabi, Patrick and Abiolu, 2022; Agunbiade, 2016). Thus, kneeling is a gesture of deference, submission, and respect, often used to show reverence for those in positions of authority. Oluyemi and Olumide (2021) also suggest that

kneeling serves as a coping strategy for live-in employees by demonstrating submission to employers. Consequently, kneeling is employed by domestic workers to navigate power dynamics within households, maintaining harmonious relationships with their employers. Participants in this study described how this cultural practice of greeting (kneeling) was adopted as a coping strategy.

*Kneeling by females is the cultural way of greeting, showing appreciation, respect and pleading in the Yoruba context and traditions. When you work with Yoruba people or even if you belong to the tribe, showing respect is a big deal to the Yoruba people because we all like to be respected. For example, if my elder sister is older than me with just a year, I still have to give my respect, I cannot call her by her name. So, part of the respect includes greeting which involves kneeling- that is for females and the males prostrates to greet an elderly person. Apart from that, when a person is trying to plead for something or apologizing, it is needed to put such indigenous knowledge to practice. I often do this at my employers place every morning to show some respect (Bolatito, female live-in domestic worker).*

Ayisha, a live-in female domestic worker from Northern Nigeria working in Ibadan, Oyo State, expanded the discussion on kneeling as a cultural practice for greeting and pleading. She shared her experiences and explained how she uses this practice as a coping strategy, stating the following:

*I am from the Northern part of Nigeria the Hausa tribe. When I got here, I noticed that people females kneel to greet to apologize or even to greet other people who are older. Later it came to my notice that this practice is to show a sign of respect and appreciation. I knew about this before coming to the Southwest (Ibadan city) because I have family members who have been in these areas before and I was more informed that the Yoruba people like respect so much, so I put that indigenous knowledge into practice very well and it has been working out for me as I am able to express a lot of respect to people around me especially my employers (Ayisha, female live-in domestic worker).*

Patricia from Akwa-Ibom emphasized in her discussion that Yoruba people appreciate it when others value and adapt to their cultural practices. She recounted how the coping strategy of kneeling is particularly valued by employers within the Yoruba culture:

*A lot of people in this part of country cherish respect so much. The kneeling-down a sign of showing respect has been helpful to me as it has been helping me to avoid conflicts. Whenever my employers are not pleased with that, I have done such as cooking*

*or cleaning I speak the Yoruba language and kneel-down by saying sorry (Emabinu). Once I do that, I'm forgiven. I just noticed that this people appreciate it a lot when you adapt with the culture even though I am from Akwa-Ibom (Particia, live-in domestic worker).*

According to Wojtowicz (2021), kneeling as a method of greeting or showing respect is an indigenous practice within the Yoruba cultural context. Ezeanya (2019) also notes that indigenous knowledge, including practices such as greeting and showing respect to the elderly, becomes deeply ingrained from childhood into adulthood for Africans. This practice has helped many female domestic workers navigate their domestic work lives. However, it is important to recognize that the kneeling practice by female live-in domestic workers reflects broader societal inequalities and power dynamics between domestic workers and their employers. While this coping strategy helps address immediate challenges, it also highlights underlying issues such as respectful treatment, fair wages, and the empowerment of live-in female employees.

### **5.3.6 The use of traditional waist beads as a coping strategy**

The findings revealed that traditional beads emerged as one of the primary coping strategies among female live-in domestic workers in Ibadan City, Oyo State, Nigeria. It was observed that most of these workers made use of waist beads to reinforce spirituality and economic empowerment. In many African traditions, beads are believed to carry spiritual significance. They are used as amulets or talisman for protection, health and well-being. One participant, Iya-meta, a widow with six years' experience as a domestic worker, elaborated on this strategy:

*A part of my coping strategy over the years has been the use of waist beads which holds a significant meaning to my culture. It is a source of comfort and pride when experiencing challenges in this our work. The waist beads are not just ordinary, there are also spiritual which has been a form of emotional relief or stress. Whenever I wear my waist beads, I have noticed that my employers tend to be calm towards me and not aggressive. There is no stress or anxiety whenever I make use of the waist beads. (Iya-meta, female, live-in domestic worker).*

Apeke, expanded further and stated the following:

*I make use of the waist beads for my finances. Even before I started this work, the waist beads has been helpful to women in general. It is an addition to beauty, attracts men*

*and money. There is no man that will see that who won't be moved to give money or make a move to get close to a lady. Although I use that for my financial gain in the domestic work (Apeke, female live-in domestic worker).*

As well, Nafisat provided further insight into the adaptation of waist beads as a coping strategy:

*I make use of the waist beads for several reasons, one is to monitor my weight and attracts financial gains. I mostly make use of it when I am challenged by my employers in terms of finances. There was a time one of my employers were owing me my salary and by using the waist beads for few days the debt was paid as it attracts wealth and finances. It is also used to protect my reputation in this job so I don't get laid off (Nafisat, live-in domestic worker).*

Lastly, Sade noted the following:

*The waist bead was given to me by my husband which I use everyday. It is for our sexual fidelity and for protection against any form of inappropriate sexual pleasure or rape from anybody. It is to scare evil people away especially men with hidden agenda. There is a magun (thunderbolt) attached to it too. The magun means do not climb. For instance, if anyone tries to sleep with me aside from my husband, that same day the person will die if appropriate sacrifices are not done. It is one of the old traditional practices for sexual fidelity. (Sade, female live-in domestic worker).*

In line with the arguments above, the fascinating theme of female domestic workers using waist beads as a mechanism has cultural, spiritual and psychological undertones. In many African societies, women have historically worn waist beads, which have profound symbolic implications relating to femininity, identity, empowerment and protection (Mensah, 2014). While there is scarcity of academic research explicitly connecting waist beads to coping strategy used by female domestic workers, their use has insightful meanings when considered in the larger settings of identity preservation and cultural resilience. Waist beads are considered to provide mystical protection in many African societies. They might have herbal infusions to fight off evil energy or be blessed by spiritual authorities. Waist beads provided a sense of protection and comfort to domestic workers who were subjected to abuse and cruelty at work by acting as protective charms.

### 5.3.8 Spiritual-Consultation as a coping strategy

Spirituality appears to be an intrinsic motivational force with a significant impact on people's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, leading to positive outcomes. Among the most compelling areas of empirical research in spirituality is its relationship with coping strategies. Anecdotal evidence suggests that spirituality can serve as a buffer against a wide variety of stressful events (Ano and Pargament, 2013). Spirituality as a coping strategy involves a connection with the self, a sacred moment with a supreme being or God, or a relationship with nature. These strategies help individuals navigate their challenges. The mechanisms behind this coping strategy are reflected in findings that highlight meaning and hope, which in turn strengthen female live-in employees as they face challenges in their employment.

A participant, Mopelola noted that prayer was a crucial part of her coping strategies. She stated:

*There are instances where I go to my home village to consult with an herbalist based on the challenges encountered at my place of work although I am a christian but I also believe in my traditions since I grew up in the village. Whenever I consult, I always feel relieved because there is always a very fast solution to my problem at work. There was a time I was almost fired by my boss what saved my job was a visit to the old herbalist man. I was given a powder to use whenever I get to my employer's house to plead. I was told that whenever my boss looks at my face directly I will be pardoned and continue my work as a domestic worker in the house which really worked for me because I followed the instructions. (Mopelola, female live-in domestic worker).*

Consultations with traditional healers is a syncretic practice that combines elements of West African spirituality and indigenous beliefs. Kope (2012) affirmed that the practice of consulting plays a crucial role in the spirituality and daily lives of practitioners, addressing various needs such as health, protection, guidance and resolving personal or communal issues. From findings participants shared their thoughts on how consultations with traditional doctors have been a part of their coping strategies as female live-in employees.

Folake, another participant, explains how spirituality is very important to her well-being as a female live-in employee as a coping strategy. She explained as follows:

*Personally, my spirituality is very important to me because that alone gives me directions about life in general. Before I started this job, my elder sister took me to one old man to know if there is not going to be any trouble from the domestic duties. This is because we have heard stories of people working as domestic workers who end up in jail by their employers. Although at the beginning I was scared about that but after consulting with the Ifa priest I was told there is no problem and I will be favoured in my place of work and if there are any challenges I can come back to him for an immediate solution. (Folake, female live-in domestic worker).*

Voodoo doctors, traditional healers are considered intermediaries between the physical world and the spiritual realm (Ajako, 2019). They possess knowledge of rituals, herbal remedies and spiritual practices that are used to heal, protect and guide individuals and communities. However, it is vital to note that the voodoo practices, including consultations with voodoo doctors, have often been misunderstood in popular media which has led to stigma and misconceptions about religion and its practices. Bird (2022) stipulates that voodoo is a complex and deeply meaningful spiritual systems that offers a rich array of cultural, spiritual and healing practices. For many practitioners, voodoo is a source of empowerment, offering practical and spiritual tools to navigate the complexities of life.

From the narratives of Folake and Mopelola, it is evident that domestic work duties are both physically and emotionally demanding, leading to stress. As a result, spiritual practices such as connection and mindfulness meditation are employed to reduce stress levels and promote a sense of well-being. Additionally, relying on one's faith or spiritual beliefs for guidance and solace provides a sense of calm and inner peace for live-in female employees. Joseph (2017) argues that spirituality also fosters a sense of belonging to a community, whether it is a religious congregation, a spiritual group, or a network of like-minded individuals. This sense of belonging offers support to live-in female employees, providing a safe space to express their feelings and seek comfort during difficult times.

The study's findings reveal several ways in which spirituality fosters connectivity. For instance, Boluwatife describes how her spirituality and connection to her supreme being have been integral to her coping strategy. Boluwatife stated:

*I am from Osun state Osogbo and I hold my cultural heritage to my heart. During the Osun Osogbo festive period I go to the Shrine to get the water for cleansing against any*

*form of evil which has been a form of protection for me as a live-in employee. I pray to the river gods for divine favour and interventions of adversities in my place of work. (Boluwatife, female live-in domestic worker).*

Finally, Bisi mentioned spirituality from a different perspective by stating that meditation and resilience serve as some of her coping mechanisms:

*The major thing I do for myself whenever I am very stressed out or when my employers are demanding too much from me is to take time to visit the nearby park when I get the chance to go in the evening. I go there to have a quiet moment to reflect and at the same time explore the nature around me as I connect to nature easily. It is a way for me to meditate and reflect my mind and remind myself of who I am (Bisi, female live-in domestic worker).*

Spirituality is deeply intertwined with overall well-being, worldview, and connection to the natural world. It provides a framework for understanding oneself, the community, and offers solutions for navigating life's challenges. A significant aspect of the study involved examining spirituality as a coping strategy for live-in employees. The findings reveal a clear connection between coping strategies and spirituality, which aligns with previous research highlighting the relationship between these two factors (Wachholtz, 2007; Krok, 2008). People often draw on their spiritual resources to manage stress and regulate their cognitive and emotional processes. Moreover, individuals with high levels of spirituality tend to address problems by first recognizing the issue and then planning potential solutions to the situation.

#### **5.4 THE APPLICATION OF COPING STRATEGIES BY FEMALE LIVE-IN EMPLOYEES**

Following the discussion on the application of indigenous coping strategies, female live-in domestic workers were further probed to understand how and when these strategies are employed in their workplace. The demographic data of the study revealed that the vast majority of these female live-in domestic workers were from the Yoruba tribe. Consequently, those from the dominant tribe were familiar with indigenous cultural practices and could use them as coping strategies.

However, domestic workers from non-dominant tribes also demonstrated awareness of cultural practices and successfully employed indigenous coping strategies based on their culturally

informed knowledge. This knowledge helped them adapt and manage domestic work challenges. Lodhi and Mikulecky (2011) noted that people living in remote areas often possess in-depth knowledge of coping strategies from a decolonial lens. Accordingly, the majority of the study participants were aware of decolonial reflections related to indigenous coping practices.

This section of the study focuses on the application of coping strategies by female live-in domestic workers who participated in the study. Boluwatife mentioned that she applies coping strategies when challenged by the employers. She elaborated as follows:

*I apply the indigenous coping strategies whenever I am challenged by my employers especially when things are not going well on my side. There was a time I was laid off, I rushed to my home town to the Osun river goddess to do some cleansing and rituals for favour which really worked for me as I believe in my cultural traditions. (Boluwatife, female live-in domestic worker).*

Continuing from the narrative above, Ayisha, a young live-in domestic worker from the Northern part of Nigeria (Hausa), described how she applies coping strategies. Initially unfamiliar with cultural practices in Ibadan city, Ayisha learned about them through interactions with her employers and community members. She shared the following:

*Whenever I offend Daddy and Mommy or when they are angry with me, I just kneel immediately to plead with them. I have also learnt that Yoruba people love respect so much and by doing that, it melts their heart. I was able to learn from my employers and member of the community by observing them (Ayisha, female live-in domestic worker).*

As a further example, Sekiola gave an in-depth discussion on the application of indigenous knowledge as a coping strategy while working as live-in employee in Ibadan city, Oyo state, Nigeria:

*I have encountered several challenges in this work which are both from my employers and co-workers. I apply indigenous knowledge when somethings are beyond normal. For instance, when I was very ill and nothing was found, I knew it was spiritual. That was when I went for the incision. When it comes to things like that one has to be fast about it because if care is not taken, one can die of the unknown arrow of sickness. I observe first before I apply indigenous methods to sort my challenges because there are several things that are happening which we cannot see with our ordinary eyes or going*

*to the hospital. It is important to put indigenous systems into practice. (Sekiola, female live-in domestic worker).*

According to Sekiola's narrative, female domestic workers employed coping strategies for several reasons, one of which is to protect their lives and cope with challenges which might be a form of spiritual attack towards the domestic workers by other co-workers in the same working space. Furthermore, the practice of incision as highlighted by Sekiola is a method of protecting against evil in some African cultures, such as the Yoruba culture in Nigeria. The findings also confirmed that these strategies were used by live-in employees to address various life challenges. Furthermore, this practice strengthened the close relationships between female live-in employees and their various cultural heritage.

In addition to their use during difficult situations and for enhancing relationships, it was found that domestic workers applied their indigenous knowledge when employers are angry while these practices set relieves and reduces the tension on female live-in employees. Felicia noted:

*I apply coping strategies when I experience any form of difficulties with my employers. You know as domestic workers, our employers may get angry at us based on somethings we are supposed to do which are not done on time, such could be the home chores. So, once I notice that their attitudes changed towards me, I adopt my indigenous methods of coping which is to pour some salt and honey in my palm and say some words of prayers for my employers to love me again and overlook my mistakes. And after doing that I lick my palms 3 times then my rituals are complete. (Felicia, live-in female domestic worker).*

From Felicia's narratives, indigenous coping strategies are not only applied based on the challenges associated to domestic work. It also serves as a coping tool for domestic workers to avoid conflicts with the employers.

Esther narrated how coping strategies have been applied in her place of work which has protected her employment status as a live-in female domestic worker:

*I apply coping strategies whenever I am confused based on behaviours and attitudes of my employers. This work can be very draining as it requires a lot of brainstorming. What I do when I am very confused at work is to seek advise from the elderly people around me who help me to navigate on how to solve the problem at hand (Esther, Live-in female domestic worker).*

As a coping strategy, female domestic workers seek advice from the elders in the society as they are able to navigate the silent issues associated to their duties as live-in employees. Nevertheless, it is vital to emphasize that this approach does not provide a sustainable solution and can actually reinforce an unhealthy power dynamic between employers and live-in domestic workers. Therefore, it is essential for female live-in domestic workers to be aware of other indigenous coping strategies that can be adopted. In relation to this discussion on coping strategies, Eniola described how she uses social interaction as part of her coping strategy as a live-in employee:

*My coping mechanism has been social interactions with people because I'm a deep thinker, so I always overthink too much and whenever I am feeling sad/depressed or bullied, I interact with other fellow domestic workers especially during meetings, apart from that we have each other's mobile contact, so we often call to gist and check on each other to ease the stress and tension of the work. It also serves as a neutral ground to encourage each other. Sometimes I also gossip about what is going on in my employer's home, we even laugh about it on the phone or whenever we meet (Eniola, female live-in domestic worker).*

HO et al. (2021) suggest that social interaction is a valuable coping strategy as it helps alleviate feelings of isolation and provides emotional support. Female domestic workers echoed this sentiment, noting that supportive networks, particularly with other workers or individuals who understand and empathize with the challenges of domestic duties, are crucial. Additionally, virtual spaces and monthly meetings for domestic workers create opportunities to share experiences, seek advice, and receive support from peers who understand their struggles.

In this study, female live-in domestic workers employed various coping strategies that benefited both the workers and their employers. Among these narratives, Bolatito specifically explained how these strategies have been essential for maintaining employment and ensuring the well-being of the household:

*The coping strategy I apply is kneeling down which is a way of showing respect either by greeting or apologizing is a Yoruba cultural practice. Whenever my employers are not happy with me, I use that method which actually melts their heart only because I recognize that they are superior and I show total respect to them. It is important to be aware of all these things especially when taking care of an elderly person. I often apply these strategies whenever I am posted to an elderly person's home. You know old people*

*love it when you show them respect and by doing that I have been able to maintain my work as a domestic worker in the house. I have never been threatened that I would be laid off (Bolaitito, female domestic worker).*

Coping strategies are crucial for female domestic workers who face various challenges and stressors related to domestic chores. These strategies are often intertwined with their indigenous knowledge, enabling them to manage their own emotions and those of their employers. This enables them to navigate difficult situations, and maintain overall well-being. The findings indicate that domestic workers frequently encounter emotionally demanding situations, such as dealing with demanding employers or sickness. As a result, they employ emotional regulation techniques as a coping strategy for both themselves and their employers.

Moreover, female live-in employees often face challenges such as communication barriers, unfair treatment, or work-related stress. Building a social network with fellow co-workers can greatly enhance their relationships and provide emotional support, practical advice, and a sense of belonging, all of which reduce stress and foster resilience. Lastly, self-care practices are essential for mental health. For example, some participants engage in self-care by taking time off from work, such as pretending to be ill, to manage their stress effectively.

## **5.5 COMMUNAL VOICES OF LIVE-IN EMPLOYEES**

Through the investigation of the study, female live-in employees shared their perspectives on fostering adaptation of coping strategies through communal voices. Three sub-themes emerged from these communal voices, categorically suggesting appropriate solutions to exploitation and maltreatment, and highlighting women's roles in preserving knowledge systems. The sub-themes identified in the study include approaches to foster indigenous knowledge as a coping strategy, the role of women in society, and the role of government in domestic work service.

### **5.5.1 Approaches to foster indigenous knowledge as a coping strategy**

Folake, a study participant, suggested one of the approaches to foster indigenous knowledge as a coping strategy by noting the following:

*It is very important for use to adopt indigenous knowledge systems into our daily lives even regardless of our job as domestic workers because before the arrival of this oyinbo people we had our own method of coping with crisis. So I believe, if we go back to the*

*way we use to do things like traditional medicine, consulting with ifa priest, oracles and all that, it would help in a long run and we won't depend on hospitals and other things that was brought to us which has over shadowed our own traditional systems. (Folake, live-in domestic workers).*

In the same view, Mopelola noted the following:

*Nowadays a lot of people use to think that the cultural practices are evil because of charms and sacrifices that are done to please the gods. But these things are used for several reasons such as corrections, coping with crisis or challenges in life. I feel it is very important for the traditional leaders to hold press conferences to educate the youths for them to know the importance of this traditional knowledge and traditional religion which has been in existence for a very long time even before Christianity and Islam. (Mopelola, live-in female domestic worker).*

Omolola shared her thought on approaches to foster indigenous coping strategies by stating the following:

*I believe there are numerous traditional practices that can be taught even without involving voodoo practices. The indigenous knowledge is fast eroding which has been affecting the cultural methods of adapting and coping with numerous situations. Parents, traditional leaders like kings, chiefs and elders need to remind people especially the young generations about indigenous knowledge systems. For instance, if you ask one of this young generations about the coping strategy for someone who is having a crisis of epilepsy in the middle of the night and the hospital is far away, they won't have answers to do that simply because they do not have a deep knowledge about indigenous methods. (Omolola, live-in domestic worker).*

Participants in the study argued on the same notion stating that indigenous knowledge has been affirmed coping strategy for female domestic workers. In as much as indigenous knowledge is eroding in the society there is a need for traditional leaders to educate the masses on the advantages of indigenous knowledge practices which has been in practice before colonization in Africa.

Furthermore, Felica illustrated from another dimension by stating the old traditional practices of folk stories, social interaction, and cultural practices are methods to foster the adaption of indigenous coping strategies by female domestic workers in Ibadan city, Oyo state Nigeria. She stated the following:

*I think it is important to bring back the old methods of learning into our communities today because that will assist and bring back the old traditional methods of adapting. Folk stories are not done anymore for the young generations to learn, the culture of Ubuntu is no longer there like before again, most people to imbibe the European practices by focusing on their immediate nuclear family. (Felica, live-in domestic worker).*

From Felicia's argument, the cultural practices and folk stories served as a method of learning as traditions are passed down orally across generations.

### **5.5.2 Roles of women in the society**

It has been noted and argued in the literature that women are custodians of knowledge transmission through generations (Akolaa and Frimpong, 2023; Singha, 2024). Nyeleka et al. (2019) also assert that women are the keepers of indigenous knowledge, emphasizing the crucial role they play in channelling and transmitting these knowledge systems to society. Female live-in domestic workers with an in-depth understanding of indigenous knowledge systems contributed their voices to educating younger generations about coping strategies from a decolonial perspective. These domestic workers shared their narratives as follows:

*It is important for women like me to educate young girls about aspects of African indigenous which can be used to preserve things and cope with a lot of challenges in our daily lives. It becomes very helpful for them as they can tackle live problems without any fear (Iyabo, female live-in domestic worker).*

Further, Omolola stated that:

*A lot of things have changed over the years. You know before the advancement of technology people always have moonlight story time, poems, family gathering, cooking, healing procedures and other cultural practices. But right now, there are no such moments again as a lot of people depend on technology. It is necessary for us to instil such knowledge system into our children and other people around us so as not to lose our indigenous coping systems (Omolola, female live-in domestic worker).*

Women are often primary caregivers, possessing extensive knowledge of herbal medicine, midwifery, and holistic healing practices. Stronach (2019) asserts that women play a critical role in encouraging community health, maternal health, and emotional well-being, drawing on

indigenous healing traditions that place a high priority on holistic approaches to healthcare. Women's roles in preserving coping strategies from a decolonial perspective remain significant and multifaceted. Decolonial perspectives encompass traditional practices, beliefs, and wisdom passed down through generations within a community. Aliyu (2022) also alludes that women have historically been responsible for passing down oral traditions, storytelling, and practical skills from one generation to another, thus serving as custodians of indigenous knowledge systems.

### **5.5.3 The role of government**

The role of government emerged as the final sub-theme of the study, highlighting live-in employees' suggestions for implementing policies to safeguard living conditions and ensure social justice for female live-in employees in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria. Female live-in domestic workers proposed possible solutions to the problems they encounter at work. Sade shared her thoughts on this:

*The government should implement new policies about the working hours of domestic workers. Besides that, we are not really recognized because it is an informal job as we are working for individuals in their homes. (Sade live-in domestic worker).*

Moreover, Nafisat discussed how government can play a role in protecting the rights of female domestic workers as follows:

*The government should endeavour to send representative to employer's homes unannounced to check the well-being of live-in female domestic workers and how they are treated in employer's homes. By doing this, they will be able to monitor the well-being of both workers and employers because they are also situations where some domestic workers also frustrate the employers too (Nafisat, female live-in domestic worker).*

Furthermore, Alice suggested that background checks are necessary to monitor both employers and domestic workers to alleviate the problems and allegations that affect live-in domestic workers:

*There should be strategic laws on the employment of domestic workers when employing people like us, employers should show their (NIN) numbers (ID), photos and the background check should be done by the government agencies before anyone can*

*employ domestic workers. This will ease a lot of problems we face as live-in domestic workers (Alice, female live-in domestic worker).*

Boluwatife also emphasized the importance of establishing panels to scrutinize employers before they recruit domestic workers:

*The creation of organizations with board of directors should be in place, where employers will have to meet up with a panel before recruiting a live-in domestic worker into their homes. Therefore, the employers will be scrutinized very well before they can employ anyone (Boluwatife, live-in domestic worker).*

The critical evaluation of these narratives revealed that in addition to coping strategies, female live-in employees also contributed valuable suggestions to the solutions to the problems they face. Further, it was suggested that domestic work be formalized, and that governmental agencies be established to oversee the living conditions of live-in workers.

The coping theory primarily focuses on psychological stress and methods individuals use to cope with stress which can be related to the coping strategies of female live-in domestic workers examining how these workers manage the unique challenges within their socio-cultural context. Cohen and Lazarus stipulated that the coping theory is in two major dimension which are problem focused coping and emotional focused coping (Baker, 2007). The problem focused coping laid emphasis on social interaction, wisdom and patience as female domestic workers engage in collective problem solving by connecting with other workers through social interactions, patience, sharing of ideas and wisdom to address working conditions and other factors associated to the domestic duties. These workers often rely on practical skills and resourcefulness which were part of their indigenous heritage to navigate their work environments.

The emotional focused coping emphasized on spirituality, cultural practices, story telling and oral traditions. In the study numerous female domestic workers practiced the emotional focused coping strategy which enabled the spiritual practices which allowed female domestic workers to process emotions and find inner strength. The African feminism often incorporate both traditional and community-oriented approaches (Dube, 2024). From the findings, female live-in domestic workers experience series of stress, exploitation crisis and challenges. Thus, their coping strategies are influenced by their cultural heritage and community values. Female live-in domestic workers find

comfort in connecting with their cultural narratives and sharing their experiences with others from similar backgrounds which is based on the intersectionality of class in the society.

Both problem- and emotion-focused approaches were employed by female live-in domestic workers, as suggested by Cohen and Lazarus' theory. In addition to using emotional and spiritual coping strategy to manage the stress of their situation, they take proactive measures to improve their working conditions. The incorporation of these methodologies highlights the adaptability and resilience of Indigenous techniques for coping under the Cohen and Lazarus framework.

The intersectionality theory, African feminism and the coping theory employed by female live-in domestic workers are significant, especially considering their similar emphasis on resilience, community support, and navigating intricate power relations. African feminist theory provided a framework for comprehending the distinct experiences of African women, such as the live-in domestic workers, and how they deal with and fight oppression and exploitation. African feminism supplement this by providing culturally based techniques for survival and resilience. Despite difficult working circumstances, poor pay, and restricted rights, female domestic workers demonstrate incredible endurance. A major component of African feminism, which honours African women's autonomy and courage in the face of challenges, is this resilience. Nevertheless, the African feminism criticizes the exploitative working circumstances that many African women endure, especially in fields like domestic work, where women are frequently underpaid and undervalued.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

Decolonial reflection provided valuable insights into the indigenous coping strategies adopted by female live-in workers. This study revealed various perspectives on indigenous knowledge, highlighting the diverse cultural practices transmitted over generations. These coping strategies are continuously practiced by live-in female domestic workers to maintain their employment, manage their relationships with employers, and tackle the challenges inherent in domestic work.

As the study progressed, domestic workers shared narratives about the most effective coping strategies, with some debate on which were most favourable. A significant concern for many live-in female employees was the fear of losing their jobs. The discussions on coping strategies were

highly polarized, with many workers emphasizing the importance of strategically applying indigenous knowledge to navigate difficult situations.

Some live-in female domestic workers found the application of indigenous knowledge to be particularly beneficial. The research identified key aspects of indigenous knowledge, such as patience, wisdom, perseverance, cultural practices, humour, spirituality, showing respect through kneeling, social interactions, and conflict resolution. These strategies are essential coping strategies used by female domestic workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. These strategies help domestic workers maintain their employment, address challenges in domestic chores, and assist their employers when needed.

Additionally, these coping strategies benefited employers, as live-in domestic workers could provide traditional remedies for illnesses and build cordial, intimate relationships with them. The study's critical engagement with these findings revealed the communal responses of female live-in domestic workers to maltreatment and underscored the role of women in transmitting indigenous knowledge across generations. Finally, this chapter discusses the importance of government regulation in supporting these workers and preserving indigenous knowledge.

## **CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

The study explored the Nigerian female domestic workers perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees in Ibadan, city Oyo state Nigeria. The data gathered through this study addressed the live-in experiences, indigenous coping strategies, oppression, challenges, maltreatment and exploitation of females in the domestic sector. Given the above background, this study builds on existing knowledge on coping strategies as literatures has pointed out coping strategies from the Eurocentric perspectives. Hence, this study explored from a new dimension by investigating on the indigenous coping strategies applied by female live-in domestic workers in the study.

The introduction of the study provided insights into the study by highlighting the important aspects of the study such as the background to the study, the problem, the rationale to the study, the research objectives and questions to the study and the limitation to the study. This was followed by the review of literatures pertinent to the study. The literature review navigates the research into a context of how it fits into the subject discussion and the analysis of information resources available as it relates to the aim of the study (Kanki, 2006). The literature review of this study drew insights from relevant books, journals, published and unpublished dissertations and electronic materials. The literatures presented in this study assisted in grasping a better understanding of the study, it was evident that there was a dearth of literature on the topic of indigenous coping strategies of female domestic workers especially in Nigeria. The literature in this study was able to traced the history of domestic work in the African region from pre-colonial Africa to colonial Africa and post-colonial Africa. The study was able to identify and highlight the exploitation, violence and abuse perpetuated towards female domestic workers.

The study underpinned the various theories, as not one single theory could succinctly explain the different concepts in this study. Hence, this study adopted the use of Cohen and Lazarus coping theory, intersectionality theory and African feminism. The last section of the literature explained the relevance of the three theories to the aim of the study. The Cohen and Lazarus coping theory explored the methods of coping in difficult situations. The theory identified eight distinct concepts that were applicable to the domestic workers under investigation. Intersectionality theory explained oppression, the class dimension and power structures between the domestic workers and

the employers. The African feminism explored the cultural concepts of how women cope with challenges.

Chapter three of this study provided an in-depth discussion of the research methodology adopted and the qualitative method used in the study. The chapter explained the research methodology and methods adopted in the study. It explained the need for qualitative research, presented the sampling methods, data collection methods, interview procedures and challenges encountered during the field work process. The research participants were female live-in domestic workers selected through purposive and snowball techniques. Chapter four investigated objective one of the study by documenting the live-in experiences of female live-in employees in the study. From findings, several themes emerged. However, during the investigation, it was crucial to understand the recruitment methods before delving into the experiences of female live-in employees. In-depth discussion was followed after the presentation of the data.

The chapter five of the discussed focused on objective two, three and four of the study which solely focused on the indigenous coping strategies. The themes achieved from the investigation identified the indigenous coping strategies practiced by female live-in employees, the applications of these strategies and lastly approaches for foster the adaptation of indigenous coping strategies.

This chapter discussed the overview of the study, summary of the chapters, how the research objectives was achieved and the recommendation for further studies.

## **6.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

Female domestic workers are adult women whose duties are performed at home. These duties include general house cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, laundry services, caring for infants and the elderly, running errands such as grocery shopping, and other household responsibilities. This also encompasses the general healthcare and well-being of the household.

Domestic workers play a vital role in providing essential services in various homes. Understanding the live-in experiences of female domestic workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, was the primary focus of this study. Additionally, the study highlighted the ongoing demand for female domestic workers in Ibadan. It brought to light narratives explaining why women from marginalized communities are often subjected to work as live-in employees in cities like Ibadan.

The discussion extended beyond the live-in experiences of domestic workers to their perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees, aiming at decolonial reflections. The purpose of this study was to fill a gap by providing narratives about the indigenous coping strategies adopted by live-in domestic workers, as well as how they integrate these strategies in their daily routines.

Domestic work is recognized globally as one of the most prevalent informal sectors, predominantly occupied by females. Domestic workers have varied and extensive responsibilities. While men also work as domestic workers, women hold the vast majority of these positions. Domestic workers play a crucial role in stabilizing their employers' households. This enables many employers to pursue their careers and aspirations without worrying about household chores. Female domestic workers were classified as live-in employees based on their assigned duties. These categories included those responsible for the care of elderly individuals, the general well-being of the household, child care, the emotional support of employers (such as widows), and the health care of individuals with illnesses. The study found that female live-in employees often combined these core duties, making their daily tasks very strenuous. The findings reveal that domestic workers in general are expected to carry out a wide range of duties, including general cleaning, cooking, caring for the young and elderly, and taking care of various household duties and health activities.

The participants provided an in-depth narrative on the employment methods, the daily chores of female live-in employees in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria. The challenges associated with domestic work and the factors that drive women into domestic work were discussed. The accomplishments and achievements of female live-in employees was not left out in the discussion. The study asserted that poverty and the inability to complete elementary education are among the factors that propel females into the domestic service. Furthermore, the study found that the majority of female live-in employees came from marginalized communities. As a result of this study, it became evident that young female live-in domestic workers, who remained submissive, were dependent exclusively on their employers for sponsorship to complete their high school education. Thus, these live-in domestic workers had no alternative but to follow the often-strenuous regulations of their employers.

A key finding of the study was the narratives about daily challenges associated with domestic chores. The challenges faced by each female live-in employee varied, as their duties differed according to the needs of their employers. Alongside the extensive discussion of these challenges,

the testimonies of female live-in employees were also highlighted. It became evident from the investigation that some of these employees shared their views on the achievements they have made through domestic work. However, the challenges they experienced often surpassed these achievements.

Another significant issue that emerged in discourse was the exploitation and mistreatment of female live-in employees in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria. According to the narratives of these employees, exploitation took several forms, including physical assault by employers and manipulative strategies used against domestic workers. Employers also resorted to threats and intimidation to control female live-in employees.

Long working hours and low wages were prominent concerns in the study. The body of literature has consistently highlighted these issues, indicating a persistent problem that needs addressing. Live-in employees expressed their thoughts and concerns about the extensive working hours and inadequate pay they received for their daily duties. Although the majority of female live-in employees were recruited and paid directly by agencies, it was challenging for them to confront their employers regarding their compensation. This issue highlighted the need to discuss the employment methods of female live-in employees.

Most live-in domestic workers in the study were recruited by domestic work agencies. These agencies not only monitored the well-being of the workers but also controlled their wages. Additionally, some females were employed into domestic work through recommendations from friends, relatives, and other extended family members. Those recruited from villages often worked in exchange for a more convenient life in metropolitan cities like Ibadan. In such cases, employers determined the exchange, which could include opportunities to learn new skills as apprentices or further their education. These agreements were typically contractual between the live-in employees and their employers. For underage domestic workers, the agreements were made with their guardians.

An important theme of the study was sexual assault and harassment perpetrated on female live-in employees. This study discussed the assaults and silent narratives of sexual abuse and harassment experienced by female live-in employees, which included sexual remarks, inappropriate touching, and sexual favouritism. The actions of some employers and members of the household created

some trauma on female live-in employees as most of those who shared their narratives about this were traumatized by such actions.

Nevertheless, domestic workers are not considered to be on the same hierarchical level as their employers. Even when domestic workers are older than their employers or members of the household, the position of the employers remains dominant, owing to the social hierarchy of class. This conversation led to examining female live-in employees' coping strategies in Ibadan city, Nigeria. The study was informed by a decolonial perspective, reflecting the indigenous knowledge of female live-in employees. The study found that most live-in employees, especially the older females, had extensive knowledge of indigenous practices, which they adopted as coping strategies. These strategies included wisdom, patience, perseverance, cultural practices, telling of jokes, social interactions, conflict resolution, and spirituality. These indigenous coping strategies served as a negotiating tool between employers and domestic workers. Additionally, the indigenous coping strategies promoted bonding in relationships, an increase in happiness, a reduction in stress associated with household chores, as well as the development of the spiritual consciousness of the live-in employees.

Based on the narratives gathered, female live-in domestic workers demonstrated empowerment as they were able to reach a suitable stability of adopting indigenous coping strategies based on the challenges associated with their day-to-day responsibilities. The application of these coping strategies caused female live-in employees to gain significant self-confidence as they were able to share their live-in experiences over time. Live-in employees were able to identify their places, roles and positions within the household (home of their employer) as their narratives were expanded.

### **6.3 ACHIEVING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This section of the study highlights the findings that was set out to be achieved by the objectives of this study. The following listed objective was identified by this study, which was, firstly to understand the experiences of the Nigerian live-in female domestic employees in Ibadan city Oyo state Nigeria; secondly, to explore the indigenous coping strategies used by Nigerian live-in female domestic workers; thirdly, to investigate how Nigerian live-in female employees apply these coping strategies in their employers homes; and lastly to examine the communal voices of the Nigerian female coping strategies in Ibadan city, Oyo state Nigeria.

The study revealed a number of findings. It was discovered that female live-in employees were recruited into the domestic work through several means such as agencies, suggestions and recommendations from friends and family members. However, vast majority of the female domestic workers were recruited through agencies. From findings it was also discovered that there are several narratives surrounding domestic work as the duties differ in each homes of the employers. Part of the key findings presented the challenges encountered by domestic workers which gave a broader insight into the challenges experienced by female domestic workers. The factors predisposing females into the domestic work in Ibadan city, Oyo state Nigeria was also discussed in the study which explained the diverse narratives that led females into the domestic work sector. Nevertheless, the findings from the study also established the experiences of female domestic workers on sexual assault and harassment perpetuated by male employers, lastly on the experiences, the accomplishments and achievements of female live-in employees was achieved. In as much as there are several challenges, exploitation and maltreatment in the domestic sector, findings from the study noted that there are also notable achievements by female live-in employees.

Another finding that was revealed in this study proves that female live-in employees applied indigenous coping strategies into their daily lives. It was revealed that female live-in employees were fully aware about indigenous coping strategies. The study discovered that the indigenous coping strategies were intertwined with Euro-centric/ colonial strategies in the study. However, from the investigation and findings, it was revealed that the indigenous coping strategies was more adopted over the Euro-centric strategies in the study. Therefore, the insights on the coping strategies was achieved from a decolonial lens signifying the adoption of indigenous knowledge systems from a cultural context as a survival tool. To delve more into the indigenous coping strategies, female live-in employees explained how and when the coping strategies are employed into their daily lives. The study revealed that most of the female live-in employees in the study adopted indigenous coping strategies in the time of stress or when challenged with the rigorous chores of domestic work. It was adopted as a means of survival in the domestic sector.

The study also revealed the approaches to foster the adaptation of indigenous coping strategies. However, the indigenous methods of coping is fast eroding due to the emergence of globalization. This study brought to the fore, the indigenous coping strategies into the study and ensured that

these knowledge systems are passed across to other female live-in employees through social gathering which enabled other female live-in employees to learn about indigenous coping strategies for survival.

#### **6.4 CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP**

By exploring the perspectives of female live-in domestic workers on coping strategies from a decolonial perspective, this study contributes to the body of scholarship on domestic work by utilizing research from the selected sites of study (Ibadan, Oyo state Nigeria). While the study explored the perspectives and various aspects of coping strategies used by female domestic workers, it also provided knowledge about the live-in experiences of female domestic workers. Furthermore, the study examined the method of employment which defined the relationships between live-in domestic workers and their employers. Based on the findings of the study, indigenous knowledge played a significant role in the lives of female live-in domestic workers' as they were able to incorporate indigenous knowledge into their daily household chores.

This study also provides insight to the understanding of the challenges associated with domestic chores. The study also reveals the intersectionality of class as it relates to the domineering power of employers, their prestige, and the subordination of women who work as live-in domestic workers. The interplay between the aspects of coping strategies enhanced the study's discourse. Identifying issues affecting female domestic workers and their livelihood, this study contributes to the understanding of gender and social environment of women who work as live-in employees in places such as Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study contributes to academic scholarship exploring the challenges female live-in domestic workers and highlights their resiliency in the face of this exploitation. It also brings to the fore the multiple dynamics and innovative ways they navigate this challenging work environment. Additionally, this study fills a gap in the literature regarding the perspectives of Nigerian female domestic workers from a decolonial perspective.

#### **6.5 FINAL REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study showed that there were several challenges associated with female domestic workers who domicile as live-in employees in different households. The coping strategies served as power negotiation tools within the home terrain. The shift in the normative ideas on the Eurocentric coping strategy brought to the fore the decolonial perspective on coping strategy which is grounded on cultural norms and indigenous practices. Amidst these ideas female domestic workers recruited

for the study were of African descent who had an in-depth understanding of African indigenous knowledge (from their cultural content) which was applied as coping strategies in the study. These strategies often empower live-in employees to balance and negotiate their daily challenges. The findings of this study demonstrate the validity of decolonial reflections; interestingly, understanding the aspects of indigenous knowledge enabled female live-in employees to incorporate indigenous knowledge into coping strategies for their daily lives.

Moreover, this study argues that the recruitment of female live-in domestic workers is complex due to the diversity of recruitment methods. However, most of the female domestic workers in this study were recruited through agencies. Recruiting agencies of live-in employees are responsible for finding aspiring females seeking employment as domestic workers. It enhanced the placement of female domestic workers as live-in employees in different homes within the city of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. These agencies for the recruitment of female live-in domestic workers operate within normative structures. However, as part of theorizing a broader understanding, this study argues that these practices might serve as a trafficking organization that commodifies and subject women into human trafficking. Future research may benefit from an understanding of the recruitment agencies of female domestic workers dynamics and processes. Nevertheless, it was also noted that some domestic workers are also recruited by direct contractual agreement and suggestions from friends and other family members.

It is interesting to note that this research opened novel discussions about how female domestic workers cope as live-in employees from a decolonial perspective. In this study, indigenous knowledge is explored from a decolonial perspective of coping strategies adopted by live-in female domestic workers.

Future research might contribute significantly to empirical knowledge by exploring the following areas in depth:

- Exploring the narratives from employers of domestic workers on the coping strategies practiced by live-in employees.
- An exploration of the relationship's dynamics between domestic workers, employers and other family members.
- A critical assessment of how sexual pleasures are used to maintain domestic worker employment.

- An investigation of wage and compensation packages for live-in domestic workers.

Based on the above, this study explored the perspectives of female domestic workers on coping strategies as live-in employees towards decolonial reflections. In addition, the study investigated indigenous practices as coping mechanisms amongst live-in domestic workers as this became compelling during fieldwork. Throughout the fieldwork, participants expressed concerns about the remuneration and the challenges associated with working as a female live-in domestic worker. There is also a need to examine the employers of domestic workers by investigating if there are potential harms to employers when domestic workers adopt various coping strategies.

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**APPENDICES I: ETHICAL CLEARANCE**



28 January 2022

Oluwapelumi Temitope Adegbenjo (218086415)  
School Of Social Sciences  
Howard College

Dear OT Adegbenjo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003736/2021

Project title: An explanatory case study of Nigerian female domestic workers perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees: Towards Decolonial reflections.

Degree: PhD

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 13 December 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 28 January 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

**All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.**

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

#### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: [hssrec@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hssrec@ukzn.ac.za) Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## Appendix II: CONSENT FORM

### Participant Consent Document



Dear Participant,

My name is **Oluwapelumi Temitope Adegbenjo (218086415)**. I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus. The title of my research is: “**An explanatory case study of African Nigerian female domestic workers perspectives on coping strategies as live in employees: Towards Decolonial reflections.**”

The aim of the study is to probe live in female domestic workers in Ibadan Oyo state Nigeria about their African indigenous coping strategies. I am interested in interviewing you to share your experiences and coping strategies on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- Information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about (60-90 minutes).
- You have a right to agree or not agree to recording. You will not be penalized for not agreeing to recording.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.

- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban. Email: [REDACTED] m

Cell: + [REDACTED]

My supervisor is Dr. MC Kgari-Masondo who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email [Kgarimasondo@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Kgarimasondo@ukzn.ac.za) P h o n e number: [REDACTED]

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za), Phone number +27312603587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Yours truly

[REDACTED]

Mr Oluwapelumi Temitope Adegbenjo

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## **DECLARATION**

I.....  
..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project entitled: “An explanatory case study of Nigerian female domestic workers perspectives on coping strategies as live in employees: Towards Decolonial reflections”.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate. I hereby agree to participate. I accept the interview to be recorded Yes or No (circle the appropriate answer).

Yours truly

Name of Participant.....

Signature of the Participant: .....

Date.....

### **APPENDIX III: RESEARCH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

#### **Demographics**

**Age:**

**Marital status:**

**Ethnic group:**

**Education:**

#### **Section A: Icebreaking questions:**

1. Where do you work? How long have you been working?
2. What are your daily tasks as a domestic worker?
3. What do you do during your spare time (hobbies)?
4. Do you have children if (YES) how many? What is their sex? How old? If no children, why (Only if the participant is willing to respond).
5. What sex is your employer (Male/Female or Both)?

#### **Section B: General Research questions:**

6. What can you say about being a domestic worker and living with your employer?
7. What has been your experience as a live-in domestic worker?
8. Can you explain in detail your daily task from morning till late at night?
9. What will be done to you by the employers if these tasks are not carried out?
10. Do you have spare time to relax after work apart from relaxing at night?
11. Do you work when you are sick? If Yes, how do you manage work and take care of yourself?
12. What has been your experience with your employers (Male/ Female)?
13. Do you directly or indirectly experience any form of abuse in any way: sexual, physical and emotion abuse by your employer? If yes, what happened, can you share? Also, if yes, how have you been coping?
14. Did you speak about it to anyone if Yes what was the outcome?
15. Based on your experience/observation/hearsays, what has been happening to other domestic workers?
16. What do you understand by indigenous coping strategy?
17. What indigenous coping strategies do you use when you are faced with challenges with your employers' homes?

18. When and how do you apply these strategies?
19. Do these strategies favour you in your employers' homes? How?
20. What has been observed happening to employers as domestic workers are applying these strategies?
21. What has been experienced by domestic workers when applying these coping strategies?

Section C: Concluding research questions:

22. Overall, as a domestic worker, what is your final message about the use of indigenous knowledge as a coping strategy?
23. How do you feel about sharing your experience as a live-in domestic worker?
24. What should be the role of women in the society in ending the abuse of females in employer's homes?
25. What has been the role of the government in limiting the abuse of domestic workers?

Once again, thank you for participating in this study. Your opinion is valuable. As promised in the consent form you signed, your identity will be kept confidential – and all information you provided will be used for the purpose of fulfilling research requirement for my degree.

### Appendix III: Language Edit

Tobi Joseph  
[REDACTED]  
Essenwood, Berea  
Durban  
South Africa 4001  
[REDACTED]

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This is to confirm that I have undertaken language editing of a thesis by Oluwapelumi, Temitope Adegbenjo, entitled An explanatory case study of Nigerian female domestic workers perspectives on coping strategies as live-in employees: towards decolonial reflections.

[REDACTED]

31<sup>st</sup> July 2023

## Appendix IV: Turnitin Report

