



Unravelling the dynamics of power in the employer-domestic worker relations in contemporary South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal: Praxis-oriented research

By

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PREFACE

The study described in this thesis was carried out in the Discipline of Social Work in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban in South Africa. The study described in this thesis is original work done and reported by the author.

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. This thesis contains no material previously published or submitted for publication by another person except where due reference has been made.

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, domestic work continues to serve as a significant source of employment for many Black African women, both in rural and urban settings. Through a critical, praxis-oriented and reflective method of inquiry, this study examined contemporary power dynamics and multifaceted interactions between female domestic workers (DWs) and domestic work employers (DWEs) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Grounded in post-structural feminism and other emancipatory theoretical frameworks, the study examined how various structures of oppression and privilege intersect in the domestic worker-employer relationships.

To qualitatively uncover strategies of power and privilege and explore their deconstruction in the domestic worker-employer relationship, the study employed a critical research paradigm with participative narrative inquiry coupled with a praxis-oriented design. The study utilised a non-probability sampling method, selecting a total of 38 adult participants. Among these, 26 participants were Black African female DWs, while the remaining 12 were female employers of domestic workers, equally representing Black African, Indian, and White racial groups (each category comprising four participants). Data collection was carried out through a series of in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring privacy, and maintaining confidentiality of the information shared.

The collected data was analysed using NVivo analysis software, with further examination carried out through a combination of critical discourse and thematic analysis to uncover deeper insights. The findings unveiled intricate patterns of power relations including surveillance, narratives of power and powerlessness, agency and acts of resistance, gendered performative acts and mutual dependency between domestic workers and employers. Through exploring the definitions of self-worth and self-determination among these groups, the study contributed to a deeper understanding of the socio-political implications of domestic work and offered insights into the potential for praxis-oriented research to challenge and deconstruct prevailing power structures in the employer-domestic worker relationship.

This study highlights the urgent need to challenge and disrupt the entrenched systems of neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy that underpin the structural roots of gendered racism in domestic work. Ultimately and at its core, this study aimed to humanise domestic work, redefine its societal value, and inspire critical reflection and action to address the deeply entrenched inequalities within this labour sector. Recommendations include the promotion of collective action, raising critical consciousness that could inform policies and practices towards more equitable and respectful employment conditions, and promoting educational initiatives aimed at dismantling the intersecting oppressions that perpetuate inequality in the domestic work sector.

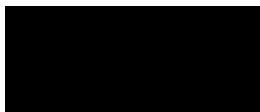
Keywords: Domestic Work, Employers, Power Dynamics, Employer-Domestic Worker Relations, Praxis, South Africa

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I **Thobeka Ntini** declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
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Date: 18 November 2024

SUPERVISOR DECLARATION

I, Prof. Vishanthie Sewpaul, hereby confirm that I have read the contents of this thesis and approve its submission.

Signature:



Date: 18 November 2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this passion work to the women in my family lineage, especially those who have been and continue to be domestic workers. To my late grandmother *Lilian Dadazi Ntini* (RIP, 2006), my mother *Priscilla Zandile Ziningi Ntini* (RIP, 2002), and my aunt *Etheldretta Ntombifuthi Ntini*, who raised me after their passing, she continues to be a domestic worker. To every domestic worker around the world, especially the participants in this study — your tireless and emotional labour keeps families functional and intact. Your work not only makes other people’s work possible but also holds together the very fabric of our societies in this unforgiving and lethal capitalist world.

#DomesticWorkIsWork

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Family and my forefathers, **oLungwase, Phenduka, Gcagcamane** nalapha ko**Mgudlwa, oMadiba**, nalapha engihlonipha khona ko**Zenda, oMakununika**, thank you all for everything. To especially my sister, udade, umafungwashe ka baba, **Sthabile**, you have not only attentively listened to me but engaged me even when you did not fully understand the journey to this PhD, and for that, I am deeply grateful. Your constant validation and the way you made me feel unstoppable after every call mean the world to me.

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Dear me, I am excited and proud for who I am becoming. As Snoop Dogg says:

I wanna thank me for believing in me,

I wanna thank me for doing all this hard work,

I wanna thank me for never quitting,

I wanna thank me for always being a giver and tryna give more than I receive,

I wanna thank me for tryna do more right than wrong,

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| C189 | ILO Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189) of 2011 |
| CDA | Critical Discourse Analysis |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| DA | Discourse Analysis |
| DHET | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| DWE/s | Domestic work employer/s |
| DW/s | Domestic worker/s |
| FGD/s | Focus group discussion/s |
| HIV/AIDS | Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| IASSW | International Association of Schools of Social Work |
| ICLS | International Conference of Labour Statisticians |
| IFSW | International Federation of Social Workers |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| ILMS | International Labour Migration Statistics (database) |
| ILOSTAT | ILO data portal on labour statistics |
| LRA | South Africa's Labour Relations Act of 1993 |
| OHSA | Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993 |
| PNI | Participative Narrative Inquiry |
| PSF | Post-structural feminism |
| SA | South Africa |
| SADSAWU | South African Domestic Services and Allied Workers Union |
| SDG/s | Sustainable Development Goal/s |
| STI/s | Sexually transmitted disease/s |
| StatsSA | Statistics South Africa |
| TA | Thematic Analysis |
| UIF | Unemployment Insurance Fund |
| UN | United Nations |
| WIEGO | Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| PREFACE | i |
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| PLAGIARISM DECLARATION | iv |
| SUPERVISOR DECLARATION | v |
| DEDICATION | vi |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | vii |
| ABBREVIATIONS | ix |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | x |
| LIST OF TABLES | xv |
| Chapter One: Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Background | 1 |
| 1.2 Rationale | 3 |
| 1.3 Problem Statement | 4 |
| 1.4 Significance of the study..... | 5 |
| 1.4.1 Research..... | 5 |
| 1.4.2 Policy | 6 |
| 1.4.3 Practice..... | 6 |
| 1.4.4 Assumptions of the study | 7 |
| 1.5 Location of the study | 7 |
| 1.5.1 EThekwini Municipality | 7 |
| 1.5.2 UMhlatuze Municipality | 9 |
| 1.6 Research Aim..... | 11 |
| 1.7 Research Objectives..... | 11 |
| 1.8 Research Questions..... | 11 |
| 1.9 Theoretical framework: Post-structural Feminism | 12 |
| 1.9.1 Performativity | 14 |
| 1.9.2 Subversion of norms and resistance..... | 15 |
| 1.9.3 Critique of identity politics and intersectionality..... | 16 |
| 1.9.4 Language, discourse and power | 16 |
| 1.9.5 Performativity of Sexuality..... | 17 |
| 1.9.6 Domestic worker-employer power dynamics: Foucauldian, Freirean and Gramscian Perspectives | 18 |
| 1.10 Definition of terms | 26 |
| 1.11 Structure of the thesis..... | 28 |
| 1.12 Summary | 28 |
| Chapter Two: Global, Regional, and National Overview of Domestic Work | 30 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 30 |
| 2.2 Global overview of domestic work: Migration, statistical estimates, and trends | 30 |
| 2.2.1 <i>Northern America and the Middle East</i> | 33 |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| 2.2.2 | <i>Asia and the Pacific</i> | 34 |
| 2.2.3 | <i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i> | 35 |
| 2.3 | Regional overview of domestic work: statistics and trends..... | 36 |
| 2.4 | South African overview of domestic work: A journey from apartheid to democracy | 39 |
| 2.5 | Summary | 42 |
| Chapter Three: Power, Intersectional Influences, Resilience, and Agency in Domestic Worker-Employer Relations | | 43 |
| 3.1 | Introduction..... | 43 |
| 3.2 | Domestic work, oppression and privilege..... | 43 |
| 3.3 | Domestic work as a feminised labour market..... | 49 |
| 3.4 | Intersections of race and class in domestic work..... | 55 |
| 3.5 | Abuse and violence in domestic work | 63 |
| 3.6 | The intersection: Domestic Workers and Employers | 67 |
| 3.6.1 | <i>The home as a workplace: Part of the family rhetoric</i> | 70 |
| 3.7 | Self-determination, identity, and resilience among DWs | 74 |
| 3.8 | Summary | 79 |
| Chapter Four: Research Methodology | | 80 |
| 4.1 | Introduction..... | 80 |
| 4.2 | Research Paradigm: Critical | 80 |
| 4.3 | Research Approach: Qualitative | 82 |
| 4.4 | Research Design: Participative Narrative Inquiry | 83 |
| 4.5 | Sampling | 86 |
| 4.5.1 | Sampling and Recruitment Strategies..... | 86 |
| 4.5.2 | Population | 89 |
| 4.5.3 | Sample Size..... | 92 |
| 4.6 | Data Collection Methods and Instruments..... | 93 |
| 4.6.1 | Individual in-depth interviews | 93 |
| 4.6.2 | Focus Group Discussions..... | 98 |
| 4.7 | Data Processing and Analysis..... | 99 |
| 4.7.1 | Critical Discourse Analysis..... | 100 |
| 4.8 | Ethical Considerations | 108 |
| 4.8.1 | Permission..... | 108 |
| 4.8.2 | Informed consent | 109 |
| 4.8.3 | Autonomy, privacy and confidentiality | 110 |
| 4.8.4 | Anonymity | 110 |
| 4.8.5 | Doing no harm | 110 |
| 4.8.6 | Knowledge dissemination..... | 111 |
| 4.8.7 | Reciprocity for participants..... | 111 |
| 4.8.8 | Researcher positionality..... | 112 |
| 4.8.9 | Data storage and management | 115 |
| 4.8.10 | Trustworthiness | 116 |

| | | |
|---|--|------------|
| 4.9 | Methodological Limitations..... | 118 |
| 4.9.1 | Short duration of the study..... | 118 |
| 4.9.2 | Power imbalances in the researcher-participant relationship..... | 118 |
| 4.9.3 | Limited generalisability | 118 |
| 4.10 | Summary | 119 |
| Chapter Five: Analysis and Interpretation of Participants' Demographic Data | | 120 |
| 5.1 | Introduction..... | 120 |
| 5.2 | Participants' Demographics: Domestic Workers and Employers..... | 120 |
| 5.2.1 | Age..... | 120 |
| 5.2.2 | Race..... | 121 |
| 5.2.3 | Gender..... | 121 |
| 5.2.4 | Education | 122 |
| 5.2.5 | Marital Status | 124 |
| 5.2.6 | Knowledge of Minimum Wage and Perceived Fair Compensation | 125 |
| 5.2.7 | Wage Earnings Among Domestic Workers..... | 127 |
| 5.2.8 | Household Structures and Roles | 130 |
| 5.2.9 | Experience and Commuting Challenges..... | 130 |
| 5.2.10 | Lack of Formal Protections and Union Membership..... | 132 |
| 5.3 | Summary | 132 |
| Chapter Six: Power, Helplessness, and Resistance in Domestic Work..... | | 133 |
| 6.1 | Introduction..... | 133 |
| 6.2 | Coding Process and Themes' Outline..... | 133 |
| 6.3 | Presentation of Findings and Discussion | 136 |
| 6.4 | Constructions of Domestic Work..... | 137 |
| 6.4.1 | Domestic work as an economic necessity with limited choices | 137 |
| 6.4.2 | Domestic work as incurring an inferior status and exploitation | 140 |
| 6.4.3 | Domestic work as love and duty: Emotional bonds and attachment | 142 |
| 6.4.4 | Domestic workers as worthy and autonomous | 147 |
| 6.5 | Narratives of Helplessness..... | 149 |
| 6.6 | Narratives of Power | 152 |
| 6.6.1 | Mutual Dependency | 152 |
| 6.6.2 | Legitimate Assertions of Power..... | 155 |
| 6.6.3 | Illegitimate Assertions of Power..... | 157 |
| 6.7 | Resistance, Retaliation, and Agency..... | 162 |
| 6.7.1 | Asserting Boundaries and Authority..... | 163 |
| 6.7.2 | Retaliation Against Perceived Injustices and Confrontation | 165 |
| 6.7.3 | Subtle and Overt Resistance | 169 |
| | Summary..... | 175 |
| 6.8 | Summary | 175 |
| Chapter Seven: Race, Class, Gender, Social Position and Praxis in Domestic Work... | | 176 |
| 7.1 | Introduction..... | 176 |

| | | |
|---|--|------------|
| 7.2 | Coding Process and Themes' Outline..... | 176 |
| 7.3 | Race, Class, Gender and Social Position: Beyond the triple jeopardy | 179 |
| 7.3.1 | The Intersection of Race, Class, Gender and Social Positioning in Domestic Work | 179 |
| 7.3.2 | The Gendered Expectations of Care | 183 |
| 7.3.3 | The Gendered Perception of Threat: Woman-to-Woman..... | 186 |
| 7.4 | Praxis-Oriented Research: Shifts in Entrenched Norms and Discourses in Domestic Work | 189 |
| 7.4.1 | Possibilities and Constraints for Transformative Shifts among Employers | 189 |
| 7.4.2 | Possibilities and Constraints for Transformative Shifts among Domestic Workers | 193 |
| 7.5 | Summary | 196 |
| Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations | | 197 |
| 8.1 | Introduction..... | 197 |
| 8.2 | Conclusions..... | 199 |
| 8.2.1 | Conclusions related to objective A | 199 |
| 8.2.2 | Conclusions related to objective B | 200 |
| 8.2.3 | Conclusions related to objective C | 201 |
| 8.2.4 | Conclusions related to objective D | 202 |
| 8.2.5 | Conclusions related to objective E..... | 203 |
| 8.3 | Conclusions' relevance to the social work discipline | 204 |
| 8.4 | Recommendations..... | 206 |
| 8.4.1 | Recommendations for challenging the dominant discourse on power imbalances between DWs and DWEs..... | 206 |
| 8.4.2 | Recommendations for social work practice and scholarship..... | 208 |
| 8.4.3 | Recommendations for stakeholders, policymakers and broader community .. | 208 |
| 8.4.4 | Recommendations linked to theoretical framework | 209 |
| 8.4.5 | Recommendations for future research | 210 |
| 8.5 | Final Reflection..... | 213 |
| Reference List..... | | 214 |
| Appendices..... | | 265 |
| 10.1 | Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Domestic Works (English) | 265 |
| 10.2 | Appendix 2: Interview Guide for DWs (IsiZulu)..... | 270 |
| 10.3 | Appendix 3: Interview Guide for DWEs (English)..... | 276 |
| 10.4 | Appendix 4: Interview Guide for DWEs (IsiZulu) | 281 |
| 10.5 | Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion Guide for DWs (English) | 286 |
| 10.6 | Appendix 6: Focus Group Discussion Guide for DWs (IsiZulu)..... | 290 |
| 10.7 | Appendix 7: Information sheet and consent form for Interviews with DWs (English)..... | 294 |
| 10.8 | Appendix 8: Information sheet and consent form for Interviews with DWs (IsiZulu) | 297 |
| 10.9 | Appendix 9: Information sheet and consent form for Interviews with DWEs (English)..... | 301 |

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 10.10 | Appendix 10: Information sheet and consent form for Interviews with DWEs (IsiZulu) | 305 |
| 10.11 | Appendix 11: Information sheet and consent form for Focus Group Discussions with DWs (English) | 309 |
| 10.12 | Appendix 12: Information sheet and consent form for Focus Group Discussions with DWs (IsiZulu)..... | 313 |
| 10.13 | Appendix 13: Ethical Clearance..... | 318 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Structure of the thesis | 28 |
| Table 2: Inclusion Criteria | 90 |
| Table 3: Sample Size | 92 |

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

Globally, domestic work is one of the oldest occupations that is considered informal and vulnerable. It is linked to the global history of slavery, colonialism, and other forms of servitude (Mantouvalou, 2006; Neunsinger, 2015; Theodoropoulou, 2020). As Wa Sekake (2022) reflects, settler-colonial, racist, patriarchal, and capitalist power relations stripped communities of their critical imagination, rendering them citadels of banality and routine. In South Africa, this legacy is deeply embedded, where domestic work remains shaped by the systematic dehumanisation and economic exploitation of Black African labour, perpetuating a wage system likened to the reproduction of slave-labour, as Wa Sekake (2022, p. 20) notes, “the gap between the value of labour power and the actual wage of black workers” continues to sustain capitalist accumulation through dispossession.

In its contemporary manifestations, domestic work is a worldwide practice that reinforces social hierarchies shaped by intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, migration status, indigeneity, caste, and nationality (May, 2015). The meaning of the term domestic work may vary considerably depending on the geographic and cultural context, which may differ from one country to another and within countries. Some countries use terms such as household worker or private home worker in recognition that the activity domestic workers (DWs) perform is a job (ILO, 2018). On the contrary, in some contexts old fashioned terms such as maid or domestic servant are used, which suggest a type of submission on the part of the worker, while terms such as household helper or household aide diminish the importance of domestic work and devalues the occupation.

Statistical reports suggest that there are more than 76 million DWs in the world, and that one in 25 female workers globally is a DW (ILO, 2018, 2021). Within the African region, South Africa has the highest employment rate of DWs that near one million with only four per cent of this total being male (Statistics South Africa, 2021). The historical exploitative and discriminatory social order, that persists to date, has contributed to domestic labour being one of the largest sources of paid employment for Black African women in SA (Cock, 1980b; Gaitskell et al., 1983; Grant, 1997; International Labour Organisation, 2013).

Marais and Van Wyk (2015a) assert that domestic work is a “highly feminized sector” (p. 65). It is a possible answer as to why much research in domestic work has concentrated on

gender, race, and class as main markers of DWs' experiences in the South African context. Some of these classical studies were conducted during the apartheid era, for example, Cock (1980) and Gaitskell et al. (1983). Opponents to concentrating on the sum of classism, sexism, and racism, which has been labelled as the "triple oppression" (Gaitskell et al., 1983, p. 2) criticise this ideology as "...too simplistic to capture the complexities of multiple systems of oppression and inequalities because it suggests that relations between vectors of oppression are additive" (Hassim cited in Maqubela, 2016, p. 1). It is, therefore, necessary to analyse the complex interaction among the manifold structures of oppression and privilege that overlap in the relationship between DWs and their domestic work employers (DWEs).

In South Africa, domestic work is profoundly embedded with significant social meanings. Moreover, the institution of domestic work appears to possess a distinctive quality that preserves and reflects aspects of the apartheid moral order, extending beyond its current practical realities. Du Plessis (2011) unfolds the institution of domestic work and avows that it violates personhood and perpetuates existential and economic inequalities even in post-apartheid SA. The positionality of DWs is usually denoted as "...a condition of subjugation and immobility" (Cock, 1980b, p. 7), more often than not, in "...simplistic binary notions of power as suggesting 'the powerful' and 'the powerless', and seldom as "concurrent and relational" (May, 2015, p. 4). This raises the question of whether we should treat DWs as passive victims in need of merely rights-based protection or as persons with agency and as active agents of change.

The home, within which domestic workers work and function, provides for a space of complex and nuanced dynamics of power, which are not unidirectional; they are bi and multi-directional. Since DWEs are typically from a privileged part of society and afford the services of those from relatively marginalised positions, should we assume DWs' immunity in the power struggle? These are important questions that have been explored in this research study.

In her study conducted during the apartheid era, Cock (1980) described DWs in SA as "... 'trapped' within a tightly woven structure of constraints" (p.7). In democratic SA, more than 40 years after Cock's study, it continues to be the typical analysis of the "power trip" of DWEs, and it undeniably bears reality as "...the space domestic workers occupy is still largely marginal in post-apartheid South Africa" (Mahali, 2016, p. 4). While literature and

mass media often discuss power as one-directional, it is much more complex and tangled. Without denying that domestic work is profoundly exploitative compared with other comparable occupations (Collins, 2002, 2022), this study strove to challenge dominant narratives within the institution of domestic work by interrogating multiple and contradictory truths that led to a more nuanced analysis of power as reflected in the findings and discussion of this study.

Hardy and Clegg (1999) suggest that in a working relationship, employees can acquire and wield power that has not necessarily been granted to them. For example, Myrtle Witbooi, a former South African DW, who rose against the odds and advocated for DWs' rights, at the time of this study, was playing an essential role in influencing the International Labour Organisation's DWs Convention 189. Myrtle's story exemplifies, as suggested by Weber (1978), that people have creativity, discretion and the agency to use one's power although in varying degrees. While we need to acknowledge the struggles of DWs, we should be careful not to refute their agency and ability to convey some level of power and influence in their own lives and the households that they work in.

The complexity presented by the unequal relationship between DWs and their DWEs warranted a study that went beyond understanding the structural configurations that contribute to maintaining domestic work as a space of the reproduction of inequalities and oppression, but that unravelled the nuances of power that underpins the relations between DWs and their DWEs. Importantly, praxis-oriented research opened a space for reflexive dialogue among participants. As the researcher I engaged participants and challenged their taken-for-granted assumptions of power, oppression, and privilege within the institution of domestic work. Given my subject location, having occupied the position of a DW, this was no easy process. Indeed, a study that is a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning, for not only the participants, but for me too as I discuss in the methodology chapter.

1.2 Rationale

Experiences of Race, Class, Gender, and Power Dynamics within Paid Domestic Work: A Personal Reflexive Motivation for the Study

Literature on domestic work encourages more studies on the relationships between the DWs and DWEs as the nature of the domestic service sector is concealed by its private nature

(Bosch & McLeod, 2015). In this study, I was motivated by the use post-structural feminism and praxis within the social work discipline as binoculars to unravel the power dynamics in contemporary South African domestic work. The study was largely prompted by my personal experience as a Black African female, a former DW and being a close witness to the plight of DWs through the eyes of my family lineage. My first work experience was attained from 13 years of age through working in people's homes. While children my age enjoyed their play times during weekends and school holidays, mine were reserved for doing domestic chores, both paid and unpaid, caring for children, and running errands for my bosses, among other tasks in my employers' homes. For seven years, I worked as a part-time "child" DW for a few White families in an urban area in the South Coast of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I emphasise "child" because I was recognised as a child in South African law but not at my workplaces.

I represent the majority of South Africans that "have been touched by the institution of paid domestic work: either because of the *presence* of an often motherly carer and cleaner, or by the *absence* of a mother who does paid housework for others" (Jansen, 2019, p. 2). I come from a family where the expressions of "igeli"¹ or "Eve"² have described my female family members across three generations. At the time of this study, my aunt was still working as a domestic worker and experienced several injustices in her workplace. While her personal experiences are unique, they resonate with broader patterns of precarity, exploitation, and inequality documented in South African domestic work scholarship (for instance, Donald & Mahlatji, 2006; Flood et al., 1997; Maboyana & Sekaja, 2015; Preston-Whyte, 1982; Seepamore, 2018; Tolla, 2013). Rather than assuming a direct correlation, her experiences serve as a point of entry into understanding the systemic challenges faced by many Black African female DWs in South Africa. This broader reality, supported by existing literature, informed the decision to focus on Black African female domestic workers in this study.

1.3 Problem Statement

The intricacy of the institution of domestic work in the South African context makes the problem of this study twofold. First, it is the presence of binary notions of power within the institution of domestic work. On the one hand, the dominant narrative encapsulates DWs in a

¹ It is an IsiZulu term that directly translates to "girly" that is of a derogatory characteristic of or appropriate to a girl or young woman.

² Eve is the "maid" or DW character of a popular South African satirical comic strip *Madam & Eve* created by Stephen Francis and Rico Schacherl.

character with a total loss of power, invisible and forever vulnerable to exploitation (Barrett, 1985; Cock, 1980b; Lawson, 1985). However, the risk of maintaining the DW trope, that confines their character to powerlessness and invisibility, is that it can sustain DWs' subjugation and immobility to such a degree it becomes normalised and internalised as inevitable to DWs themselves and to the wider society (Collins, 2002). On the other hand, DWEs are often painted as almost unsusceptible to the power dynamics in relation with their employees, yet power is more nuanced and complex, beyond its straightforward definition as "the ability to get others do what you want them to, if necessary, against their will" (Weber, 1978, p. 6). This study sought to explore the potential influence of praxis-oriented research on DWs' and DWEs' self-conceptualisations of power and its manifestations, and to challenge the binary construction of power in their relationships.

The second fold of the problem emerges from a trail of studies within the South African context that have primarily focused on the Black African-White racial dynamic within the institution of domestic work. While recent studies, for example, Mahali (2016); Marais & Van Wyk, (2015a, 2015b) and Seepamore, (2018), focus on Black African women performing domestic work for White families, which might be reflective of a dominant pattern of domestic labour, it does overlook that domestic work service is no longer an exclusive domain for White people in contemporary SA (Maqubela, 2016; Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2010; Tolla, 2013). Despite the changing racial and class composition of domestic employment relationships, there remains a significant gap in scholarly research exploring power dynamics beyond the Black African-White binary. This dearth of research limits an understanding of how race, class, gender, and social position intersect in these evolving relationships. By addressing this gap, this study makes an original contribution to the field, providing insights into emerging patterns of power relations and embedded tensions between DWs and DWEs.

1.4 Significance of the study

1.4.1 Research

This study addressed a significant gap in South African social work scholarship by critically examining power dynamics and oppression within labour relations, particularly in domestic work. Historically, social work literature has had minimal engagement with labour issues. For instance, Scanlon (1999) found only 23 citations under the subject entry "labour union" between 1977 and 1997, with only 11 appearing in social work journals. While some

discussions linking social work and labour exist in the northern hemisphere (Miranda et al., 2018; Straussner & Phillips, 1988), they remain largely absent in the South African context. This study contributed to filling this void by examining intersectional inequalities, power relations, and exploitation in domestic work—issues that are integral to social justice and human rights, as expressed in the international definition of social work (International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW)/ International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014).

Furthermore, this study aligns with critical social work perspectives, which interrogate how dominant social work discourses have historically supported hegemonic state ideologies and social control functions, thereby neglecting structural transformation (Harms Smith, 2013). Focusing on the realities of domestic workers and their employers, this study contributed to reorienting social work scholarship towards labour justice as a fundamental social work concern.

1.4.2 Policy

This study had implications for labour and social policy, particularly in relation to worker protections, fair wages, and employment conditions within the domestic work sector. By engaging with SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, the study highlighted the urgent need for policies that ensured dignified employment conditions for domestic workers. It highlighted the importance of integrating social work advocacy into policy discussions concerning domestic labour, which remained a precarious form of employment.

Additionally, the study contributed to policy dialogues related to SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities by examining how race, gender, and class inequalities were embedded in domestic work structures. It provided evidence-based insights to inform policies aimed at addressing these disparities and ensuring greater protections for marginalised workers.

1.4.3 Practice

Social work, as a profession committed to human rights, advocacy, self-determination, empowerment, and social justice (IASSW, 2018), needed to critically engage with labour relations and the lived realities of DWs. This study challenged the profession to reflect on its ideological positioning and its historical complicity in maintaining oppressive structures rather than actively advocating for transformation.

By engaging with SDG 5: Gender Equality, the study advanced social work's role in addressing the gendered dimensions of domestic work, where women—particularly Black African women—were disproportionately affected by exploitative conditions. The findings encouraged social work practitioners to integrate a labour rights perspective into practice, recognising the intersection of social justice with economic and employment rights.

Finally, the study aimed to provoke discussions within the South African social work profession about its role in labour justice, challenging it to take a more active stance in advocating for the rights of domestic workers. In doing so, it provided a foundation for integrating labour issues into social work education, practice, and policy engagement.

1.4.4 Assumptions of the study

At the inception of the study, I made the following assumptions:

- a) Despite the overwhelmingly negative constructions of domestic work and the manifold human rights abuses those domestic workers experience in their workspaces, domestic workers have power and agency.
- b) Domestic workers have internalised dominant narratives of helplessness, powerlessness and victimhood, and thus do not recognise their power.
- c) While domestic work employers have more authority and control in the employment relationship, the manifestations of power in the working relationship are nuanced and complex.
- d) Domestic work employers have internalised privilege or domination and do not recognise their external sources of privilege and power.

1.5 Location of the study

The study was conducted in both Durban (eThekweni Municipality) and Empangeni (uMhlathuze Municipality) for practical reasons related to sampling convenience discussed in the methodology section (Chapter four). The decision to include both municipalities, eThekweni and uMhlathuze, was driven by my relocation from Durban to Empangeni during the data collection phase.

1.5.1 EThekweni Municipality

EThekweni is a metropolitan municipality created in the 2000s, which includes the city of Durban and surrounding towns. EThekweni is one of the 11 districts of the KwaZulu-Natal

(KZN) province, and it spans an area of approximately 2 297km². It is residence to approximately 3, 2 million people, making it the most populous district in KZN (World Population Review, 2023).

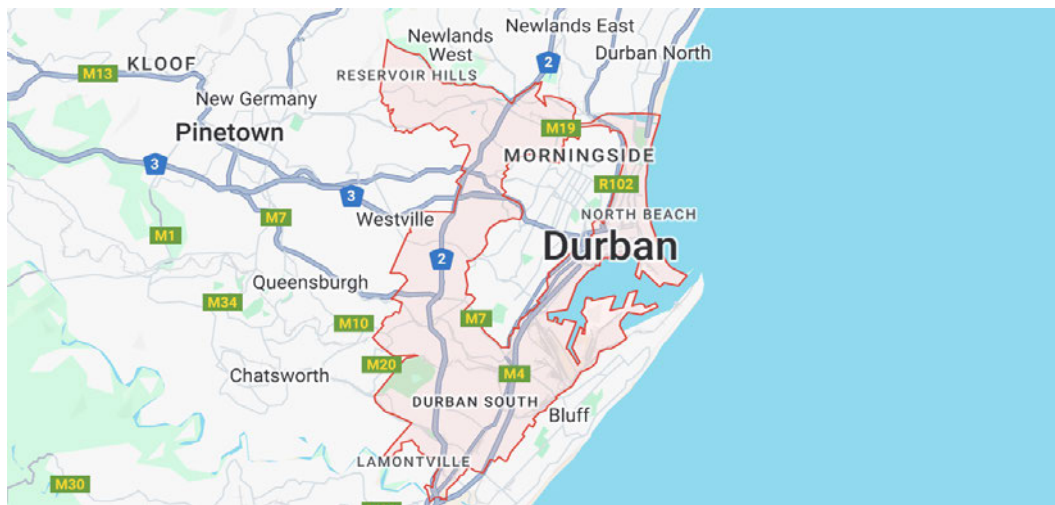


Figure 1: Map of Durban, eThekweni Municipality (Google Maps, 2023a)

The Durban population statistics indicate a diverse demographic composition, with the largest group being Black Africans at 2,741,335 (74% of the population), followed by Indians/Asians at 653,819 (18%), Whites at 229,559 and Coloured individuals at 77,518 (both around 2.1%) (StatSA, 2015). These figures illustrate a significant racial and ethnic diversity within the province. However, these demographics are not necessarily reflective of the national distribution in SA. According to Statista (2022), of the SA's population approximated at 60.6 million, Indians/Asians form the smallest population group, counting about 1.56 million people overall.

EThekweni Municipality consists of a diverse society, which faces various social, economic, environmental, and governance challenges (Sihlei & Ngcoya, 2016). Though it has a comparatively stable political, administrative, and financial status, it faces a high unemployment rate (Sihlei & Ngcoya, 2016; StatSA, 2015). Since this area is metropolitan, it attracts both formal and informal employment, including domestic work (Horwood et al., 2019). Statistical reports on domestic work specifically in eThekweni are sparse. This tellingly illustrates the oblivious or taken-for-granted institution of domestic work, but it is also reflective of some level of desensitisation in South African literature.

1.5.2 UMhlatuze Municipality

The city of uMhlatuze under the King Cetshwayo District is in northern KwaZulu-Natal, approximately 170 kilometres northeast of Durban. It covers an area of 123,359 hectares, including Empangeni and other neighbouring towns and rural areas under traditional councils (City of uMhlatuze, 2022a). The population was estimated at 412,075 according to the Census conducted in 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2024). UMhlatuze Municipality is characterised by natural features like wetlands and lakes, and railway lines primarily serve commercial and industrial purposes. The Richards Bay deep-water port has historically influenced spatial development. Additionally, there is one airport and several airstrips in the municipal area.

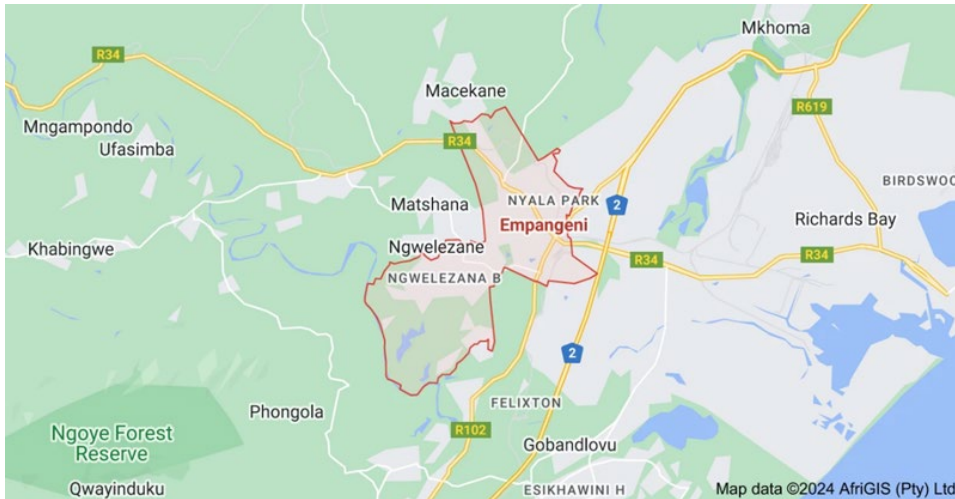


Figure 2: Map of Empangeni, uMhlathuze Municipality (*Google Maps, 2024*)

The Municipality reflects national and provincial demographic trends, with a higher female (187 287) population than males (177 177), though specific wards show higher male populations, possibly due to single males working in the municipal area while their families reside elsewhere (City of uMhlathuze, 2021). Most of the population resides in tribal areas, followed by urban areas and a small percentage in farmlands. Female-headed households have increased, due to factors like divorce, increasing female independence, children born out of wedlock and absent fathers. Child and adolescent headed households represent about five percent (City of uMhlathuze, 2022b). Despite a slight increase in primary enrolment levels, about 10% of school-age children are not attending school (City of uMhlathuze, 2022a), likely due to accessibility, affordability, and poverty-related issues like HIV/AIDS. IsiZulu is the predominant language in the municipality, followed by English and Afrikaans. Employment rates vary across wards, with higher employment in developed urban areas and higher unemployment in developing areas.

The uMhlathuze Municipality faces a myriad of challenges as Mhlongo and Rautenbach (2023) highlight: “low rates of economic growth, high unemployment rates, low levels of industry sustainability, low levels of skill development and literacy, high rates of poverty, restricted access to essential social and household services, high rates of crime, and deteriorating infrastructure” (p. 136). Additionally, the municipality grapples with increased HIV/AIDS prevalence, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic with its associated social and economic effects, further straining healthcare services and poverty alleviation programmes.

Domestic work is attractive in uMhlatuze due to several factors outlined in this brief background. The municipality faces challenges such as low economic growth, high unemployment rates, and high levels of poverty. These factors contribute to individuals, particularly women who head households or are part of households with limited income, to seek employment opportunities in domestic work. Additionally, the presence of a higher female population in the municipality, along with an increase in female-headed households, might contribute to the demand for DWs within the community.

1.6 Research Aim

The aim of the study was to unravel the dynamics of power in the employer-domestic worker relations in contemporary SA in Kwa-Zulu Natal province using praxis-oriented research.

1.7 Research Objectives

- a) To examine the complex interaction between the manifold structures of oppression and privilege that overlap in the relationship between female DWs and DWEs.
- b) To identify patterns of power relations and embedded tensions between DWs and DWEs in contemporary SA.
- c) To describe sources of resistance and retaliation from the DWs and DWEs when the relation is threatened.
- d) To explore the definitions and relations of self-worth and self-determination among DWs and DWEs.
- e) To explore the potential influence of praxis-oriented research on domestic workers' and domestic work employers' self-conceptualisation and their deconstruction of power in the domestic worker-employer relationship.

1.8 Research Questions

- a) What are the structures of oppression and privilege that overlap in the relationship between DWs and DWEs?
- b) What are the power dynamics between DWs and DWEs in contemporary SA?
- c) What are the sources of resistance and retaliation from the DWs and DWEs when the relationship is threatened?
- d) What are the narratives of self-worth and self-determination among DWs and DWEs?

e) What is the potential influence of praxis-oriented research on domestic workers' and domestic work employers' self-conceptualisation and on the deconstruction of power in the relationship?

1.9 Theoretical framework: Post-structural Feminism

There are several theoretical frameworks that offer valuable insights into the complexities of domestic work and the power dynamics between DWs and their employers. Researchers and scholars have used (a) feminist theories, which have been extensively applied to examine how gender roles and power dynamics influence the division of domestic labour and the treatment of DWs within the household; (b) Marxist theories have focused on the commodification of domestic labour and the unequal power relations between DWEs and DWs; (c) intersectionality which examines how multiple social categories interact to shape the experiences of DWs; (d) postcolonial theories have been employed to explore how colonial histories and racial hierarchies influence domestic work arrangements; (e) critical race theory which has been applied to study the role of racism in shaping power relations within domestic work contexts; (f) social reproduction theory which has been applied to interrogate how domestic work sustains and reproduces existing social structures and power relations. The study has drawn from post-structuralist theories which examine the construction of social identities and the discourses that shape the perceptions of domestic work and DWs, thereby challenging essentialist notions, and exploring how power operates through language and social norms.

Post-structural feminism guided this study because it aligned with the critical, emancipatory, and structural focus in social work practice where this study was positioned. Post-structural feminism is a theoretical framework within feminist thought that emerged in the late 20th century, drawing on postmodern and post-structuralist philosophy to deconstruct and challenge traditional notions of gender, identity and power (Davies & Gannon, 2005). It rejects the idea of fixed universal categories and seeks to understand how language, discourse and power relations shape and construct our understanding of gender (Maclaran & Stevens, 2019).

From a practical standpoint, emancipatory social work focuses on raising awareness of external forces of oppression and privilege, aiming to enhance individual's self-esteem,

courage, and determination. This empowerment enables individuals to actively challenge the structural causes of poverty, inequality, marginalisation, oppression, and exclusion (Sewpaul, 2013; Sewpaul & Larsen, 2014). The motivation for the selection of this theory was to move away from the pathological individual focus to a more critical stance that situates the structural causes of DWs' challenges, and to interrogate the relationship between the personal and the political. This motivation was also linked with Giroux's (2006) critical ideology that values collectivism to "...address material inequities involving resources, accessibility, and power in... the broader global society while viewing the struggle for power as generative and crucial to any viable notion of individual and social agency" (p. 66). That is because the exercise of power in private households is a focal point for the global DW rights movement.

Post-structuralist feminism also acknowledges oppressive structures as being reproduced in people's daily lives, thus, urging for recognition of the complex web of power relations in which social workers and the people they work with are embedded (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006). Given the "concealing function of common sense" (Sewpaul, 2013, p. 112) as educators, researchers, and practitioners, we are both shaped by and contributors to our socio-political and cultural environments. The Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (IASSW, 2018), applicable across teaching, research, and practice contexts, includes principles 4.7 and 4.8, which emphasise the importance of developing awareness of how dominant socio-political and cultural discourses can entrap one's thinking and potentially result in human rights violations. These principles further urge social workers to cultivate a heightened consciousness within themselves and among the individuals they engage with.

Post-structuralist feminism addresses "...the question of how social power is exercised and how social relations of... [oppressive institutions] might be transformed" (Weedon, 1996, p. 20). Post-structuralist feminism served as an effective theoretical approach to deconstruct the cultural processes responsible for instituting structures of oppression, thereby providing "a way of understanding the world through a rich plurality of voices and perspectives, which may lead to a greater recognition and connection among people who hold competing viewpoints, and ultimately may prompt social and educational transformation" (Baxter, 2002, p. 5). Post-structuralist feminism inherently seeks to disrupt social silences, creating space to dismantle dominant discourses and ideologies that sustain power inequalities (Fardon & Schoeman, 2010; Hollingsworth & Cody, 1995). The theory also situates gender at the centre of this enquiry, where there are serious concerns with gender inequality and a subsequent aim

to emancipatory reform (Francis, 2001; Lather, 1991, 2001). The theory was also useful for dissecting gender dynamics that not only affect the positionality of female DWs in SA, but their relations and power dynamics with their employers.

There are many writers and theorists who have contributed vastly to the movements of post-structuralism, these include Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze and Jean Baudrillard among others (Harrison, 2006). Over time, post-structuralist's works have had an impact on multiple humanities fields, including philosophy, art, literature, narratology, linguistics, and critical social work.

For this study, I chose to draw from Judith Butler who is a prominent philosopher that has significantly influenced contemporary gender studies and feminist theory. Her insights promote transformative change by challenging essentialist notions of gender with the hopes to foster more equitable, inclusive, and empowering environments for the oppressed, usually women. To reimagine domestic work employment beyond traditional gendered paradigms, Judith Butler's post-structural feminist concepts provide a rich framework to understand and critically analyse the dynamics of power in the DWE-DW relations. Butler's concepts emphasise the notions of (a) performativity, (b) subversion of norms, (c) critique of identity politics, (d) language and discourse, and (e) the performativity of sexuality which are discussed below in relation to domestic work.

1.9.1 Performativity

Butler's concept of performativity emphasises how gender roles are not inherent but rather constructed through repeated actions (Butler, 1988). Traditionally, domestic work has been deeply entrenched within gendered expectations and societal norms. Butler's concept of gender performativity challenges the notion of fixed gender identities, highlighting how individuals enact gender through repeated acts and performances (McKinlay, 2010). In the context of domestic work employment, these performances manifest in prescribed roles and behaviours associated with femininity and masculinity. The performance of tasks such as caregiving, cooking, and cleaning becomes imbued with gendered meanings, reinforcing traditional stereotypes and power dynamics within the household. DWEs often perpetuate traditional gender norms that assign specific roles to DWs based on societal expectations. This can be seen in the African context, where women are assigned to domestic roles in the

household. This performative aspect of gender roles maintains power hierarchies and differences.

In a study that explored gender performativity of domestic workers in SA by Smith (2020), DWs reported conforming to performative gender expectations imposed by DWEs whereby women employed in the roles of domestic work conform to certain gender roles thus reinforcing power imbalances. Furthermore, it also examined the ways in which DWs perform gender in their daily work. The study found that DWs were often expected to perform gender in specific ways such as being nurturing and caring while also being subservient to their DWEs. The author then argues that these expectations are rooted in the history of domestic work in SA which has largely been shaped by colonialism and apartheid.

1.9.2 Subversion of norms and resistance

Butler's framework offers avenues for subverting normative gender roles within domestic work employment. Butler argues that subverting norms can be a form of resistance (Butler, 1990). DWs, despite being positioned as subordinate, engage in subtle acts of resistance that challenge prescribed roles. By recognising the constructed nature of gender and the potential for disruption in performances, individuals engaged in domestic work can challenge conventional expectations. This may involve renegotiating responsibilities, advocating for equitable distribution of household tasks, or rejecting gendered assumptions about competence and suitability for specific roles. Such subversion can contribute to the destabilisation of rigid gender binaries and pave the way for more inclusive and egalitarian domestic arrangements.

In a study by Johnson (2020), it was observed that there were instances where DWs subtly subverted normative expectations, such as renegotiating their work hours which indicate resistance to traditional power structures. The research study investigated how DWs in SA resisted the norms and expectations imposed by their DWEs. It explored how these workers resisted the gendered and racialised expectations they faced. The study revealed that DWs employed various forms of resistance, including subverting the norms of their work, establishing alternative spaces, and forming solidarity networks with fellow DWs. These forms of resistance are important for challenging the oppressive structures of domestic work

in SA. This elucidates that DWs have agency and that they can challenge the status quo of power within the relationship of DWE and DM.

1.9.3 Critique of identity politics and intersectionality

Butler's critique of identity politics challenges fixed categorisations, emphasising the fluidity of identity. Intersectionality further complicates power dynamics by considering multiple intersecting identities (Schippers, 2014). Butler's critique of identity politics sheds light on the complexities of domestic work employment beyond simplistic categorisations based on gender, race, or class. Conventional narratives often essentialise DWs within fixed identity categories, overlooking the diversity of their experiences and perspectives. By questioning the stability of identity categories and highlighting their potential for exclusion, Butler prompts us to critically examine the intersecting dynamics of power and privilege within domestic work employment. This critique underscores the importance of recognising and addressing the intersecting forms of oppression that shape the lives of DWs.

Mkhize (2019) highlights how an intersectional approach reveals the compounding effects of race, gender and class in shaping the power relations between DWEs and DWs in SA. The study put forward that the triple oppression of African women as Black Africans, women and workers were particularly evident in the domestic service sector, highlighting the way in which race, class and gender have all shaped the character of domestic service in SA. Aspects such as race, class and gender are important to explore in a study such as this as they also have elements of power whereby a certain group is considered to have more power than another according to race, class and gender. The power play that is at work in such aspects and beyond could also be present in the relationship between the DWE and DW.

1.9.4 Language, discourse and power

Central to Butler's framework is the understanding of language and discourse as powerful agents in shaping social reality. In the context of domestic work employment, language constructs narratives around care work and domesticity that influence perceptions and expectations. The language used in DWE-DW relations contributes to power dynamics. Discourse shapes perceptions, reinforcing or challenging existing power structures (George, 2013). A study conducted by Jones and Brown (2021a) that analysed DWE discourse revealed subtle linguistic cues that maintain hierarchical power relations which demonstrate

the influence of language in perpetuating inequalities. Language is a powerful tool that can influence the way people perceive themselves as well as others (Ngcobo, 2019a). Feminist post-structuralists contend that it is not expression but rather who owns the rights to express and whose expressions can become applied (Butler, 1990) cited in Ngcobo, (2019). This depicts how power can be used to influence language and discourse thus setting the stage of how those that are deemed powerful use language and discourse to their advantage to maintain the hierarchy. Additionally, it also provides insight on how those that are deemed powerless could ascribe and act according to the words or names given to them. By interrogating the language used to describe domestic work and challenging dominant discourses, we can unravel the underlying power dynamics and hierarchies inherent in the field.

1.9.5 Performativity of Sexuality

Butler's exploration of the performativity of sexuality offers insights into the intersections between sexual identity and domestic work employment. Just as gender performances shape the division of labour within households, sexual identities also influence dynamics of power and intimacy. Butler's exploration of the performativity of sexuality adds another layer to the analysis as it considers how sexuality is constructed and enacted within the DWE-DW dynamic. Butler (1990) asserts that individuals perform their gender identity and sexual orientation through actions, language and gestures which shape these identities in a societal context. Gomez (2017) investigated instances where DWEs imposed sexualised expectations on DWs illustrating how sexuality becomes performative within the power dynamic. As with performativity in DWE-DW interactions, performativity of sexuality speaks to the way gender roles are sexualised. When we recognise the constructed nature of sexual identities, we can challenge assumptions about the sexualities of DWs and create more inclusive spaces within the domestic sphere. Although I unpacked the relevance and applicability of post-structuralist feminism to the study, it was also helpful to explore other notions of power that were important for the critical analysis of the findings. Below follows a discussion of Foucauldian, Freirean and Gramscian perspectives relevant to the dynamics of power in the DWE-DW relations.

1.9.6 Domestic worker-employer power dynamics: Foucauldian, Freirean and Gramscian Perspectives

What power is or why it operates in ways it does is hard to agree on (Tew, 2006). In agreement, Solomon (1987) asserts that the meaning of power depends on whether it is viewed from economic, psychological, political, sociological, or philosophical viewpoints. In fact, the lack of clarity around power, has led to a contradictory usage of the term ‘empowerment’ in social work and social welfare (Pease cited in Tew, 2006). For Tew (2006) power is a social relation between people at various scales, opening up or closing opportunities for resource access, participation and developing personal identities. If we define power according to Tew, are DWEs in contemporary SA in a position to block resources, access, and the development of the personal identities of DWs? If DWEs can do so, what structures allow for these? Can we typically box DWEs as ‘evil’ and the DWs as ‘angelic’? I think not. However, I do think that by critically examining the DWE-employee dynamics through a post-structural feminist lens, we can challenge essentialist assumptions, deconstruct power dynamics, and promote a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in DWE-DW relationships. In this way many of us could consider multiple perspectives, recognise agency and resistance, and uncover the ways power operates within and beyond monetary exchange.

1.9.6.1 Gramscian and Hallian Perspectives

Antonio Gramsci’s ideas on challenging taken-for-granted presumptions and questioning dominant discourses (Gramsci, 2020; Sewpaul, 2013), are highly relevant when examining the DW-DWE relationship and the power dynamics that underlie it. Gramsci’s concept of recognising invisible power structures involves unveiling the implicit mechanisms that sustain societal hierarchies (Monasta, 2003). In the context of domestic work, hidden power dynamics perpetuate disparities. Within the scope of this study, I have confronted the unseen influence that DWs wield within their workplaces. The dominant narrative suggests that DWs are devoid of power, lacking agency and autonomy. However, DWs can assert their influence within the workplace, thus challenging the established power dynamics. Gramsci proposed that prevailing discourses often obscure underlying power structures, presenting them as natural and beyond scrutiny (Hall et al., 2013). In the dynamic between DWs and DWEs, there often exists an imperceptible power dynamic wherein DWEs maintain authority

stemming from societal, economic, and cultural factors. Gramsci's perspective urges us to uncover these concealed power dynamics and interrogate their origins.

Gramsci's framework emphasises the concept of hegemony, wherein dominant social groups secure compliance from the less dominant groups (Bakalov, 2024). His concept of hegemony revolves around the idea that the ruling class maintains control, not just through direct coercion but through the creation of cultural and ideological consensus. This consensus is embedded in what he calls common sense, which is the uncritical and largely unconscious acceptance of the dominant values, beliefs, and practices of society as natural and unchangeable (Gramsci, 1971). People internalise these hegemonic values and practices, which then shape their perception of reality. This internalisation leads to consent, where the subordinate classes accept their position within the social hierarchy as legitimate and natural, often without questioning it (Gramsci, 1971). In the context of domestic work, the idea that DWs are subordinate, and their work is less valuable becomes part of the common sense. This perception is reinforced by media representations, cultural narratives, and legal frameworks that marginalise domestic work. DWEs and society at large accept this hierarchy as natural, which maintains the status quo and the power dynamics between DWs and DWEs.

Gramsci's framework of questioning assumed roles extends to the entrenched dynamics of the DW-DWE relationship, where traditional expectations assign subservient roles to DWs and authority to DWEs. His concept of the "war of position" emphasises the need for a gradual, persistent challenge to the cultural and ideological structures that uphold these roles, rather than direct confrontation (Gramsci, 1971). By urging us to interrogate the unquestioned acceptance of these roles and contemplate their potential restructuring for greater equity, Gramsci emphasises disrupting established power relations within this context. In domestic work, predefined roles frequently reinforce power imbalances. Furthermore, Gramsci's advocacy for amplifying subaltern voices highlights the importance of providing marginalised groups (Gramsci, 1971, 1985), such as DWs, with platforms to express their experiences and perspectives. This approach challenges dominant discourses and illuminates the realities of their lived experiences, countering the prevalent silencing of their voices within the broader discourse.

Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist, expanded on Gramsci's ideas emphasising the dynamic and contested nature of ideological hegemony. Hall highlighted that hegemony is not static but is constantly being negotiated and challenged (Hall, 1985). Subordinate groups can challenge

dominant ideologies through counter-hegemonic practices. Hall (1980; 1985) argues that ideological struggle involves redefining and recontextualising terms that carry negative connotations to transform their meanings. For example, the term “Black African” has been contested and redefined to carry positive ideological value, yet for a long time, it was term that was connoted as “the most despised, the dispossessed, unenlightened, uncivilized, the uncultured, the scheming, the incompetent...” (Hall, 1985, p. 112). Similarly, the perception of domestic work needs to be contested and disarticulated from its current negative connotations. To address internalised oppression and privilege, there is a need for a dual approach that involves reframing perceptions of domestic work and actively address privilege of those that employ DWs. Such approach would be necessary in achieving emancipatory praxis and social change.

If we question these narratives and challenge the idea that DWs are subordinate, individuals can begin to break down the hegemonic control that perpetuates unequal power dynamics. Gramsci contends that challenging ideological hegemony is essential for social transformation (Daldal, 2014; Gramsci, 2020). In the context of domestic work, this could involve fostering a narrative that recognises the value and dignity of domestic work. This means shifting the discourse to emphasise the crucial role DWs play in households and society; we can challenge the perception that their work is menial. Gramsci’s idea of building counter narratives involves constructing alternative stories that challenge dominant discourses (Donoghue, 2018). In DWE-DW relations, counter narratives can disrupt prevailing power structures. One way of countering narratives is to educate. Gramsci believed in the power of education to empower individuals to critically engage with the world around them (Giroux, 1999; Mayo, 2015). For DWs, education can be a tool to question their subordinate position, understand their rights, and develop strategies to challenge exploitative dynamics. Similarly, DWEs can also benefit from education that challenges their biases and assumptions, helping them understand the importance of fair treatment and respect for DWs.

Gramsci’s overarching goal is the transformation of power relations (Daldal, 2014). Education becomes a tool for DWs to challenge and reshape power dynamics. Applying this to the DW-DWE relationship, it is possible to envision a shift in power dynamics where both parties engage in more equal and respectful interactions. This involves rejecting the notion of permanent hierarchy and embracing the potential for change. By challenging assumptions,

questioning dominant discourses, and empowering the subaltern, Gramsci's ideas offer a pathway for reshaping power dynamics in DWE-DW relations.

1.9.6.2 Foucauldian Perspective

In a world where it is a norm to regard power as a straightforward coercion, where someone is forced to do what they would otherwise not have done, Michel Foucault dispelled that notion with persuasive arguments. He advocated the idea that "power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere", it is embodied in discourse, knowledge, and "regimes of truth", which has had a significant influence on how people understand power (Foucault, 1998, p. 63). He did this by moving away from the analysis of people who use power as a tool of coercion and from the discrete structures in which those people operate (Foucault, 1991). For Gaventa (2003), Foucault's work departs from "previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them" (p. 1). What this means is that power is complicated and has a subjective meaning. Power comes just as much from those who win and from those who lose, so it is not as those who lose are forced to remain losers, it is because they have internalised the structure of power into their own subjectivity. In fact, according to Foucault (1991) power can be sometimes necessary and useful in society, he asserts that:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (p. 194).

The above statement highlights power as somewhat necessary and useful in society rather than merely something that oppresses people and forces them into doing things against their will. By producing reality, Foucault's stance is that power can reveal certain conceptual structures that are historically determined and socially constructed, which allows for further interrogation of concepts that presents a pathway to the process of deconstruction and reconstruction. It is an opportunity to unlearn and relearn, the act of questioning the categories that we use to construct our construction of what is normal.

For Foucault (1991), freedom is a refusal to accept any of the readymade coercive mechanisms and characteristics of the cultural traditions into which one is born into. Poststructuralism is a philosophy of resistance based upon the idea of undermining the structures in society to interrogate and delegitimise prevailing grand narratives (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2017). In the case of this study, it was to call into question and interrogate the grand narrative of powerlessness that has categorised DWs and domestic work in literature and society for decades. Foucault's philosophy declares war on the self-imposed limitations, he extends the whole domain of human freedom, and the way to do that is to remove and delegitimise any discourse which claims to situate itself as nature.

Foucault is well known for his analysis of power concerning homosexuality, mental illness, and imprisonment (Bevir, 1999; Gutting, 2005). He believes that madness as a social construct, imposes a certain element of the will of power of a certain element of society on another element of society, with an invention of a bogus discourse – a discourse of madness which legitimises putting people in madhouses (Howell, 2016). We have artificially and socially constructed this idea of madness, and we use it to coerce certain kinds of people for certain sorts of reason. When examining domestic work, we can see how Foucault's concept applies. Historically, gender roles and expectations have been constructed by those in power to maintain a division between private and public spheres. Domestic work, primarily performed by women, has been framed as a natural extension of women's roles as caregivers and homemakers. This framing has been perpetuated by cultural narratives, media representations, and social norms that portray women's primary responsibilities as being confined to the household.

Ideological constructs do not exist as theoretical abstractions, they affect the material conditions of people and impact the self-conceptualisation of people in profound ways (Sewpaul, 2013, 2020). The legacy of apartheid has perpetuated a hierarchical power dynamic in DWE-DW relations. The negative framing of domestic work has been internalised by DWEs, DWs and society, shaping perceptions and reinforcing existing inequalities. During apartheid, domestic work was racialised with predominantly Black African women serving White households. This historical context has left a lasting impact on power dynamics where remnants of racial hierarchies persist (Ngubane, 2015). The devaluation of domestic work, stemming from these historical inequalities continues to

influence how it is perceived today. DWs still bear the inequalities of past injustices as they are subject to unfair labour practices. However, DWs also do have agency and can exert their power that offsets the dominant discourse that DWs are ‘powerless’.

DWEs often view domestic work through a lens of subservience maintaining a power dynamic that echoes historical imbalances (van der Westhuizen, 2020). This negative framing is internalised by DWs which contributes to repetitive cycles of disempowerment. The consequences of these power dynamics are tangible; they affect the well-being, rights and dignity of DWs. Smith (2018) posits that societal attitudes contribute to exploitative working conditions, low wages and inadequate recognition of their contributions. The negative framing of domestic work impedes efforts to address these issues, thus creating a barrier to meaningful social change. Society at large, influenced by historical prejudices, further perpetuates stereotypes that marginalise DWs.

Foucault’s concept of the panopticon outlined in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, illustrates a system of surveillance in which power is exerted through visibility, causing individuals to internalise a sense of discipline as if they are under constant observation (Foucault, 1995). This model serves as an ideal mechanism for control, where people self-regulate with minimal need for direct intervention. In the context of domestic work, the panoptic model can help explain how DWEs exert control over DWs, not necessarily through direct supervision but by creating an environment where workers feel perpetually watched. This can lead to self-disciplining behaviours, as DWs may anticipate scrutiny in their tasks and interactions within the household. However, as Caluya (2010) suggests, the panoptic model may fall short in addressing the complexities of contemporary forms of surveillance, particularly within intimate spaces like the home, where relationships are marked by both proximity and power imbalances. Thus, while Foucault’s panopticon remains a critical lens for understanding how power operates through observation, expanding this view can provide deeper insights into the nuanced and often implicit forms of control that shape the everyday experiences of DWs.

Foucault has not gone uncriticised, some of the criticisms were pointed towards the aspect of relativism in his theory, and that it leaves it vulnerable to charges of incoherence as his thoughts are seen to shift and change throughout his works over the length of his career. He has also been criticised for his overuse of the term ‘power’ and the anonymity he gives it,

making it common and pointless (Tavita, 2021). The attraction to Foucault's work is that it provides the necessary relationship between criticism and theory; criticisms can be used as a tool to sharpen and develop a theory. Although there is no direct methodology for social work in his works, Foucault's thoughts have made it possible to engage with power dynamics between DW-DWE relations more than a mere reflection of social and historical power relations that mould the development of a culture, but rather as part of the general process of cultural reproduction (Hotek, 2011; Law, 2001).

1.9.6.3 Freirean Perspective

Paulo Freire is another renowned critical theorist who has contributed significantly to understanding social constructs and power dynamics within society. His ideas provide a lens through which to view domestic work as a site of both oppression and potential empowerment. Applying his insights to the concept of domestic work offers a profound re-examination of power dynamics and reveals how it is a social construct with historical roots and a dominant negative framing that impacts DWEs, employees, and society. DWEs often see DWs as mere 'help' or a disposable resource, rather than recognising their agency and dignity (Blackett, 2011). This parallels the banking model described by Freire. In this analogy (Freire, 2018b), DWs can be likened to passive learners, while DWEs assume the role of authoritative teachers.

Like how knowledge is treated as a commodity to be deposited into the minds of passive learners, DWs are often expected to perform tasks without question or input, mirroring a one-way transmission of instructions and expectations. These dynamic fosters a power imbalance where DWEs hold all the authority and control, while DWs are relegated to passive recipients of commands. Just as the banking model perpetuates oppressive power dynamics in education, this approach in domestic work reinforces existing social hierarchies and inequalities. Thus, DWs themselves may internalise this framing, leading to self-oppression and a lack of recognition of their own rights and worth.

Freire also introduced the concept of critical pedagogy, emphasising the importance of dialogue, reflection, and praxis in challenging oppressive systems (Freire, 1970;1973; Govender, 2020; Sewpaul, 2013). Central to his framework is the notion of conscientisation, whereby individuals become aware of the social, political, and economic forces that shape

their lives. This awareness is essential for promoting agency and transformative action. In domestic work, power manifests not only through explicit coercion but also through subtle forms of control embedded within social structures and cultural norms. Freire would argue that DWs, often marginalised and disempowered, must undergo a process of conscientisation to recognise and challenge the power dynamics that constrain their agency.

Foucault's assertion that power is diffuse and omnipresent resonates with Freire's perspective, as both scholars emphasise the pervasiveness of power within social relations. However, Freire diverges from Foucault by foregrounding the role of education in emancipatory struggle. For Freire, education is a tool for liberation, enabling individuals to critically analyse their reality and work towards social transformation (Freire, 2018a; 1973; 2021). Within the context of domestic work, Freire's approach shows us the importance of education and collective action in challenging the status quo. Through promoting critical consciousness among DWs and DWEs, they can both be empowered to advocate for their rights, resist exploitation, and to transform oppressive structures.

Moreover, Freire's emphasis on praxis highlights the need for concrete action in addressing power imbalances (Lian Flem et al., 2023; Sewpaul, 2006). In the realm of domestic work, this may involve organising unions, advocating for labour rights, and challenging discriminatory practices. Through collective struggle, DWs can exert their agency and demand recognition as equal participants in society. Freire's framework also offers insights into the intersectional nature of power dynamics within domestic work. By recognising the ways in which race, class, gender, and other social categories intersect to shape individuals' experiences, educators can adopt a more holistic approach to empowerment (Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2019).

Given my earlier positioning as a DW, my susceptibility to dominant discourses, and that, as social workers, we are products, and producers of our socio-political and cultural worlds (Sewpaul, 2013), I had to adopt a constant critically reflexive stance, that post-structuralist feminism calls for, in executing the research (see Chapters five and six). The use of this theory allowed engagement with the complexities of domination and power within the institution of domestic work, and the possible need for paradigm shifts in the conceptualisation of DWs and DWEs, and the ways in which intervention is planned and implemented. It was useful in framing how not only gender or race, but how dominant

ideologies and taken-for granted assumptions about power are instrumental in the relationship between DWs and DWEs.

1.10 Definition of terms

Class

Wright (2002) defines class as a person's position within a system of property relations, which determines their place in a structure of domination, control, and exploitation. Class is situational, shaping individuals' circumstances and opportunities, and significantly influencing the trajectory of their lives (Grusky, 2019).

Domestic work

The term is defined as all the work performed in households to provide services that are mainly consumed by the household members. Domestic work is performed in exchange for payment that is made to the employees of the household (Chen, 2011). It can further be defined as work that can be done without one receiving a salary or wages but providing care to the household and family members (Bonnet et al., 2019). This study focuses on paid domestic work.

Domestic worker

A domestic worker (DW) is an individual, male or female, who performs domestic work or duties for remuneration in households that include cleaning, cooking, and caring for children, the elderly the sick and disabled in their households, and they may reside at the DWE's household or commute regularly (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2011, 2018). Although there are varying terms (see Chapter two) that define DWs, in this research study, the ILO definition provided in this section was adopted throughout this dissertation.

Domestic work employer

Based on the ILO (2011, 2018) definition described above, we can define a domestic work employer (DWE) as an individual or a household that hires someone to perform various domestic tasks within their home for remuneration. In ideal circumstances and professionalised work, the employment relationship is a legal link between employers and

employees, but often, DWs are employed outside of legal parameters without formal working contracts.

Employer-domestic worker relations

Employer-domestic worker relations are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, class, gender, and social position, often reinforcing hierarchical power dynamics. These relationships are characterised by varying degrees of dependency, control, and resistance, reflecting broader socio-economic and historical inequalities.

Power

Power in employer-domestic worker relations is both structural and interpersonal, operating through economic control, surveillance, and social hierarchies. It is dynamic, manifesting not only in domination but also in acts of resistance, negotiation, and boundary-setting by both DWs and DWEs. Understanding power requires examining how privilege, oppression, and agency intersect in shaping labour dynamics.

Praxis-Oriented

A praxis-oriented approach integrates theory and action to challenge entrenched norms and power structures within domestic work. It emphasises critical reflection and transformative engagement, aiming to shift dominant discourses and labour practices towards equity and justice. This perspective aligns with emancipatory social work, advocating for change through knowledge production and activism.

Race

According to Sewpaul (2013) race is defined as a social, cultural, and political construct designed to maintain social hierarchies and power relations. While race lacks biological legitimacy, it remains a powerful ideological and ontological force that structures privilege and oppression.

1.11 Structure of the thesis

Table 1: Structure of the thesis

| Division | Description |
|----------------------|--|
| Chapter one | Introduction and theoretical framework of the study |
| Chapter two | Global, regional, and national overview of domestic work |
| Chapter three | Power, intersectional influences, resilience, and agency in domestic worker-employer relations |
| Chapter four | Research methodology |
| Chapter five | Presentation and discussion of findings: Part One |
| Chapter six | Presentation and discussion of findings: Part Two |
| Chapter seven | Summary, major conclusions and recommendations |

1.12 Summary

This chapter offers a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted issues surrounding domestic work, particularly in the South African context. It highlights the historical, social, and power dynamics at play within this occupation. The chapter highlights the intricate relationships between DWs and their DWEs, shedding light on hidden power dynamics, structural inequalities, and forms of resistance that are often overlooked. The chapter also outlines the post-structural feminist framework that is employed in the study, highlighting its purpose to deconstruct prevailing power structures and to understand how language, discourse, and social norms shape perceptions and interactions within domestic work. Arguments for recognising the need to move beyond simplistic binary notions of power, acknowledging the complexity of power relations and the potential agency of both DWs and DWEs are made in this introduction. In adopting a critical stance and a praxis-oriented research approach, the study aims to challenge traditional assumptions, empower marginalised individuals, and promote a more nuanced understanding of power dynamics and agency within the DWE-DW relationship. Moreover, in this chapter the significant

contribution to the discourse on domestic work, power dynamics, and social justice has been highlighted, underscoring the importance of acknowledging agency, resisting essentialist assumptions, and recognising the complex interplay of power, privilege, and oppression within the domestic work sector.

Chapter Two: Global, Regional, and National Overview of Domestic Work

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a global overview of domestic work. It reflects on significant trajectories in domestic work, drawing on statistical reports and migration flows in developed and developing regions in the world, including Europe, America, the Gulf countries and Africa. Although this study is not centred on migrant DWs, migration is tied to the character of domestic work, whether it is internal or external, it runs parallel and complements other intersectional lines that affect South African DWs in their local setting. In fact, research on local DWs has documented that taking a domestic job often requires the employee to live far away from their own family members (Chen, 2011; Seepamore, 2018). Subsequently, the chapter zooms into the South African history of domestic work offering comparative contexts between the tenure of apartheid and democracy. It partially draws on law and policy developments in the efforts to formalise domestic work in SA.

2.2 Global overview of domestic work: Migration, statistical estimates, and trends

Domestic employment is a global occurrence that is crucial to the functioning of the economy. Information on the number of DWs is inconsistent despite the sector's importance and level of influence. The high level of domestic work statistical informality and the grey area in which it takes place poses a challenge for gathering and comparing credible data (Heimeshoff & Schwenken, 2011). There are a few causes for this, one being the casual or informal nature of domestic work. Also, many DWEs do not officially declare when they employ DWs. Most DWEs do not legally disclose employing DWs to dodge red tape, including fiscal, citizenship and labour regulations. For example, a DWE, who underpays their DW who is an undocumented immigrant, is unlikely to report such information to any statistical agency or tax revenue service as it would raise many questions that the DWE would prefer not to answer. According to the ILO (2016), "official figures are widely seen as an underestimate in a region where many say that "almost everyone has a domestic worker" and "even domestic workers in urban areas have domestic workers" (np.). Nevertheless, there have been improvements over the years, and estimates that exist are likely more accurate, although it varies from region to region.

The domestic work sector has grown significantly from 1995 to 2010 – by almost 20 million – and in 2010 accounted for 1.7 per cent of global employment (ILO, 2013b). Presently, domestic work accounts for four per cent of women’s employment in the labour force worldwide while it is only one per cent of men (WIEGO, 2022), and across 176 countries in the world, eight per cent worked outside of their countries of origin (ILO, 2016b). For instance, South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific host the largest share of DWs with 24 per cent of the world’s migrant women DWs, followed by Europe, with over 22 per cent, and the Arab States with 19 per cent (ILO, 2016b). Collectively, the Arab States, North America and Europe, not including Nordic countries, account for more than 50 per cent of migrant DWs universally. This is hardly surprising considering that these are high-income regions, and are undergoing demographic changes such as migration, gendered labour patterns and family structures, as well as aging population, all which have strong implications for the demand for care.

Migration represents legacies of colonialism, imperialism and uneven development that have laid solid structures for issues of power and powerlessness, not only in the institution of domestic work but other political issues (Federici, 2020; Gutierrez-Rodriguez, 2014). Migration for domestic work is generally a female-driven phenomena, with the limitation of women’s employment opportunities playing a major role. Due to the ease with which migrants may enter domestic work and the gendered character of the occupation, domestic work is intimately associated with migration of women from rural to urban regions (Bonnet et al., 2022). One of the implications is the phenomenon of paid domestic work, which highlights, among other problems, the struggles faced by working women, many of whom leave their children and households to the care of other women. In many countries, this segment of the working population is primarily female immigrants from developing countries (Labadie-Jackson, 2008). Women employed as DWs are faced with the burden of leaving their children and families in the care of other women whom they must pay whilst they are employed to conduct domestic duties in foreign countries.

The order of domestic work expresses global inequalities, reflected in private households where migrant women from the global South are taking over the household work in the global North (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010). The South to North order of migration sustains the economic income trap that many developing countries are under, where the club of rich nations receive domestic services from poorer countries. However, Bertoli et al. (2013) argue

that poor people tend to migrate shorter distances or to places which are more like the sending region. This has been witnessed in SA with people from neighbouring countries, such as Zimbabwe, Eswatini, Lesotho and Mozambique emigrating to SA for employment. Similarly, Wouterse (2011) shows that intercontinental migration from Burkina Faso is most common among households owning the most land, whereas intra-African migration is less biased towards the rich. Other studies find that the very poor are not very likely to migrate at all, and conditional on migrating, poorer and less-skilled individuals moved to Spain, while wealthier and more skilled individuals moved to the United States (ILO, 2013a).

While the total of DWs across Europe is reported to be 2,5 million (WIEGO, 2022), it is a rare occurrence for Nordic private households to employ DWs. Data shows that DWs account for only 0.1 to 0.3 per cent of total employment in Nordic countries (ILO, 2013a). These low numbers of DWs highlight an interesting phenomenon that is rather contrasted with many parts of the world. This contrast raises questions about the relationship between the presence of DWs and the nature of a country's social welfare policies and overall societal equality. This is because Nordic countries are known for their comprehensive welfare systems that provide universal public services, generous social benefits, and a commitment to gender equality (Pedersen & Kuhnle, 2017). Nordic countries prioritise equal access to healthcare, education, and welfare services. They also offer substantial support to families, including parental leave for both mothers and fathers, and robust child support programmes (Teigen & Skjeie, 2017). The implication of this phenomenon is that the presence of domestic work can be linked to societal inequality. In regions with less robust welfare systems and fewer social supports, domestic work might be more prevalent due to economic disparities, limited access to public services, and unequal gender norms. This observation could be used to challenge neoliberal models that emphasise market-driven solutions over robust public services. It is thus, unsurprising, that Sewpaul (2024), writing in relation to the devastating consequences of COVID-19, calls on policy makers and politicians to “draw on the best of the Nordic welfare models for a post-pandemic world” (p. 70).

By 2010, there were 3.6 million migrant DWs reported to be living in the developed countries, and more than 70 per cent were female (ILO, 2013). These statistics are convincing that women are important components of international migration flows. Also, the highly skewed migration flow of women from developing countries to developed countries reflects severe inequalities in a capitalist world, that is, “...dependent on a new dynamic:

globalisation and migration” (Ozyegin et al., 2008, p. 195), with a dependence that emphasises a nationality divide, encapsulating the position of a DW as the “other”. Migrant workers are often left in a working rights grey zone to partial regulatory to complete deregulation and the social labour of these workers is also devalued because of its social predication as feminised and racialised (Gullikstad et al., 2016; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010).

Numerous migrant DWs lack formal employment arrangements, such as written contracts, labour protections, or social safeguards. Their working hours are often lengthy and unpredictable, wages are frequently below the legal minimum, and instances of physical or verbal abuse, as well as sexual exploitation, are well-documented (d’Souza, 2010; Deshingkar & Zeitlyn, 2015; Program, 2006; Rajan & Sukendran, 2020). There are several papers concerned with the impacts of migration for domestic work on families left behind and on the migrants themselves in managing reproductive and productive roles in split households (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Lam & Yeoh, 2018; Libanova, 2019; Seepamore, 2018; Thapa et al., 2019; Ukwatta, 2010). An ethnographic research study on Filipina DWs in Singapore shows the difficulties faced by DWs in balancing their roles as breadwinners in their source household and as confined DWs at destination (Arnado, 2010). Through employing strategies to maintain connections with their families and children, these women have successfully navigated long-distance mothering while managing their domestic responsibilities. This insight is drawn from in-depth interviews with Filipina domestic workers in Singapore, Asis et al. (2004) claim that migration has challenged the very notion of family life. It is argued that DWs encounter greater difficulties compared to other migrants, as they are separated from their families and integrated into another household, where they often perform tasks that their own children back home are missing out on. While their labour relieves female DWEs of household and childcare responsibilities, it creates significant challenges for their source families regarding roles and obligations.

2.2.1 Northern America and the Middle East

Northern America has almost three million DWs, with the United States of America (USA) accounting for 73 per cent and 27 per cent by Canada (Wolfe et al., 2020). This underscores substantial presence of DWs in Northern America. This phenomenon intersects intriguingly with the United States’ position as an ultra-liberal state characterised by a notable disparity in wealth distribution (Pabst, 2021). Among economically developed nations, the USA has

consistently reported one of the highest levels of inequality (Liao & De Maio, 2021; Natrass & Seekings, 2001; Nielsen & Andersen, 2021). This correlation between DW prevalence and economic inequality in the USA is not coincidental. The ultra-liberal economic model tends to prioritise market forces, which can result in diminished labour protections, suppressed wages, and the under-recognition of care work. Domestic work, predominantly occupied by women and often women of colour, becomes emblematic of this inequality, as it intersects with gender, race, and socio-economic hierarchies.

While the ultra-liberal economic framework can foster economic growth, it also exacerbates income and wealth inequality. Domestic work, encompassing various forms of caregiving and household responsibilities, occupies a crucial but undervalued niche within the labour market. This perpetuates a cycle of economic vulnerability and reinforces the inequality that defines the USA's socio-economic landscape (Nielsen & Andersen, 2021). In this context, the coexistence of a large DW population and the USA's high inequality levels shows the systemic relationship between the structure of economic policies and the uneven distribution of resources, opportunities, and societal recognition.

It is reported that 94.5 per cent of DWs are women in North America, with over 52 per cent being Black African, Hispanic, or Asian American/Pacific Islander women (ILO, 2013). In contrast to North America and Europe, more than a third of DWs in the Middle East are men, the single largest group of male DWs are those working in Saudi Arabia. They are commonly employed as gardeners or drivers (ILO, 2021). The Arab States host 51 per cent (1.5 million) of all male migrant DWs. Over one in ten male migrant workers in the Arab states is a DW (ILO, 2016b). The percentage of female DWs in Arab States is 32 per cent (ILO, 2021), however, this may not be the true reflection of practice because Arab States largely exclude DWs, who, in this region, are to very large extent women migrant workers from Asia and Africa (Fernandez & de Regt, 2014). Female DWs in the Gulf are one of the groups of workers with the least protection under national labour laws, earning less than half of normal salaries, working long and irregular hours (ILO, 2014).

2.2.2 Asia and the Pacific

According to ILO (2016b) there are more than 23 million DWs in Asia and the Pacific, and more than 80 per cent are women. Asia has the largest number of DWs with 3.34 million

being migrant DWs. In China alone, there are 13 million and most of them are internal migrants moving from rural to urban areas. Asia also has substantial migration within the region, women from Southeast Asian countries find employment in the care economy of richer Eastern and South-eastern countries. DWs migrate beyond their region's borders to the Middle East and to developed economies in Europe and North America (ILO, 2016b).

2.2.3 Latin America and the Caribbean

The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020) reported that there are 18 million people engaged in paid domestic work in Latin America and the Caribbean, of which 93 per cent are women (ILO, 2020). Domestic work accounts for 14 per cent and 10.5 per cent of women's employment in the region. In Latin America and the Caribbean, domestic work represents six per cent of the labour force (ILO, 2016a). Many people who work in domestic employment are Afro descendants who are overrepresented in domestic work, reaffirming the class and racist nature of work that is not properly regulated, controlled, or well paid (Zhongming et al., 2021). According to ILO (2013), Latin America and the Caribbean DWs generally migrate within the region, from poorer to more prosperous countries, as well as to the United States and to Europe. This phenomenon includes migration routes within the region's own countries (from rural areas/poorer areas to cities) or to other countries with higher income levels.

Brief global outline of legal protections for the domestic work sector

DWs remain one of the least protected groups of workers under national labour legislation. Because DWs are often seen as low-skilled and unskilled, their work is often considered informal and therefore not covered by labour laws (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020). While there are legal reforms aimed at protecting DWs, they continue to be largely excluded from the general labour legislation or are given less protection under laws governing domestic work than other workers. From a report on domestic work for the 99th Session of the International Labour Conference by ILO, there were several gaps identified which included the lack of coverage of DWs by minimum wages, restriction on working hours, exclusion from social protection programmes and lack of regulations to ensure occupational safety and health (ILO, 2010).

Only a few nations, including France and Italy, have domestic work collective agreements. In Western Europe and Scandinavia, DWs' working conditions are typically governed by specific labour regulations. On the opposite, the Eastern European labour law has not favoured specific standards for domestic employees (ILO, 2013). Latin American nations' domestic work regulation, where it exists, usually comes in the form of special laws or dedicated chapters on domestic work within labour codes. In Asia, migrant DWs are particularly exposed to the lack of legal protection under the labour laws of host countries. Similarly, labour laws in the Middle East largely exclude DWs (Aoun, 2020), however, some countries have issued employment contracts for migrant DWs which regulate basic aspects of the employment relationship. For example, the Indian Ministry of Labour and Employment established a task force that created a thorough National Policy for DWs that acknowledged the current coverage gap (ILO, 2013). Another example is Bahrain, which included domestic employees in a limited scope of its new labour law, including those that deal with employment contracts, wages, leave, and dispute resolution.

2.3 Regional overview of domestic work: statistics and trends

While Africa is the third largest employer of DWs (International Labour Organisation, 2013), after Asia and Latin America, millions of DWs continue to work in horrific circumstances with little pay and sometimes no pay for months. The formalisation of domestic employment is a distant goal for many African countries, with child domestic work on par and there is a disregard of labour regulations. For many years, the recognition and protection of domestic workers' labour rights were largely absent both internationally and across Africa. However, the ILO has made significant progress in promoting socio-economic justice for domestic workers by establishing international labour standards. Despite these efforts, domestic work continues to be a domain of various forms of oppression, characterised by dehumanising and physically demanding tasks. Domestic workers are often paid extremely low wages for long working hours, frequently without clear terms of employment, and remain excluded from comprehensive labour rights. These conditions leave them vulnerable to irregular working arrangements and exploitation, which are critical issues for social justice and human rights. (Fisher, 2021).

Domestic work in Africa represents 2.2 per cent of the labour force, with approximately 9.3 million DWs, and 650,000 of those are migrants (ILO, 2016b). The domestic work sector in

Africa mirrors the global outlook on gender; it is an area of work dominated by women, with 3.8 million women and 1.4 million men (International Labour Organisation, 2013). Interestingly, there are countries that do not reflect the common gendered statistical image in Africa, for example, Egypt (71%), Algeria (55%) and Nigeria (52%) have more male DWs than women (International Labour Organisation, 2013). However, Bartolomei's (2010) study in India, the Congo, and the Ivory Coast reveals that male domestic workers tend to assume these responsibilities more comfortably, particularly in maintaining their patriarchal status within their households. The research found that, despite variations in the type of work and employment practices, male domestic workers across all locations continued to identify as the head of their families. Although many of them performed traditionally 'female' tasks for their employers, these skills were not transferred to their own households, nor did they assist their spouses. This indicates that traditional gender roles have undergone minimal change. Additionally, there is limited research exploring how migration for domestic work has influenced gender relations or altered gender norms within the workers' home communities.

Africa is distinct in its migration flows compared to the rest of the world in that most of the DWs are local or continent born. Migration in Africa is primarily economically driven and largely occurs within the sub-region, for example, Zimbabweans or BaSotho people working in SA. Many African migrant DWs keep strong ties with their country of origin especially through sending remittances to their families (Schwenken & Heimeshoff, 2011). In most African societies, the boundary between a DWE and an employee, recruited through kinship networks are blurred (Awumbila et al., 2017).

Eastern Africa is characterised by an increasing rate of migration of women particularly from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to the Middle East to work as DWs (Ayalew et al., 2020). In West Africa, inter-country child labour migration dominates the sector with, for instance, Togolese children working as DWs in Central and West African countries including Ghana (Demissie, 2018). For example, in Nigeria, DWs may start their employment as early as six or seven years old. In contrast, other West African countries report relatively low levels of domestic work. For instance, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone collectively account for less than one per cent of total domestic employment. However, domestic work is more prevalent in certain parts of the sub-region, such as Mali (4.4%) and Senegal (3.8%). It remains unclear whether these disparities reflect genuine differences

between countries or are a result of statistical variations arising from differing research methodologies.

Brief regional outline of legal protections for the domestic work sector

The lack of protection for DWs in Africa is a well-documented and ongoing issue. The introduction of the Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189) (C189) in 2011 aimed to safeguard domestic workers from exploitation and workplace discrimination, drawing global attention to human rights violations and the pervasive inequalities within domestic work. However, many African countries have yet to ratify this convention. To date, Mauritius and South Africa remain the only two African nations to have signed ILO Convention No. 189. However, other nations including Algeria, Cabo Verde, Gabon, Kenya, Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, and Zambia also have laws addressing DWs' social security coverage (ILO, 2021).

When DWs get old or injured, they are dismissed from their jobs without a pension or sufficient financial support since most of their job is devalued and unprotected. DWs also have among of the longest and most unpredictable workdays. Many countries usually place a 40–48-hours weekly workweek limit on employees. However, it is reported that in Namibia and in Tanzania, DWs put in more than 61 hours a week (ILO, 2013). Although some countries have a minimum wage for DWs, there are differences in minimum pay between DWs and other worker categories.

Despite the challenges surrounding the protection of DWs in Africa, an increasing number of countries are taking proactive steps to expand the scope of legislation to include DWs. By making necessary amendments to existing laws and policies, these nations are beginning to grant DWs the same rights that are legally guaranteed to other categories of workers. Some examples of good practices that can be highlighted in a few countries include Morocco, Angola, Tanzania, and Zambia. In Morocco, the DW Employment Conditions bill was approved in 2015 (ILO, 2016a). Angola has an active Union of DWs which launched the *End Modern Slavery* campaign, and advocates to government and policymakers to adopt the ILO Convention No. 189 (Fourie & Bowles, 2017). Similarly, an advocacy effort is under way in Tanzania with the help of gender experts to improve understanding of the rights of DWs as well as the education of trade unionists (Lambin & Nyysölä, 2022).

There are recognisable national efforts for research into domestic work in Zambia that is aimed at issues of maternity protection, work-life balance, and gender stereotypes within the sector. Senegal also makes provisions for DWs in their Labour Code which includes contracts and pay slips (ILO, 2016a). The Mozambican Labour Law was amended in 2008 through Decree40/2008, extending protection to DWs (Castel-Branco, 2012). This demonstrates an increasing recognition by unions and policymakers. While there are strides to make provisions for DWs, there is still more to be done in Africa, including fiscal incentives, minimum wage, registration programs, awareness-raising initiatives, research focusing on DWs and their DWEs.

2.4 South African overview of domestic work: A journey from apartheid to democracy

Domestic work in SA has its origins firmly grounded in our socio-political history that is exploitative and oppressive. Between 1948 and 1994 SA was characterised by legislated institutional racism which cheered suppression of Black African, Coloured and Indian people for the benefit of Whites (Cock, 1980b; Gaitskell et al., 1983). The apartheid system was quintessentially rooted in the principle of division and inequity, privileging the Whites' sociocultural and sociopolitical stance with favourable perceptions of racial identity to the "other" races, especially Black Africans (Lindner, 2018).

Whiteness as a racial classification was prescribed as a point from which socioeconomic, political, and racial privilege were identified (Schooley et al., 2019), where White privilege controlled and determined the social dispensation of economy, resources, laws, policies, to Black Africans at any given time and situation. Essentially, being White at the time was constructed as deserving of structural, experiential, and socio-political benefits which were denied to other racial groups. Cock's seminal work, *Maids and Madams* (1980) provides insight into the historical assessment of domestic work during apartheid, showing intersecting forms of oppression and exploitation between Black African DWs and White DWEs.

The apartheid system consented to unjust laws such as the Bantu Building Workers Act No 27 of 1951, which made it illegal for Black African people to perform any skilled labour in urban areas except in those sections designated for Black African occupation; the Native

Labour Act of 1953, which banned protests by Black African people; the Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953, which aimed to prevent Black African people from receiving education that would lead them to aspire to higher positions in society; and the Extension of University Education Act 45 of 1959, which marked an end to Black African students attending White universities (Krige, 2011; Steinmann, 2016). These segregationist laws and policies ensured severe restriction to formal employment and economic resources for most Black Africans, especially females. This was a system designed to sustain the oppression of especially Black Africans, and even in the post-apartheid era it continues to militate against them.

With the political era transition post-1994, shifting from apartheid to democracy, there are a growing number of Black African, Coloured and Indian/Asian middle and lower-middle class families who also employ Black African DWs (Maqubela, 2016; Tolla, 2013). However, given the history of the systemisation of inequality in SA with entrenched White supremacy, as an ordering principle (Dladla, 2020), domestic work remains largely performed by Black African women that work for White families (Mahali, 2016; Marais & Van Wyk, 2015a, 2015b; B. Seepamore, 2018). The racial pattern within the institution of domestic work echoes the South African long history of colonialism and apartheid that were obsessed with racial classification and exclusion, and according to Pithouse (2016), even in contemporary SA it still reflects a country "...that has not fully escaped the iron cage in which it was born" (p.120).

In recent years, there has been a growing number of migrant DWs in SA. SA has become increasingly xenophobic, and many nationals regard African foreigners as a direct threat to their economic well-being. Unfortunate incidents have included attacks on foreign DWs commuting to their places of work, attacks on hawkers and burning of the homes of migrants (Waters & Runge, 2020). Migrant DWs are also faced with the challenge of accessing healthcare facilities due to their nationality and are vulnerable to diseases (Guadagno, 2020).

There have been instances where African foreign nationals, who provide what has been perceived as cheap labour, have been attacked. This includes foreign women and men who do domestic work, gardening, and construction labour. Hiropoulos (2020) posits that in SA foreigners have also become scapegoats in periods of economic recession and are accused of stealing jobs from nationals. They are stigmatised as criminals and blamed as conduit for the spread of diseases, including HIV/AIDS. DWs who are immigrants and largely females are

not exempt from such treatment or attacks. Typically, when one is an immigrant, they are ethnic minorities and usually of lower social class than their DWEs (Baxter et al., 2009; Seepamore, 2018).

The institution of domestic work continues to be entrenched by class and racial inequality in contemporary SA (Mahali, 2016; Seepamore, 2018). This is not divorced from the repercussions of neoliberalism on the domestic work sector, which has not only widened the class divisions among people, but has also made life harder for most uneducated women where unfortunately many DWs are encircled (Nadasen, 2012; Seepamore, 2018). Sewpaul (2015) argued that, “neoliberalism has contributed to distorted development between the North and the South, to greater levels of inequality within nation-states, to the further marginalization of women and to a greater feminization of poverty, especially among Black African women” (p. 466). Thus, it seems relevant to visit the experiences of Black African DWs who work for Black African, Indian, and White DWEs to demystify and dissect how patterns of oppression, privilege and power are developed and reproduced within DW-DWE relations in contemporary SA.

The birth of domestic work formalisation and advocacy in South Africa

The creation of the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU), and legislation such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No 75 of 1997 brought DWs some credibility and organisation as a work force in the post-apartheid era (Penwell Dlamini, 2018). The activism around domestic work and worker rights have pushed for a national minimum wage of ZAR 3,710,40 (about \$230) a month, which is about ZAR 23,19 (\$1,40) per hour (Labour Research Service, 2022), but it is still undergoing discomfiting debates (Millea et al., 2017). Some of these debates are centered on DWEs’ lack of adherence to this minimum wage treaty, while other disputes are on the dissatisfaction with the current minimum wage as it is viewed as not meeting the quality of life needs of DWs (Lilenstein et al., 2018).

In South Africa, legislation mandates that domestic workers employed for more than 24 hours per month must be registered with the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). This requirement applies to both part-time and full-time domestic workers. The UIF offers various benefits, including unemployment, illness, death, adoption, and maternity benefits. Following

these legislative revisions, South Africa has been recognised globally for its commitment to protecting domestic workers' rights. However, amid rhetoric of rights and entitlements, domestic work in SA remains one of uncertainties, insecurities, and dehumanisation (Gwynn, 2015). Changes in legislation have not necessarily eliminated exploitation or translated into improved working conditions for all DWs.

2.5 Summary

Globally, the issue of domestic work is complex and requires sustained attention and action from both the government and civil society. Although domestic work is still a significant source of employment, especially for women and those in lower income communities, the working conditions of DWs are often unjust. The legal protection for DWs is frail, which has provided an enabling environment for widespread exploitation and abuse. In the afore discussion, one can see that domestic work and migration are interrelated phenomena that have significant impacts on both the individuals involved and the broader society. Domestic work provides valuable support for households, especially for those in developed countries, where the demand for DWs has increased because of changes in family structures and increased participation of women in the workforce. Improving the legal protection of DWs and implementation strategies to ensure that they have access to the same rights and benefits as other workers are important. This can include measures such as setting minimum wage standards, providing access to social security and health insurance, and recognising domestic work as a valuable contribution to the economy. Ultimately, promoting the fair treatment of DWs and improving their working conditions is essential for challenging and disrupting dominant discourses on domestic work, and for creating a more just and equitable world.

Chapter Three: Power, Intersectional Influences, Resilience, and Agency in Domestic Worker-Employer Relations

3.1 Introduction

Domestic work can be seen as a manifestation of inequality and of the skewed power relations that exist within and between households, communities, and countries. While domestic work provides valuable support for households, allowing women to participate in the formal workforce and contribute to the economy, it is also associated with various forms of exploitation and oppression, as DWs often have limited legal protection and face challenges. The power relations between DWs and their employers are often shaped by factors such as race, class, gender, and nationality, with DWs often experiencing marginalisation and discrimination. This chapter conceptualises domestic work as a highly feminised sector, followed by a discussion of the overlapping structures of oppression and privilege that shape the relationship between DWs and DWEs, with references to race, abuse and violence, health, gender, and class. It also reflects on the patterns of power relations between DWs and DWEs. The chapter concludes with an exploration of resiliency and agency within this unstandardised and intimate work, delving into critical discussions of self-worth, self-image, and self-determination for both DWEs and DWs.

3.2 Domestic work, oppression and privilege

Although the word ‘oppression’ has been used in the earlier chapters, it has not been particularly discussed, yet it is integral to the phenomenon being studied. Oppression is characterised by prejudice and institutional power that systematically discriminates against certain groups while privileging others (Dominelli, 2017). Within the diverse landscape of social identities, a hierarchical structure exists, wherein dominant and non-dominant groups hold differing social statuses. What practically happens is that members of dominant groups possess the ability to confer advantages upon individuals they perceive as *normal* and acceptable, while limiting opportunities for those who are viewed as the *other* or different. For example, the ideology of White supremacy and notions of racial hierarchy during apartheid were used to justify the oppression of non-White people, with the White people believing they were superior and entitled to control non-White people. Individuals belonging

to non-dominant groups may experience oppression in various forms, including limitations, disadvantages, or societal disapproval (Pease, 2021a).

Joy (2019) terms the ideology that informs oppression as powerarchy. Powerarchy stems from the belief that in a hierarchy of moral worth, some individuals or groups are more worthy of moral consideration than others (Cole, 2016; Joy, 2019). The perception of a hierarchical moral worth leads to the denial of the dignity and inherent value of specific individuals or groups. This belief in a moral hierarchy often prevents the recognition of certain individuals as victims of oppression, even when they are, as societal acknowledgment of vulnerability and victimisation requires a certain moral standing (Cunniff Gilson, 2016). Like colonialism, the subjugation of Indigenous people was often justified by portraying them as inferior (less worthy of moral consideration) and in need of guidance and civilisation from the colonisers (who are deemed more worthy of moral consideration). This hierarchical structure serves to uphold unjust power imbalances that justify and perpetuate oppressive systems that undermine people of their rights, dignity, and autonomy.

Unfortunately, in the hierarchical structure that justifies inferiority and superiority, some individuals internalise the societal rejection of differences, leading to the adoption of beliefs that undermine their autonomy, self-worth, and agency (Freire, 2021; Sewpaul, 2013, 2020). Paulo Freire in his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* calls this internalised oppression, which is referred to the process by which individuals internalise and adopt the oppressive beliefs, biases, and prejudices that target the identity groups to which they belong (Freire, 1970, 2018a). This phenomenon occurs when various forms of social oppression, such as racism, sexism, ableism, classism among others are perpetuated and upheld for the benefit of dominant groups. Hardy (2013) terms it internalised devaluation where the continuous influx of messages that diminish one's value creates challenges for oppressed individuals to maintain self-awareness and weakens their capacity to resist an overwhelming and unjustified negative message. Psychological oppression inflicted by internalised prejudices can profoundly impact a person's self-perception and moral relationship with themselves (Joy, 2019). It is important to recognise that internalised oppression not only reflects the presence of an oppressive social climate, but also acts as a mechanism for its perpetuation and endurance (Williams, 2012).

On the dynamics of the normalisation of injustice, discrimination and oppression, (Wilkerson, 2020) asserts, "The awkward becomes acceptable, and the unacceptable becomes merely

inconvenient. Live with it long enough, and the unthinkable becomes normal. Exposed over the generations, we learn that the incomprehensible is the way that life is supposed to be” (p. 16). Further on, she makes the following cogent observation: “Perhaps it is the unthinking acquiescence, the blindness to one’s imprisonment, that is the most effective way for human beings to remain captive. People who do not know they are captive will not resist their bondage” (Wilkerson, 2020, pp. 33–34).

There are much evidence-based studies that suggest that subjugation and perpetual injustices as well as inequalities that the DWs face, foster the belief in them that they are part of a lower sub-group (Barba, 2009; Peabody, 1998). This creates feelings of inferiority thus making them subservient to their employers. As the majority of DWs are women, Motsei (1990) suggests that women frequently find themselves trapped within a pervasive system of control, where their subordinate position becomes a defining characteristic of their entire existence. The acceptance of this subordinate status by women carries significant economic, political, and social consequences. The DWs come to believe that they do not have a voice or power to change the status quo. They are of the understanding that they are of low stature, thus reinforcing the notion that they exist merely to perform domestic work.

According to Bailey (1998) “any understanding of oppression is incomplete without recognition of the role privilege plays in maintaining systems of domination” (p.104). This is because for each marginalised group, there exists a corresponding group that enjoys societal advantages (Young, 2020). This suggests that under systems of power, the social groups that are deemed superior are privileged, rather than oppressed. For Sewpaul (2013), internalised privilege or domination is:

“the incorporation and acceptance by individuals within a dominant group of prejudices against others” (Pheterson, 1986, p. 147). The normalization of both oppression and privilege is linked to the common sense assumptions that we carry, manifested in the attitude that we get what we deserve without considering the structural determinants of our lives (p.122).

Therefore, internalised privilege creates an unearned sense of entitlement in members of the privileged group and can be expressed as a denial of the existence of oppression. In the context of the power dynamics between DWs and DWEs, Sewpaul’s description of internalised privilege suggests that individuals within the dominant group (DWEs) may internalise and accept prejudices against DWs. This acceptance of prejudice contributes to the

normalisation and naturalisation of both the oppression faced by DWs and the privilege enjoyed by DWEs. Furthermore, it reflects a common attitude within the dominant group that success or failure is solely based on individual merit (Tappan, 2006), without acknowledging the broader structural factors that influence the lives of DWs, such as socio-economic inequalities and systemic discrimination. This attitude perpetuates the power imbalance between DWEs and DWs, as it reinforces the notion that DWEs inherently deserve their privileged position while disregarding the structural disadvantages faced by DWs.

Findings from a qualitative study that examined the dynamics between DWEs and DWs, highlighted how DWEs, who occupy privileged positions, exercise greater autonomy in their participation in occupations compared to DWs (Galvaan et al., 2015). These researchers detail how DWEs' actions, including the use of micro-aggressions against DWs, reflect ingrained biases that reinforce their privileged positions, and they emphasise the need for DWEs to acknowledge their internalised privilege and its role in perpetuating occupational injustice for DWs (Galvaan et al., 2015). Sewpaul (2013) highlights the importance of recognising and addressing internalised privilege as a crucial aspect of confronting systemic inequalities. In the context of DWEs, this involves acknowledging and challenging the ways in which individuals in positions of power and privilege internalise and perpetuate systems of domination and oppression within the household setting.

Undoing internalised privilege requires a critically "transitive consciousness" as asserted by (Freire, 1973, p. 14). This means critically examining and challenging existing power dynamics, biases, and assumptions. In the context of the current study, it involves actively listening to and valuing the perspectives of DWs, while also being willing to reflect on and revise one's own beliefs and behaviours. Ultimately, it is about fostering a mindset of equity, self-awareness, accountability, and continuous learning to dismantle internalised privilege and promote fair and respectful interactions between DWEs and DWs.

While acknowledging the actual and internalised privilege of employers, it is crucial to recognise that DWs also hold a degree of power within the households where they work. Sometimes they are the ones who run the households in the absence of their DWEs, and they are the ones whose duties are very much needed for people to be away from home to be able to function in their careers, thus contributing to the economy. DWEs can have peace of mind that all is well taken care of at home by the DW, and DWs often take responsibility for child-

rearing during children's formative years. However, due to internalised oppression most tend to not take cognisance of the importance of their work, and the power and control they might possess in the households they work in. Delport (1995) describes domestic work as a socially fragmented workforce, further impacting how DWs perceive themselves. For example, DWs in SA faced a lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem because of the systemic oppression imposed on Black African people and women during the apartheid era (Motsei, 1990). In such circumstances, DWs inevitably view themselves as inferior, perpetuating the power imbalance in their relationships with DWEs.

The individual can experience depersonalisation within their work environment, leading to a sense of powerlessness and dependence. Domestic work has been viewed as dirty work (Anderson & Anderson, 2000; Bosmans et al., 2016), and there are few studies that link dirty work with dehumanisation and invisibility (see Agadullina et al., 2022; Terskova & Agadullina, 2019; Valtorta et al., 2019; Volpato et al., 2017). Work can become invisible when dominant beliefs and ideologies neglect to recognise specific tasks, roles, or occupations as valid forms of work. For instance, Daniels (1987) explored how women's work is disregarded when it involves emotions, housework or volunteering.

“Voiceless”, “helpless”, “victimised”, “abused”, “invisible” are frequent adjectives in discussions that concern DWs (Barrett, 1985; Cock, 1980b; Mahali, 2016; Marais & Van Wyk, 2015a; B. Seepamore, 2018). DWs' desperation for survival and to provide for their families, make them vulnerable to injustices in the households that they work (Marais & Van Wyk, 2015a, 2015b). Their positionality within these households is largely shaped by the dominant ideological order, where the DWE is superior while the employee is perceived as inferior. This order makes it extremely challenging to resist oppression and to fight prejudices directed towards DWs. These dominant discourses and practices serve to reinforce and reproduce the inferiority complex among DWs, and to normalise their subjugation.

While acknowledging the plight of DWs, we should be careful not to reduce them to merely passive victims of oppression. Miles (1996) maintains that although DWs are perceived as passive, many are not, as they have the “skillful ability to take advantage of the job situation to negotiate control and to reap what benefits they could as a means to pursuing their own ends” (p. 84). This means that DWs are not merely passive recipients of their circumstances but can leverage their positions to assert agency. For example, findings from a study by

Seepamore (2018) shed light on the nuanced power dynamics between DWs and DWEs, revealing instances where DWs assert agency within their roles. Through actions such as arriving late intentionally or consuming prohibited foods on the DWE's property, DWs in the reported study subverted the strict control imposed by their DWEs, thus challenging traditional power structures.

In another study, DWs covertly contested power by engaging in behaviours such as taking unplanned days off, using facilities without discrimination, and disregarding DWEs' social values (Deshingkar & Zeitlyn, 2015). The tactic of intentionally arriving late and taking unscheduled leave disrupts the DWE's control over her time, illustrating the DW's agency in challenging oppressive practices. These actions reflect a form of resistance that disrupts traditional power structures and challenges the dominant narrative of passive DWs. Furthermore, as found in Seepamore's study, DWs' facial expressions of disapproval and feigned deafness serve as subtle forms of resistance, allowing them to assert boundaries and resist tasks they find objectionable (Seepamore, 2018). Nyamnjoh (2005) asserts that while DWEs may initially appear to hold all the power, the reality is often more nuanced and subject to ongoing negotiation and concessions to the DWs. There are other forms of subtle resistance including cheerful incompetence, silence, deference, and a non-committal attitude, alongside behaviours like foot-dragging, slow work, pilfering, sulking, and non-responsiveness (Nyamnjoh, 2005). These strategies highlight the ways in which DWs navigate power differentials and assert agency within their roles, challenging the notion of passive victimhood often attributed to them. This resonates with post-structural feminist perspectives, which emphasise the fluidity and complexity of power relations and challenge essentialist notions of gender and labour.

DWs' and societal bold branding of powerlessness clashes with the aims of empowerment, as it presents it as almost unachievable to overcome barriers and take control of their lives (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006). For social work, as a helping profession, we should aim at empowering rather than rescuing to try to avoid exacerbating feelings of powerlessness and stifling people's abilities to mobilise for change. Indeed, Tew (2006) warns practitioners against adopting a role of rescuers for individuals perceived as helpless and passive victims of social oppression. This approach risks paradoxically reinforcing the same paternalistic dynamics they aim to dismantle, ultimately recreating the oppressive relationships they seek to transform.

Studies tend to focus on DWs but fail to bring into focus new and far-reaching potentials of the enquiry (Gergen, 2015). What differentiates this study, is the attempt to link complex issues of power, oppression, and privilege together within the institution of domestic work, through a critical and reflective method of enquiry. The assumed all powerful and superior position that DWEs hold in the institution of domestic work is a complex one, a position influenced by several intersectional dynamics. Understanding the complexities of power, as discussed in Chapter one, avoids assigning dichotomous positions to both DWs and DWEs.

Domestic work is consistently rendered invisible as cleaners are often overlooked or treated as if they are unseen. Treating others as invisible conveys the message that marginalised groups are not deserving of human interaction, recognition, or respect. As stated by Suchman (1995) that the more distant we are from others' work, the more oversimplified and stereotypical our understanding of their work becomes. Unfortunately, the assumed invisibility by dominant groups degrades the sense of self by the one that performs the stereotyped work (DWs for instance) and silences their voices. It then limits their ability to negotiate working conditions and wages due to their perceived subordination to DWEs.

This section has explored the dynamics of oppression and internalised oppression experienced by DWs in the context of DWE-DW relationship. The discussion highlights how dominant groups might perceive DWs as inferior, thereby upholding a hierarchical structure that maintains oppressive systems. The section also highlights the impact of internalised oppression, where DWs may internalise societal rejection and adopt beliefs that undermine their autonomy and self-worth. This can lead to a sense of powerlessness and dependence, perpetuating the power imbalance in DWE-DW relationships. The literature reviewed in this section emphasises the need for recognising the complexity of power dynamics and the importance of empowering DWs, rather than positioning them as passive victims.

3.3 Domestic work as a feminised labour market

Studies on domestic work have developed over time. At first, scholarly research accentuated the importance of domestic work in an industrialised economy and its contribution to development (Kuznesof, 1989; Milkman et al., 1998). While domestic work was praised for facilitating women's participation in the labour market, both as DWs and DWEs, it was also

critiqued for aggravating structural inequalities (Anderson & Anderson, 2000). Then, it was research driven by feminists, mostly conducted in the Southern African region with findings concentrated on overlapping forms of oppression on race, class, and gender. These studies exaggerated the powerlessness of DWs in the face of dominating, usually female bosses (Cock, 1980b, 1980a, 1990; Gaitskell et al., 1983; Hansen, 1990). Later, findings focused on DW's agency (Constable, 1997b, 1997a; Romero, 1988, 1999). With capitalism at its supremacy, inequality and the feminisation of labour were high on the agenda, which stirred debates surrounding the formalisation of domestic work (Ally, 2010; Chen, 2011; Nadasen, 2012; Nadasen & Williams, 2010).

Both historic and current research studies, as well as statistical reports show that domestic work is female dominant. DWs perform the reproductive and productive functions necessary to keep households intact, and the economy booming. In his thesis, Castel-Branco (2012), concisely visualises the scene of DWs at the rush hour of the morning when they leave for work, a normal working day for many DWs:

Every morning, tens of thousands of domestic workers make the long trip [to the] ...working-class suburbs, to the middle- and upper-income neighbourhoods... Urban sprawl, increased congestion and an inadequate public transport system have transformed this daily commute 'across the boundaries of race and class' ..., into a costly struggle. Fearful of arriving late, they set out at dawn, hoping to secure a spot on the packed minibuses that carry this 'undervalued and essential' workforce to the city... Others, live-in domestic workers, are already up, sweeping the yard, heating the bath water, or taking care of the baby while *madam* gets ready for work. As apartment lights flicker on and the city awakens, domestic workers are there to greet it (p.1).

The above quote captures how DWs often find themselves at the intersection of race, gender and socioeconomic injustices. Castel-Branco demonstration in the above excerpt, that before most female DWs get to work, they are greeted by the hurdle of the rush hour with unreliable and crammed transport, perhaps having to walk a long distance to the DWE's house as public transport is unlikely to drop them off at the gate, flags the class divisions between the worker and DWE. The assumption would be that from the minute most female DWs wake up to prepare to go to work, they are already tasked with the unremunerated domestic duties of

their own home. The DW must prepare for her husband and child/ren before reporting to work.

Castel-Branco's quote also encapsulates the reproductive and productive function of a DW, where the DW provides an enabling environment for the *madam* to have children and participate in the labour force. If it were not for the presence of the DW filling in the gap in care responsibilities (OECD, 2012), the domestic duties would be expected to be performed by the *madam* to fulfil the societal gendered expectation and ideological construction of what represents an ideal wife and/or mother. Hence, other scholars argue that paid domestic work does not challenge the existing gendered division of labour, but rather a re-deployment of domestic work along classed lines (Moras, 2017; Romero, 2016).

The identity of a DW is closely linked to the existing socially constructed gender roles that have been created through social practices and discourse that place men in superior positions while women are deemed more useful in conducting domestic duties. The subjugation of women and patriarchal views have created the thinking that domestic work is women's work because housework is. In a sexist and patriarchal environment, women in SA were treated as inferior and dependent individuals (Cock, 1980b). Different race groups and classes of women faced varying levels and types of discrimination under apartheid (Sewpaul, 2020). The historical changes in customary law and the devaluation of women's roles in the economy further contributed to the dependency and exploitation of DWs (Wessels, 2006). Is, 2006). Domestic work perpetuates the feminisation of household roles, reinforcing the stereotype that such tasks are inherently women's work, dictated by traditional gender roles (Bosch & McLeod, 2015).

Hess et al. (2020) and Mushunje and Sewpaul (2023) assert that compared to males, women spend more time performing unpaid care and household duties. Women worldwide spend 3.2 times as much time as men do on unpaid care and household duties, putting in an average of 4 hours, 32 minutes every day which represents a considerable gender disparity (Charmes, 2019). Recent studies report that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on women's lives by aggravating pre-existing gender disparities (Borah Hazarika & Das, 2021; Chauhan, 2021; Dugarova, 2020; Sarrasanti et al., 2020). With COVID-19 the necessity for unpaid household duties grew after the emergence of work from home and virtual education, as well as the limited DW services.

Labadie-Jackson (2008) argues that one of the most significant shifts of the twentieth century was the integration of women into the formal labour force. However, women did not relinquish their socially ascribed roles as homemakers, childbearers, and caregivers. Instead, they have continued to bear the primary responsibility for managing household duties (Chauhan, 2021). A corresponding shift toward men sharing an equal portion of household responsibilities has not materialised as expected. This persistence of traditional gender-based divisions of labour within the family unit has broader social and economic ramifications that extend far beyond the domestic sphere. Such social practices have furthered the feminisation of domestic work and perpetuated patriarchal views that place women in subordinate positions, and women receive little consideration for their contributions to the economy.

Neoliberalism and patriarchy are major factors that push women into the informal labour market such as domestic work. According to Fraser (2017) capitalism is responsible for the ongoing crisis of care we experience because it sees financial capital disciplining the government to advance the interests of the private sector, which further exacerbates the tensions between economic production and social reproduction. The private commodification of the reproduction of labour, along with the global labour surplus created by unequal international trade policies, is transferred into a transnational domestic service industry. With neoliberal policies limiting the intervention of the state, the unregulated outsourcing of DWs remains prevalent. This system benefits continents that are in positions of power with stable economies and resources (Kotz, 2010). Although there are numerous gross issues tied to capitalism, it is gender and racial hierarchies that determine who fills the empty places by structuring the pragmatic occupational gender segregation and wage differentials (Hartmann, 1979; Holter, 2016). It is palpable that in modern societies, such as SA, stemming from the injustices and oppression of the past, that women of colour from struggling backgrounds work in the informal labour market with low remuneration.

Taking a structuralist perspective, many scholars argue that non-market hierarchies perpetuate the gendered division of paid labour and are thus the cause, rather than the result, of its existence (Banks, 2020; Folbre, 2021). However, early contributions to this discourse came from dual-systems feminists, who posited that patriarchy operates alongside the wage-ordered system (Hartmann, 1979). They viewed patriarchy as a hierarchical framework in which women are subordinate to men within a gender-structured division of labour, existing

independently but intersecting with economic systems. This illustrates that women in the informal labour market have limited choices as to the work that they can do to earn a living, and as a result, the market that is available for them is in domestic labour.

In a patriarchal society men dominate. It is gainful for men to maintain this division in the labour market, as they retain greater control over economic resources and more time in leisure pursuits (Blau et al., 2002). Unlike the division of labour, patriarchy is challenging to quantify. However, as it represents the non-market presence of male dominance, its potential extent can be inferred by examining how non-market variables influence the division of domestic labour. While early theorists have argued that women's preferences for domestic tasks explain their continued responsibility for them, it is equally plausible that the household division of labour reflects men's preference for women undertaking unpaid domestic work (Cooke, 2006; Singh & Pattanaik, 2020). In essence, patriarchy is a major contributing factor in the feminisation of domestic work. Women, particularly the unskilled, have minimum agency in their choices of employment. They must make a living to support their families, and the informal labour market is what provides employment opportunities, with some women's choices often being constrained to domestic work.

To discern whether the gendered division of domestic labour is driven by individual preferences or by institutional, potentially patriarchal structures, one approach is to evaluate whether men's preferences outweigh women's in determining the household time allocated to unpaid domestic tasks, after controlling for relative economic resources (Deshpande & Kabeer, 2021). If women's preferences significantly predict the division of domestic labour, this would support early theorists' claims that the gendered distribution reflects women's choices. However, this interpretation does not exclude the possibility that these choices are shaped by socially constructed norms. Conversely, if men's preferences have a greater influence on the division of domestic labour, it would indicate the extent to which patriarchy underpins the feminisation of domestic work (Cooke, 2006). There is a significant element of patriarchal dominance that results from material and gender relations. In a society that is still grappling with gender inequalities, particularly in the formal labour market, women that are employed as DWs are subjected to a great deal of inequalities in the hands of their DWEs. The dynamics between the DW and the DWE and unequal power relations are a point of contention.

The socially constructed gender roles have ascribed domestic tasks to women in the households. Although there are strides in the emancipation of women over the years, the inequalities between men and women remain heightened and DWs, particularly females, continue to be exposed to contentious relations with their DWEs. This is highlighted by Harzig and Juteau (2003) who state that women are challenged by the scarceness of jobs and a lack of alternative employment. Many women are limited in their choice; they can choose either to be unemployed or to be employed as a DW. These women are therefore limited in fulfilling their full potential (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000), and may remain submissive due to various social influences (Akpotor, 2009). This is especially relevant in the DW sector due to a lack of choice, stature, and the apparent never-ending nature of the cycle of poverty. Domestic work is consequently not seen as a bridging employment in SA, but rather a dead-end job (Marais & Van Wyk, 2015b).

Contemporary South African society is acknowledged for its continuous efforts to ensure equality. However, women are still overrepresented in low-level jobs and doing unskilled work for limited compensation (Baliamoune-Lutz, 2020). While the preamble to the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) provides hope for those who have been marginalised by law for decades because of the injustices of the past (Fourie & Van Eeden, 2010), the question remains, “to what degree have the improved labour laws resulted in perceptible developments for all?” (De Lille, 2003, p.13). The question posed by De Lille over 20 years ago remains relevant in 2024, and that is problematic. It is problematic because it gives the impression that the implementation of the Constitution has not empowered the SAn DW sector. As much as post-apartheid SA has made progress to address inequalities, Black African women in the informal labour market continue to be subject to inequalities and oppression.

The literature examined in this section explored historical and current research on domestic work, with a focus on its predominant association with women and the influence of patriarchy and gendered labour divisions in shaping the feminisation of domestic work. It investigates how the identity of DWs is intricately tied to socially constructed gender norms that relegate women to subordinate roles, consequently limiting their choices and opportunities. Furthermore, the discussion highlights the role of neoliberalism and patriarchy in funnelling women particularly into informal labour sectors, such as domestic work. The impact of patriarchy on the division of household labour is also addressed, underscoring the

importance of analysing individual preferences and institutional frameworks in shaping gender dynamics. Drawing from the literature, it is evident that despite attempts at achieving gender equality, women, especially those engaged in domestic work, persistently encounter disparities and oppression within contemporary SAn society.

3.4 Intersections of race and class in domestic work

It is an undisputable fact that domestic work is located at the intersection of race and class. Race and class play a significant role in domestic work, both in terms of who is employed as DWs, who employs DWs and the working conditions DWs experience. Historically, domestic work has been a source of employment for women of colour. This reality has triggered an over researched reaction from contemporary researchers, denoting that analysing domestic work through the lens of race and class is superficial because of the other isms that have developed over time or have been ignored. However, we cannot dispel the strong tie these two concepts have to domestic work and existing power dynamics. Therefore, it is necessary to review race and class as key social criteria in domestic work.

MacEachern (2012) asserts that race is a word used to designate groups of humans marked by their common origins or shared characteristics, physical or otherwise. Race is socially constructed in order to categorise people into groups, things are not always what they seem and so to categorise people according to skin colour, facial features, biological, physiological, and genetic differences can be limiting (Diamond, 2018). Race is deeply fused with power, cultural patterns, and social organisation. However, it is important that when analysing and reporting on race to always give context when raising arguments of oppression and privilege.

In South Africa, race has historically played a significant role in determining individuals' access to power, status, and resources. Wright (2002) defines class as a person's position within a system of property relations, which determines their place in a structure of domination, control, and exploitation. Class is situational, shaping individuals' circumstances and opportunities, and significantly influencing the trajectory of their lives (Grusky, 2019). Groups of people who occupy similar positions within the property relations of a society form a class. Members of a class share comparable circumstances, resources, and opportunities, which align their interests in opposition to those of other classes.

Class operates as a social sorting mechanism, with individuals being categorised into specific classes through sociological factors such as education, parental attitudes, and neighbourhood environment (Bolin & Kurtz, 2018; Houston, 2015). These mechanisms result in vastly different material outcomes for members of various groups. For instance, working-class families are more likely to face limited education, poorer health, and greater vulnerability to economic instability compared to their counterparts in the financially elite or capitalist class. The traditional conceptualisation of social class divides society into three categories: the working class, the middle class, and the upper class.

Evident in the power dynamics between DWs and DWEs is the concept of gendered racism, where women of colour “are unable to separate the individual effects of each of their identities” (Blake cited in Sewpaul, 2013, p. 121). It encompasses the intersectionality of race and gender within socio-political structures (Sewpaul, 2013). As asserted by Sewpaul (2007) identities are not fixed but rather contingent upon context, evolving alongside socio-political constructions. Samuels and Ross-Sheriff (2008) further emphasise the dynamic nature of privilege and oppression, highlighting how these fluctuate with changing contexts. Race, class, and gender, as Browne and Misra (2003) argue, are socially constructed categories wielded to maintain hierarchical power structures. In this vein, Castle (2001) critiques the fallacy of race as a natural distinction, while Yuval-Davis (2006) posits gender as a discursive mode shaping societal roles.

The implications of these constructions are profound, as categorisations instantly evoke symbolic meanings laden with material consequences. Despite challenges to categorical approaches, particularly within redress policies, an anticategorical stance remains elusive, given entrenched racial and gender disparities, especially in SA (Sewpaul, 2013). However, Hall (1985) proposes a reflexive engagement with categories, advocating for their deconstruction and reconstruction.

Intersectionality complicates the anticategorical stance, as social identities and privileges are intricately intertwined with race and gender categories. DWs, often marginalised along racial and gender lines, face compounded discrimination. Their labour is devalued due to racialised and gendered stereotypes, perpetuating exploitative power dynamics with DWEs. Gendered racism manifests in the differential treatment of DWs based on both race and gender. Black African women, for instance, are disproportionately represented in domestic labour roles,

facing systemic barriers rooted in historical and structural inequalities. DWEs, predominantly White and often affluent, wield their privilege to reinforce racialised and gendered hierarchies within domestic settings.

Efforts to address gendered racism necessitate an intersectional approach that acknowledges the complex interplay of race, gender, and class. Policies and interventions must dismantle entrenched power dynamics while centring the voices and experiences of marginalised DWs. This entails challenging ingrained stereotypes, advocating for fair labour practices, and promoting structural reforms aimed at promoting equity and justice within the domestic work sector.

Bosch and McLeod (2015) conducted a study examining the relationships between Black African female DWs and their White female DWEs in Cape Town's affluent Southern suburbs, focusing on the intersections of culture, class, race, and gender. The findings revealed that these relationships remain deeply unequal, rooted in racial privilege. While some of these interactions were reported to be intimate and fulfilling, the employment of Black African women in White households continues to reinforce the perception of the household as a feminised and racialised space. This suggests that the dynamics between DWs and DWEs can often be exploitative, perpetuating the oppression of those perceived to belong to a lower class or inferior race.

Many DWs in SA are Black African women (Marais, 2014). The formalisation of work conditions has been problematic because they work in private households. Despite the birth of democracy with the country's first non-racial elections in 1994, SA remains one of the world's most unequal societies. As reference, SA ranked first as an unequal country among 164 countries, and it is reported that race played a significant role as 10 percent of the population, mainly White, controlled more than 80 percent of the wealth (World Bank, 2022). The inequalities that continue to exist in contemporary SA affect the Black African person who comes from a poor background with the likelihood of being low-skilled by having limited choice in employment opportunities, and often work in the informal labour market in which domestic work forms a major part.

Although there have been movements and transformation that have taken place in the interest of the rights of women, they have not made substantial differences to women of colour

(Crenshaw, 2018). It can be noted that women of colour continue to be subject to injustices at the hands of the *madam*. Historically, the labour of Black African women has been exploited to support the socio-economic elevation of White women, enabling them to maintain and enhance their status within the confines of heteropatriarchy. During this time, White men remained the heads of these patriarchal households. Even after the emancipation of women, White women continued to reinforce their position within heteropatriarchy by overseeing and regulating the labour of Black African domestic workers (Nilliasca, 2010).

There are complexities that exist within these relationships, with race and class being the fundamental basis from which such complexities stem. In post-apartheid South Africa, there is an increasing disparity between a multiracial upper class and the rest of society, as well as between an urban middle class, primarily composed of employed workers and a marginalised class of unemployed Black Africans and rural poor workers (Southall, 2016). The significant divide between wealthy White and impoverished Black African sectors remains stark. Within this context, the relationship between the DW and her DWE serves as a focal point for intimate confrontations and a microcosm of the broader issues of class, race, and culture in contemporary South Africa (Marais, 2014).

In the case of DWs, the exclusion of domestic labour in regulatory administrations designed to protect and support workers gives DWEs unregulated access, and power over the labour and bodies of DWs, the majority of whom are Black African and/or immigrant women (Labadie-Jackson, 2008). This is accomplished through the construction of the private and public work sphere, which makes it difficult to practically regulate the DWE.

Drawing on international experiences provides one with an understanding that injustices and inequalities exist globally and are embedded in the history of oppression by White people on Black African people. In the United States, DWs are disproportionately women of colour. During slavery and post-emancipation, DWs were primarily Black African women (Crawford, 2018; Smith, 2015). The link between domestic service and slavery is key to understanding the historical and ongoing exploitation, oppression, and dehumanisation experienced by individuals working in domestic service. Recognising this connection helps shed light on the systemic inequalities, power imbalances, and social injustices that perpetuate the mistreatment of DWs.

In the United States, domestic service has historically been associated with slavery, predominantly performed by enslaved Black African women, and later by free Black African women, thus linking a marginalised race to a devalued occupation. Household tasks such as food preparation, laundry, childcare, and even breastfeeding were routinely assigned to enslaved Black African women. The figure of the *mammy* symbolises this racist association between domestic work and Black African women (Owen, 2018). Mammy is depicted as the ever-loyal servant to White women, an image that is accepted and even idealised within White supremacist culture. Crucially, her worth is not measured by how well she nurtures her own children but by how effectively she raises the children of her White employers (Walters, 2017). In this structure, White women assumed the role of primary regulators of the labour of women of colour, ensuring that White male husbands could participate in wage labour unencumbered by domestic responsibilities, including childcare.

Romero (2016) argues that the White feminist women's movement framed White women's liberation as freedom from housework, with its emphasis on removing legal and social barriers to entering wage labour. This focus, however, deepened the racial and class divide between women of colour and White women, perpetuating the subjugation of the former. Historically, the labour of Black African women as enslaved domestic workers enabled White women to elevate their status within the heteropatriarchal system (Nilliasca, 2010). Within the gendered roles of the heteropatriarchal family, it is the White woman who is the primary regulator of the work of women of colour, allowing the White male husband to continue to fully participate in wage labour without the constraints of domestic work, including childcare.

The lack of legal or regulatory systems governing domestic work allows DWEs regardless of race to dictate wages and working conditions. DWEs often assume supervisory roles over Black African women, contributing to their exploitation and subjugation, even while the employers themselves operate within the confines of oppressive heteropatriarchal systems (Labadie-Jackson, 2008). The intimate nature of domestic work, particularly in the South African context, involves close interactions between DWEs and workers, who are tasked with caring for homes, children, or aging family members within White, Black African, Indian, or Coloured households.

The complicity of White women in the oppression of Black African and immigrant women is evident throughout history, from the 1930s movements to reform domestic work, to the early White feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and in the muted contemporary response of White feminists to the plight of domestic workers. White feminists' framing of work as a liberating force and a rejection of motherhood overlooked the realities faced by Black African women. This reliance on the labour of Black African women allowed White women to seek personal fulfilment in the workforce without confronting traditional patriarchal family structures or gender roles (Romero, 1999). In the past the rights of women that were fought for and in areas where they experienced victories, the Black African women were left behind. Black African women continued to bear the brunt of injustices and inequalities.

During slavery, the labour of Black African women enabled White women to live up to an idealised standard of femininity, one in which a White woman was able to fulfil the gendered division of work without actually getting her hands dirty (Romero, 1999). The perception of White women experiencing gender inequality themselves, in many cases was that domestic work suited the low status of Black African women (Labadie-Jackson, 2008). These illustrations further demonstrate the in-depth disparities of women rights and liberation based on race and social class.

When examining the racism and White supremacy embedded in the mistress-servant dynamic, it becomes evident that the law of the time sanctified and safeguarded White middle-class families. In stark contrast, Black African families were subjected to persistent interference and domination by a White, racist state (Labadie-Jackson, 2008). In fact, at the time of this current study, Coetzee (2020) asserts, in their book review of *Like Family: Domestic Workers in South African History and Literature* by Ena Jansen, that the book corrects the hegemonic White imagination by examining texts that expose the distortions and violences of White paternalism, confronting the inequalities of the post-apartheid present. It emphasises that every Black African woman caring for a White child serves as a reminder of the ongoing predicament of Black African women in SA (Jansen, 2019).

But what about when race is not the sole criterion – a Black African DWE and Black African domestic employee relation? With the rise of the Black African middle-class post-1994, authors have explored the relationships between Black African DWs and their Black African DWEs (Ally 2011; Maqubela 2016; Bayane 2021) where DWs are surrogate parents to their

children (Parrenas, 2021; Parreñas, 2017), while the children of DWs are cared for by extended family. Live-in domestic work often hinders DWs from fulfilling their roles as mothers to their own children. The arrangement, which involves residing in the DWE's home, engenders a perpetual sense of duty and surveillance, further impeding their ability to prioritise their maternal responsibilities (Dawood & Seedat-Khan, 2023).

Jadezweni (2019) reflected on complexities related to hiring DWs as a young South African Black woman. She explained that this dynamic traditionally involved DWs being seen as serving without questioning, which creates challenges when it comes to communication and voicing preferences without implying criticism of their work. She reflected on her own upbringing, where most Black African people were raised not to tell elders what to do, and having a familial relationship with DWs, and being apologetic in their communication. Perhaps this is because domestic work in Black African families often involves hiring family and friends as suggested by Maqubela (2016), which makes it difficult to formally relate to them as employees. A study conducted in Limpopo among Black African DWEs highlighted that the hiring of relatives as DWs is strongly influenced by reciprocal care. While this is most common within Black African families, it also perpetuates exploitation in the name of family relationships (Bayane, 2021). The exploitation manifests through informal decisions and negotiation of work conditions. Even calling it "work" for some is problematic as the nature of the arrangement is informal, although family members still occupy formal domestic work roles that are recognised as employment.

The findings from Tolla's (2013) study on Black African DWEs and DWs show that when work and family roles intertwine, DWs find it challenging to object against mistreatment, low wages, or poor conditions. When DWs are employed by family members, they often navigate a blurred line between being relatives and employees. This can lead to challenges in defining and negotiating their roles within the household. This blurring of roles can be seen as a manifestation of what Freire calls "the oppressed becoming the oppressor" (Freire, 2000, p. 47), as the historical dynamics of power and exploitation persist even within familial settings. Freire's concept refers to the cycle wherein those who were once oppressed, upon gaining power, may replicate the oppressive behaviours they once experienced. Similarly, Fanon discusses the psychological effects of colonialism and oppression, highlighting how the oppressed may internalise the dominant culture's values and perpetuate them even after gaining power (Fanon, 1963).

Freire's concept of the oppressed becoming the oppressor is evident in the experiences of some DWs who feel disrespected or undervalued by their Black African family DWEs and in non-familial relationships with DWs. A participant from Bayane's study on Black African sister-DWEs described feeling belittled by her educated family members, suggesting that despite their shared familial ties, the power dynamics inherent in the DWE-employee relationship still exist (Bayane, 2021). Sister-DWEs often negotiate wages and working conditions based on familial principles rather than formal labour laws, potentially perpetuating patterns of exploitation and unequal treatment. A study that looked at the relationship between Sowetan middle-class Black African DWEs of DWs in non-familial relationships suggests that DWs entered these relationships with preconceived notions about how they should be treated (Dilata, 2008). They expected that shared racial identities would result in better treatment from their African DWEs, but their expectations were not met. Instead DWEs complained that their DWs did not exert the same effort they would for White DWEs, taking their Black African DWEs for granted. One DWE noted, "The domestic workers would be so meticulous when working for White or Indian employers, working over the limit. But with us, it is not like that. We want to treat them properly like our sisters, but they see us like fools and not work properly but expect a full salary" (Dilata, 2008, p. 89). Clearly, complexities of power and oppression, even among individuals of the same race and family ties exist. Fanon's analysis of internalised racism and the complexities of identity under oppression (Fanon, 1992, 2008), illustrate how both parties in these relationships navigate and perpetuate the power dynamics ingrained in their societal roles. This interplay demonstrates the persistence of structural inequalities and the challenges of overcoming internalised oppression within the domestic work sector.

In this section, the focus is on the intersection of race and class within the domain of domestic work. The historical employment of women of colour, particularly Black African and Latina women, as DWs is highlighted, alongside the ongoing influence of race and class on the dynamics of power and working conditions between DWs and DWEs. Recognising that other intersecting factors exist, literature shows that there is still a necessity to analyse domestic work through the race and class lens. The discussion encompassed the impact of historical injustices, like slavery, in shaping the exploitation and dehumanisation experienced by DWs, especially Black African women, and how these disparities persist in contemporary societies, including South Africa. Furthermore, the examination extended to the intricate

relationships between DWs and DWEs, including race, class, culture, and family dynamics, which contribute to the perpetuation of power imbalances and exploitation within domestic work environments.

3.5 Abuse and violence in domestic work

Domestic workers face appalling types of abuse and violence (such as intimidation, surveillance, discrimination, and socio-economic exclusion) intensifying the already existing stress caused by performing a job that is stigmatised. Because of DWs' identities that are often socially marginalised and have working conditions that are legally ambiguous, they are more susceptible to bullying, emotional abuse, and harassment (Mendonca & D'Cruz, 2021). Lloyd (2018) defines violence as the deliberate use of physical force, either through the act or the threat of it, directed at oneself, another individual, or a group, with the intent to cause harm, psychological damage, deprivation, or death. Anwar and Brukwe (2023) use the term everyday violence which is described as the range of behaviours that occur in settings such as homes, workplaces, and social relationships that can inflict physical and psychological harm to individuals. This form of violence is more subtle than the earlier definition provided as it is entangled in the complex dynamics of unequal power in social interactions. In the context of employment for instance, acts like pay threats, employment termination, and bullying are prevalent forms of everyday violence inflicted upon workers by DWEs (Anwar & Brukwe, 2023). While physical acts of violence may be obvious to the eye and subject to stronger legal repercussions, the complex dynamics of unequal power are often not as clear. These forms of violence often remain hidden, as they are not easily identified due to their social and economic nature (Vyas & Watts, 2009). The invisibility of violence is a significant aspect, not necessarily because it is hidden, but because it persists within visible socio-political contexts (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004).

The concept of micro-aggressions can also apply to the domestic work sphere. Microaggressions are expressions of ingrained biases and assumptions, deeply embedded in one's beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and world views (Murray & Lambert, 2019). Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional, verbal or nonverbal behaviours or comments that communicate derogatory messages towards individuals based on their membership in a marginalised group (Sue & Spanierman, 2020). These actions may reinforce

stereotypes, perpetuate biases, or subtly demean the target person or group. While it is often associated with experiences of ethnic minorities regarding race, micro-aggressions can manifest in various contexts where power dynamics and inequalities exist. In the context of domestic work, micro-aggressions might involve subtle remarks by DWEs that undermine the dignity and worth of DWs based on their gender, class, nationality, or other aspects of their identity.

A DW may experience micro-aggressions from their DWE in the form of demeaning comments about their job role, assumptions about their capabilities based on stereotypes, or dismissive behaviour towards their needs and concerns. These micro-aggressions can have a cumulative and harmful effect on the well-being and self-esteem of DWs, contributing to a hostile or unwelcoming work environment. A study conducted in South Africa on DWEs' experiences of having a live-in DW documented DWEs' experiences of annoyance and subsequent use of micro-aggressions against DWs, reflecting how DWEs' biases about their DWs' intellectual capacity led to microaggressions, such as expecting constant availability (Galvaan et al., 2015). These microaggressions reinforce and perpetuate social inequality by reinforcing privileged class positions of DWEs.

South Africa has been grappling with high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) for many years. Its presence in the domestic work sector is illustrative thereof. At the time of this study the country had among the highest rape rates in the world with near 11 000 rape cases reported in the first quarter of 2022 (South African Government, 2022). Findings from a South African research study on GBV in domestic work service revealed that DWs were exposed to pornography, male DWEs exposing their genitals, intruding their private spaces, creating situations where DWs were required to bring them items while they were showering, and to being touched without consent (Hlanganisa, 2020). This uncultured trend dates to the apartheid era, where Black African women workers were dependent on their jobs for survival of themselves and their families that they were subjected to sexual abuse in exchange for a job (Cock, 1989). Moreover, DWs, like other Black African women workers, were the object of sexual harassment in their workplaces.

A systematic and meta-analysis study on the prevalence of sexual violence experienced by DWs in Ethiopia reported that sexual violence (sexual harassment, attempted rape, and rape) was high, and perpetrators were typically men (Mekonnen et al., 2022). This evidence shows

not only the imbalance of power between the DWE and DW; it reflects socially accepted hegemonic masculinity that legitimises men's power and control over women that reproduces morbid gender-based norms and inequalities. Apart from the negative psychological effects, such as depression, feelings of guilt and humiliation that come with being sexually violated, there are reproductive health issues, such as being infected with HIV, STIs, unintended pregnancies and risky abortions (Grose et al., 2021). Violence and abuse have serious implications on the health of DWs. These conditions are exacerbated as the DW may not have access to medical cover and the DWE who is the abuser will not meet the medical costs.

There is a pool of evidence-based research that show that most sexual violence or assault encounters are grossly underreported (Rahmanipour et al., 2019; Tshoane et al., 2023), and reasons often point to shame, victim-blaming and psychological impact (Nazneen & Huq, 2023). For DWs, it is often the fear of losing their livelihood. A fitting example is captured in the following excerpt of one DW's experience who was instructed by her DWE's teenage son to stop wearing underwear when she cleans. Izwi (2020) reports:

When she approached the boy's father, her employer, he denounced her as a liar, accused her of abusing his son, and dismissed her immediately. When she went home and told her husband of 17 years, he made accusations, and eventually divorced her. The trauma also impacted her relationship with her teenage son (p. 1).

The cited DW's experience is the clear exhibition of why DWs are often trapped in situations where they are compelled to remain in a work environment characterised by violence. Besides that, she suffered immediate job loss after reporting the sexual harassment, victim-blaming not only came from the DWE, but from her husband and son as well. This experience also illustrates the intersectionality of sexism and power dynamics in the domestic work sphere, where overt manifestations of sexism, such as accusations and dismissals, intertwine with subtle forms, potentially exacerbating mental health outcomes for women, as highlighted by Lewis (2018). Although she exercised power to report the incident, she lost a livelihood, husband, and child, let alone the psychological impact that this experience may have inflicted. DWs find themselves in such circumstances due to poverty and the absence of viable local alternative job opportunities (Anwar & Brukwe, 2023).

Verbal abuse in domestic service is also not unheard of. DWs often endure verbal mistreatment, which includes insults, demeaning and demoralising language, and threats (Acosta & Acosta, 2019). The verbal abuse directed at DWs falls under what is termed discursive othering, which refers to the various ways in which language is used to articulate biases against minority groups (Ladegaard, 2022). It encompasses the mechanisms and circumstances that facilitate the perpetuation of inequality and marginalisation based on group identity. This form of abuse can have detrimental effects on the emotional well-being and self-esteem of DWs, creating a hostile relationship between the DW and DWE.

In their research, Cervone et al. (2021) and Bianchi et al. (2019) highlight that the use of derogatory language perpetuates prejudice, maintains status hierarchies, and legitimises violence against marginalised groups. According to Cock (1989) DWs were scolded for being stupid and without brains. Similar to Cock's (1989) findings, but almost four decades later, findings from Ladegaard (2022) revealed frequent mentions of the DW's nationality in demeaning online posts, often gendered and racist, and accompanied by explicitly negative adjectives such as being dirty, lazy, or stupid, linking race and nationality to negative personality traits. This shows the intersectionality embedded in discriminatory language and how it marginalises DWs, while reinforcing existing prejudices.

This part of reviewed literature highlights the distressing prevalence of abuse and violence endured by DWs, manifesting as intimidation, surveillance, discrimination, and socio-economic marginalisation. DWs, often hailing from socially marginalised backgrounds, confront bullying, emotional mistreatment, and harassment. Various forms of violence, including more subtle 'everyday violence' entrenched in unequal power dynamics, have been explored. The domestic work sector in South Africa exemplifies the country's high rates of gender-based violence, with DWs subjected to DWE-perpetrated sexual harassment, exploitation, and assault. These incidents of sexual violence bear severe physical and psychological consequences for DWs, who often hesitate to report due to victim-blaming and the potential jeopardy of their livelihoods. Verbal abuse, derogatory language, and demeaning comments further compound the marginalisation and inequality experienced by DWs. These abuses persist due to ingrained prejudices and discriminatory rhetoric that reinforce damaging stereotypes about DWs based on their race and nationality.

3.6 The intersection: Domestic Workers and Employers

The history of societal power imbalances based on gender, ethnicity, race, and social status are firmly ingrained in domestic work relationships. According to Bloom (2015), historically a woman's social rank was defined as either having a DW, or she was one. These connections still exist today as a normal method for families to balance the numerous, sometimes conflicting demands of work and family (Hochschild, 2012; Masterson & Hoobler, 2019). Despite hiring DWs for cleaning duties, women still feel compelled to maintain control and oversee these tasks which does not necessarily challenge the existing gendered division of labour (Moras, 2017). Individually, the dynamics of these interactions have a significant impact on both the DWE's and DW's functioning.

The narrative that dominates society and literature is that domestic employment relationships most often exist in a context of high-power distance (Hofstede, 2016), where the worker accedes to the DWE as they pay for the services of the DW. This means that the DWE's assumed position of power is what sets the tone of relations between themselves and the employee. On the contrary, sometimes "care implies control over the recipient" (Salmenniemi, 2016, p. 131). In the context where the DW provides care to the DWE, such as childcare, eldercare, or household maintenance, the dynamics of control may shift. When the DWE relies on the DW for care, this dependency can create vulnerabilities for the DWE as well. If the DW chooses to leave unannounced or terminates their employment, the DWE may struggle to find alternative care arrangements, thus relinquishing control over their own care needs. The possibility of the DW leaving without notice not only highlights their agency in the relationship, but also challenges the assumption of unilateral control by the DWE. It suggests that the power dynamics in the relationship are fluid and subject to negotiation, rather than fixed in favour of the DWE.

Salmenniemi (2016) challenges the assumption of fixed power in DWE-DW relationships, highlighting that power is fluid and context-dependent as posited by post-structural feminism. This perspective recognises that even in power imbalances, marginalised individuals possess agency and can engage in acts of resistance. The recipients of care, who could be children, elderly individuals, or people with disabilities, become reliant on the DWs for their daily needs and well-being. This control could stem from making decisions about their daily

routines, activities, and sometimes even their medical care. This can possibly create a power imbalance. Due to their dependence on the DWs, care recipients may have limited autonomy and agency in decision-making, and their preferences might be secondary to those of the DW. This can vary significantly based on the specific care arrangements, sociocultural factors, and the multiple dynamics between the DW and DWE. However, in some cases, these power imbalances can be problematic, leading to potential abuse or mistreatment of individuals in vulnerable positions.

Domestic work relationships have a significant impact on how the DWE and employee define, assess, and position themselves in society (Anaza & Rutherford, 2012). The distribution of resources and power is often unequal between a DW and her DWE due to, for example, the absence of formal human resource policy and, oftentimes, the DWE has the liberty to set the working hours, benefits, and wages even if they do not necessarily align with the labour laws in place (Baxter et al., 2009). Post-structural feminism emphasises that power relations play a crucial role in shaping these dynamics. The DWEs, often from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds, hold more power in determining the terms of the DW's employment. This power imbalance can lead to the exploitation of DWs and exacerbate the work-family conflict they experience. This creates an unlevelled field between the DW and the DWE. Surveys conducted in South Africa revealed that one out of five participants admitted to paying their DWs less than the minimum wage (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019). Such research results are a representation of failed systemic factors, such as economic disparities, social inequalities, and the influence of neoliberal policies, that shape and perpetuate power imbalances in the DW-DWE relationship.

The dynamics of DWE-DW relationships have implications for major societal issues including women's economic and career mobility, work-family management, and transmigration issues (Calás & Smircich, 2011). The availability of DWs can alleviate some of the work-family conflicts faced by DWEs, especially women. Outsourcing domestic chores and caregiving responsibilities allows DWEs to devote more time and energy to their careers, potentially advancing their professional aspirations (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020). However, spending a significant amount of time working in someone else's home can also mean that DWs have limited opportunities to pursue their education or seek higher-paying jobs, which can hinder their own economic advancement. As articulated by Tizon (2017), in many cases, DWs may not be able to provide their own families with the same level of care

they offer their employer's family, with the resulting possibility of DW's work-family conflict and other negative individual outcomes. On the other hand, it is important to note that there are stories of DWs that successfully pursue studies and other form of skills development (Sineke, 2023). This shows that dynamics between DWs and DWEs are complex and not linear, characterised by intricate nuances.

The status quo has seen a slight shift in the dynamics between the DW and her DWE. On the one hand, both DWEs and DWs may view themselves as partners in a complex, taxing work-family balancing act (Hoobler, 2016). DWs are seen as extensions of mothers, and they may influence childrearing by transmitting their own wishes and values even when they are not physically present (Wu, 2017). Although this reinforces the traditional notion that caregiving responsibilities primarily belong to women, it also highlights the potential agency, transmission of values and influence of DWs. It is, however, essential to recognise that this influence may not always be a result of empowerment but could also be propelled by unequal power relations and expectations. On the other hand, the partnership aims to ease the DWEs' home demands, enabling them to balance career and household responsibilities. The relationship could be seen as mutual, in the sense that the DW provides labour for remuneration and the DWE can focus on their own work away from home. However, this reliance on DWs raises questions about the equitable distribution of household and caregiving responsibilities that may inadvertently perpetuate gendered roles within families.

Furthermore, DWE-DW relationships can be incredibly intimate, particularly when they are between two women. In a study of urban Indian DWs, it was concluded that domestic employment relationships are settings where class differences are "reproduced [yet] challenged on a daily and intimate basis" as these interactions are the most "intense, sustained contact with members of other classes" that most people will encounter (Dickey, 2000, p. 463). DWEs request employees to work in the private spheres of their lives and engage in highly personal tasks (Lutz, 2002). These requests are inclusive but not limited to assisting in personal care and hygiene of family members, and employees have knowledge of the quality of relationships between household members. In a study conducted to examine the relations between DWEs and DWs, one employee in South Africa stated that, "I make their beds every day...I wash their underwear every day...I answer their phone and take messages...I know everything about...their lives" (Kubu in Ally, 2010, p. 96). These issues of power prompt questions around, "What social, household, and individual factors influence

whether DWEs and workers view themselves as equals?"; "How may DWs leverage their DWEs' positions of power to help advance their own personal and economic well-being?"; and "When are power dynamics most likely to arise over the course of the employment relationship and how do DWEs and workers manage such challenges?" (Lutz, 2002). We see then that dynamics do incur shifts. It is not a given that the DWE is the one that yields all the power. Thus, the dynamics can and do revolve around the relationship between the DW and the DWE.

3.6.1 The home as a workplace: Part of the family rhetoric

Domestic work goes beyond a mere task performance and is influenced by the private space in which it occurs. Many researchers on domestic work argue that domestic work's uniqueness lies in the intimacy resulting from care work's physical nature, the privacy of the domestic setting, and the interpersonal dimension involved (Boris, 2016, 2017, 2018; Boris & Coles, 2021; Griffin, 2020; Wee et al., 2023). Marchetti (2022) avows that DWs do not merely provide a service but are essentially selling a relationship. For Hochschild (2012) this relationship involves a process of outsourcing of the self and the commodification of emotional work, where DWs are expected to embody and fulfil the desires of their DWEs to create a sense of love and closeness. In the context of DWE-DW relations, this means that DWs may be required to not only perform physical tasks but also manage emotional aspects of caregiving.

"In the negotiation of extra-wage payments, in the exchange of services completely outside any contract, in the gossip between women, and in the relations between workers and children, it is impossible not to recognise the existence of a large amount of affection" (Goldstein, 2013, p. 64). This fact, however, does not preclude a hierarchical relationship, with clear demarcations between DWEs and subordinates, such as, between those who can buy domestic services and those who, by offering their services, manage to access one of the less severe alternatives of survival (Brites, 2014). Such a dynamic can exert significant power over the DWs, as they may feel obligated to meet the emotional demands of their DWEs to maintain their employment or secure better working conditions. Furthermore, the concept of outsourcing of the self suggests that the DWs' identity is intertwined with their role in caregiving. This highlights the complexity of power dynamics in DWE-DW relationships,

where emotional labour can be both an asset and a potential source of exploitation or vulnerability for DWs.

At the household level, many women who hire DWs do not see themselves as formal DWEs. Instead, they view themselves as consumers of household services, referring to the women who work in their homes as ‘the help’ (Hoobler, 2016; Kennedy, 2011). DWEs, dismissing the documented power differential between the DWE and DW, may describe domestic employees as ‘part of the family’ (Galvaan et al., 2015; Kennedy, 2011). Jansen (2019) posits that South African White people often sentimentally reflect on individual Black African women who cared for them as children and refer to them as being like family or like a mother to them. However, Coetzee (2020) suggests that by referring to DWs as “like family”, DWEs may create a sense of emotional attachment, but it can also mask the unequal power relations in these relationships. The use of such terms may downplay the labour and agency of DWs, reinforcing stereotypes of Black African women as maternal figures or perpetuating an image of benevolence from the DWE. These factors can also culminate in most DWs being treated as invisible.

Despite the idea of homes being considered safe places, growing evidence indicates that DWs often face unhealthy and unsafe working conditions (WIEGO, 2023). DWs often have a personal, intimate knowledge of their DWEs, but the relationship is highly unequal which results in many DWs being vulnerable to multiple abuses. Such an environment impacts negatively on the DW, thus making it hard for the DW to thrive in the workplace as they are expected to be subservient. Jansen (2019) calls DWs ‘outsiders within’ who remain a prominent socio-economic institution in post-apartheid South Africa, a position entangled with contradictions and multiple social boundaries. Being outside and being within describes how DWs exist within the households of their DWEs but may still feel excluded or marginalised due to their racial, gendered, and social positions. The complexity and multidimensional role of DWs in South Africa’s social fabric positions them in spaces of both connection and separation, and they also serve as pivotal points in negotiating differences in a society with deep historical inequalities.

Marchetti (2022) points out that the relationship between DWs and DWEs is complex and does not fit neatly into traditional work categories. The personal nature of domestic work often blurs the lines between family and work, informal agreements and formal contracts,

emotional connections and professional obligations, and the private home and public spaces. Many DWs are confined behind security walls and are restricted from receiving visitors. The nature of domestic work means that household members have a significant influence on the daily working conditions of these workers (Brizi & Bertolaso, 2017). DWEs often employ the family metaphor to portray the employment relationship, masking the reality of an unequal power dynamic. This metaphor allows DWEs to switch between a contractual or familial approach to the relationship based on their convenience (Taylor, 2019). Furthermore, DWEs of DWs are not a homogeneous group, leading to varying expectations regarding the requisites of DWs (Brizi & Bertolaso, 2017). This individualised employment relationship largely excludes DWs from decision-making processes, leaving them with little or no bargaining power when it comes to determining working conditions (Marais & Van Wyk, 2015a).

Findings from De Villiers and Taylor (2019) revealed that DWEs' compliance with legislation, considering the employee as part of the family, retirement planning, and showing respect were significant factors in promoting a positive work experience for South African DWs. However, the prevalent perception that labour standards cannot be imposed in private homes means that many DWEs do not comply, and the government does not enforce labour laws regarding wages, benefits, and working conditions. In the instances where they are covered by laws, they may not be covered in practice. The implementation and enforcement are weak or may be non-existent, and the private households or individuals who employ DWs may not pay into payroll taxes or collect income tax (WIEGO, 2023).

The social boundaries and rules of interaction are largely determined by the DWE and function to maintain the DWs' position within the household as a worker (Ginsburg, 2000). Morrison's (2015) study examined the informal fostering of Black African DWs' children by the White families they worked for. The research highlights how these relationships transgress social boundaries and conventions, creating strong emotional bonds between the DWs and their employers. Morrison contends that these bonds form the basis for the informal fostering arrangements, integrating the children into the routines and lives of the employers' families and shaping their relationships with the DWEs. However, the uneven power dynamics inherent in these relationships consistently positioned the DWs in a subordinate role. They were simultaneously treated as 'intimate family members' and 'outsiders' who were expected to remain silent and invisible within the home until summoned to engage

(Goldman, 2005). This strained duality was characterised by conflicting emotions of trust and mistrust, dependency and depersonalisation, alongside behaviours that oscillated between paternalism and exploitation (Chen, 2011).

DWEs often treat their DWs like children who need supervision and control (Groves & Lui, 2012; Rotkirch et al., 2016). Consequently, researchers have labelled these relationships as paternalistic or maternalistic (Ally, 2010). King (2012) submits that maternalism could better describe the emotionally complicated relationship between a DW and her DWE who uses both kindness and assumed kinship to manipulate the DW to prioritise her obligations to the DWE's family above her own family. However, the situation is not entirely one-sided. As noted by Ally (2010) and Cock (1989) some DWs may employ agency within this complex relationship. They strategically use the DWE's maternalistic projections to their advantage, deriving personal benefits and seeking to improve their employment conditions. This act of resistance shows how DWs navigate the power dynamics to gain agency and better their circumstances within the limitations imposed by the relationship.

King (2012) suggests that, in situations where the employee is empowered through the relationship, patronage could be considered a more appropriate term. This points to the significance of power dynamics in shaping the interactions between DWEs and DWs. Patronage implies a more equal exchange of power and resources between the parties involved. It is unlike the maternalistic relationship, where the DWE exercises control and assumes a nurturing role over the DW, patronage suggests a form of support and mutual benefit. In this context, the DW might have agency and be more actively involved in negotiating the terms of their employment and asserting their rights. Therefore, empowerment may emerge when there is a recognition of the DW's labour as valuable and essential, rather than solely based on maternalistic projections or benevolence. It could also be a result of the DW finding spaces to assert their agency and challenge oppressive norms and expectations. However, patronage may not entirely negate the underlying power structures at play. Even in patronage relationships, there might still be asymmetrical power dynamics, especially when considering factors such as race, class, and socio-economic status among other factors.

In summary, this segment provided a comprehensive exploration of the complex dynamics in DWE-DW relationships, with a particular focus on power imbalances and the role of

emotions and intimacy in shaping these interactions. It highlighted the concept of maternalism and patronage in which DWs may experience both exploitation and agency within the relationship. Additionally, the literature probed in this section highlighted societal norms and discourses that contribute to the perpetuation of unequal power dynamics and gendered roles within families and particularly the domestic work sector. This section highlights the need for recognising and challenging the power imbalances and systemic factors that shape DWE-DW relationships, while also acknowledging the complexity and nuances involved in these interactions.

3.7 Self-determination, identity, and resilience among DWs

Self-determination and resilience are crucial concepts when examining the experiences of DWs as they often have complex identities that encompass not only their professional roles, but also their backgrounds. The existing DW trope can reinforce societal stigma and negatively affect DWs' self-image, self-esteem, personality traits, strengths, social roles, and relationships (Bosmans et al., 2016). According to the International Labour Organization (2019) "work is part of everyone's daily life and is crucial to a person's dignity, well-being and development as a human being" (np.). This means that work does not only provide a means of livelihood; it fosters a sense of belonging beyond the family thereby contributing to a person's identity and self-worth. Thus, engaging in meaningful work can give individuals a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and fulfilment, which are important for their overall well-being and development as human beings. The discourse surrounding domestic work often positions it within the realm of dirty work (Bentein et al., 2017), contributing to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of DWs. What is meaningful or not meaningful is debatable, and unfortunately, this status quo is usually assigned and categorised by those that do not identify with the dirty work. Sadly, findings from Baran et al., (2016) suggest that the daily engagement in the so-called dirty activities or tasks and their impact on the individual's subjectivity result in them perceiving their work as less meaningful.

The association of work with one's identity can yield both positive and negative experiences. Some occupations face societal stigma, impacting individual identities, well-being, and safety, while also influencing broader perceptions about the roles of these jobs (Bickmeier et al., 2014). Domestic work, among other low-paying jobs, has been subject to societal stigma,

which not only affects the individual identities of DWs, but also influences broader perceptions about the value of their jobs (Nimri et al., 2020; Ravenelle, 2019; Shigihara, 2018). This stigma can lead to the marginalisation and devaluation of DWs within society, perpetuating power imbalances in the DWE-DW relations. The devaluation of domestic work may be rooted in historical gender norms that associate women with caregiving and domestic duties, leading to the under-estimation of the value of such labour. This gendered perception may also intersect with racial and class-based stereotypes, further marginalising DWs who are often women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Guasti (2020) highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a shift in societal perceptions of previously stigmatised workers such as grocery or consumer retail employees. This newfound acknowledgment of previously stigmatised occupations as reported by Guasti (2020) could have been temporary, and not necessarily indicative of a broader societal shift in valuing and respecting these occupations. However, many DWs had contrary experiences during COVID-19 in South Africa. Anwar and Brukwe (2023) reported that DWs faced increased racial discrimination as they were perceived as potential carriers of COVID-19, subjecting them to additional precautions and suspicion, leading to further mistreatment. Furthermore, the pandemic exacerbated DWs' economic situation with many job losses or reduced working hours, leading to food insecurity and poverty (Kansiime et al., 2021; Wolfson & Leung, 2020). So, it is important to consider intersectionality and how the various systems of oppression and privilege intersect to shape the experiences and identities of DWs.

According to Mayes-Buckley (2011), self-determination involves the ability to independently shape one's thoughts and actions, while resilience refers to the ability to adapt and bounce back from challenges. Resilience is facilitated by existing assets and resources within the individual, their life and environment in the face of adversity (Windle, 2011). Self-determination and resilience are attributes that are not inherent; they are intricately link to the discursive processes that define the roles and agency of DWs. As Gordon and Foucault (1980) highlighted power operates through knowledge and discourse, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and their capabilities. Therefore, the self-determination and resilience of DWs must be analysed within the discursive boundaries set by societal norms, class hierarchies, and gender roles, which can either enable or constrain their agency.

For DWs, resilience and self-determination attributes can serve as powerful tools for asserting their rights and agency. For example, being self-determined could increase DWs' capacity to negotiate working conditions, demand fair wages, and establish boundaries within the DWE-DW relationship, while being resilient could equip them with the psychological strength to endure such hardships, and seek better opportunities. Research on immigrant DWs in the Netherlands found that they developed resilience strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, which allowed them to navigate the severe challenges imposed by their precarious legal status and the pandemic's impact. These strategies included adapting to income volatility, maintaining family connections, and making strategic decisions about mobility and status (Siruno & Siegel, 2023). Similarly, a study on irregular Latinx migrant workers in the United States revealed their use of resilience tactics like cognitive reframing, adaptability, and cultural pride which fostered meaning, purpose, and hope while facing challenges (Garcini et al., 2022). However, it is important to recognise that possessing these traits does not imply tolerating mistreatment or these replacing systemic reforms. Instead, being self-determined and resilient aids navigating adversity while preserving one's dignity and self-worth, which could be mobilised into collective action to engender structural changes (Freire, 2021; Sewpaul & Larsen, 2014).

The stigma of dirty work can be challenged through different defensive and coping strategies used by stigmatised workers to create a more positive sense of self (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014). A study conducted by Bosmans et al., (2016) reported several coping mechanisms used by DWs including (a) emotional self-regulation where they did not react to the DWE's verbal abuse or mistreatment, (b) focusing on aspiration where they saw their current job as a stepping stone toward achieving their goals and (c) turning to religion. According to Mcwatts (2018), DWs employ silence as hidden resistance, presenting deference in public while concealing underlying disdain. Silence can be seen as a form of subversion, challenging the assumption that their compliance equates acceptance. This demonstrates the performative aspect of power dynamics where DWs might outwardly appear submissive as a survival tactic, but beneath the facade, there can exist a profound dissatisfaction or even resentment towards their treatment that the DWE might not be able to recognise. Some linguistic scholars have recognised silence as a powerful language for emotional experience (Ephratt, 2022; Martyres, 1995; Sigurdsson, 2004). The outward display of deference can be seen as tools of negotiation within the power dynamic in the DWE-DW relations.

Other studies report that DWs fake or pretend to accept their experiences as normal to avoid thinking too much about their mistreatment (Bosmans et al., 2016; Fonagy & Target, 2000). While these strategies maybe used autonomously or independently by DWs to cope with their experiences, and they can offer some form of individual resilience, they do not resolve the root causes of mistreatment related to the working conditions they face. These findings illustrate how power imbalances between DWEs and DWs play a significant role in shaping the coping strategies that workers adopt. For example, the reliance on religious faith may provide comfort and hope, but it can be a response to feeling disempowered in their work and a reflection of resignation to one's fate. Therefore, while we recognise such coping strategies reported by Bosmans et al., (2016), it is essential to consider the larger socioeconomic, and political structures that perpetuate and maintain the vulnerabilities faced by DWs.

Having resilient traits as a characteristic is not uncommon among marginalised groups; people find creative ways to bounce back and navigate adversity. In an Australian study among marginalised Aboriginal groups, it was found that the group drew strength from their indigenous perspectives and values to develop their own solutions and have courage to implement them (Gale & Bolzan, 2013). As asserted by Windle (2011), civic connectedness and belonging among the Australian Aboriginals enhanced their resilience by leveraging existing social relationships and community. In another study, exploring self-determination and resilience among Black African women facing racism and sexism in the United States, it was found that they used unconventional coping mechanisms, including self-esteem cultivation against discrimination, and underscoring their determination and dignity which showcased remarkable resilience against oppression (Mayes-Buckley, 2011). The study exemplifies Black African women's determination and resilience despite marginalisation, a quality that resonates with many DWs.

According to Saleebey (2000), the strengths perspective and resilience literatures, "obligate us to understand that however downtrodden, beaten up, sick, or disheartened and demoralized, individuals have survived, and in some cases even flourished" (p.135). This is particularly relevant in the context of migrant DWs; despite the hardship that they face, many of them can adequately deal with stressors. For instance, in an exploratory study of migrant female DWs in the Philippines, results indicate their exceptional resilience (van der Ham et al., 2014). Furthermore, a significant number of workers continue to look for opportunities

abroad. Female DWs continue to search for employment opportunities in places that are potentially harmful because they are steadfast in fighting poverty back in their homes.

According to Aroian and Norris (2000) studies have focused primarily on the resilience and well-being of migrant populations and found high resilience to be related to improved well-being and lower depression scores. Additionally, research has shown factors that might support resilience among these groups. The findings from Fu Keung Wong and Song (2008) suggest that workers whose appraisal of being abroad as positive, particularly those who perceived migration as providing more financial and material gains, had better mental health. There are other studies that reveal social support and religion as important factors in the well-being of migrant women (Lusk et al., 2021). Working according to a resilience and strengths-based approach is indicative of empowerment, helping individuals, families, and communities to recognise and utilise their capacities (Guo & Tsui, 2010; Pulla, 2017). This is aligned with Briones's (2009) view that “framing rights in the context of capability can allow the ‘victim’ herself to reclaim her right for her intended and valued quality of life” (p.141). In the context of power dynamics between DWs and their DWEs, this suggests that approaching rights from the perspective of capabilities empowers DWs to assert agency and reclaim their rights within a system that may have initially assigned them the victim tag. Instead of being solely defined by their victimhood, the DW can leverage their skills and capacities to actively shape their own rights and pursue a quality of life that aligns with their personal aspirations and values. Drawing from the literature on migrant DWs, one can be enlightened that DWs do not always view themselves as helpless, but they do have the capability of coping and even thrive under difficult circumstances.

In this section, I have discussed the impact of societal stigma on DWs, highlighting how it affects their self-perception, identity, and overall well-being. Literature reviewed has emphasised the significance of work for human dignity and development and explores the concept of meaningful work. The stigma associated with certain jobs, particularly domestic work was examined, which can lead to devaluation and marginalisation. The intersectionality of gender, race, and class is discussed in relation to this stigma. The COVID-19 pandemic's contrasting effects on different occupations are mentioned, noting increased discrimination faced by DWs. Coping strategies and their limitations are outlined, stressing the importance of addressing systemic issues. Concepts like self-determination, resilience, and marginalisation are explored within the context of DWs and other marginalised groups.

Despite the dominant trope that DWs are victimised women without agency, DWs do have resilience and can engage in resistance. Overall, the section has underlined the capability of DWs to cope and thrive despite challenges, while advocating for a strengths-based approach to empower and support them.

3.8 Summary

This literature review chapter discusses the intricate dynamics of power within DWE-DW relationships, shedding light on the pervasive influence of oppression and internalised oppression experienced by DWs. The analysis reveals how dominant groups reinforce hierarchical structures, perpetuating oppressive systems that undermine the autonomy and self-worth of DWs. Moreover, the exploration of maternalism and patronage highlights the delicate balance between agency and exploitation in these relationships. The review emphasises the crucial need to recognise and address power imbalances, systemic factors, and societal norms that sustain unequal dynamics. The concept of meaningful work emerges as pivotal, challenging the stigma associated with certain occupations, particularly domestic work, and advocating for empowerment and respect. Importantly, this chapter underscores the resilience and potential for growth among DWs despite adversities, advocating for a paradigm shift from victimisation to strength-based support. This chapter lays a robust foundation for analysis and interpretation of findings in the subsequent chapters in this thesis.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The research methodology serves as a critical framework for systematically addressing research problems and achieving the objectives of a study. Davidavičienė (2018) succinctly articulates its significance, defining it as the roadmap guiding researchers in collecting data that aligns with the study's aims, objectives, and research questions. Similarly, Basias and Pollalis (2018) emphasise that the methodology chosen should align with the research objectives, acting as a roadmap for the study. Thus, this chapter discusses the methodological processes and techniques followed in this study encompassing various components such as the research paradigm, design, approach, sampling techniques, data collection procedures, analysis methods, and ethical considerations. The chapter provides a comprehensive guide for the reader in how the study was conducted with rigour and coherence in addressing the research aims and objectives. Furthermore, this chapter provides justification for the chosen strategies and decisions, contributing to the overall trustworthiness of the research findings.

4.2 Research Paradigm: Critical

A research paradigm determines the choice of research approach, informed by philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It encompasses ontology, which pertains to the fundamental nature of existence, and epistemology, which concerns how we understand reality (Bryman, 2016). Epistemology explores what constitutes knowledge and the methods of acquiring it, highlighting the relationship between the researcher and the underlying ontology. The main research paradigms include positivism, critical theory, realism, and interpretivism. Positivism is typically associated with quantitative research methods, whereas the remaining three paradigms are commonly applied in qualitative research endeavours (Yong et al., 2021).

The critical research paradigm was selected for this study. It is also known as the transformational paradigm since it aims to influence politics to confront social oppression and enhance social justice in each circumstance (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The critical research paradigm is rooted in critical theory and aims to challenge existing power structures and promote social change. This paradigm goes beyond traditional positivist approaches that seek to describe and explain phenomena, instead focusing on understanding and transforming oppressive social, political, and economic systems. Drawing the links between neoliberalism

and positivism, Sewpaul (2024) argues that, “neoliberalism and positivism perfected the arts of classification and categorisation, which are accepted as normal features of everyday life, supporting discrimination, exclusions and inequalities”. Central to this thesis is my contestation of these dominant discourses and practices in relation to the institution of domestic work. Critical research seeks to empower marginalised communities and challenge dominant ideologies through a process of reflection, dialogue, and action (Dammak, 2015; Mushunje & Sewpaul, 2021).

Research within this paradigm, the current study is characterised by a focus on power dynamics within social structures, a conscious acknowledgment of biased realities, and a commitment to promoting agency, liberation, and emancipation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Sewpaul, 2013; 2020). The critical research paradigm challenges researchers to critically engage with issues of power, privilege, and oppression, with the goal of promoting social justice and transformative change. It prioritises uncovering hidden forms of agency, exposing intersections of politics, morality, and ethics, and actively promoting human rights and social justice. Praxis, action research, and participatory methods are key components of research conducted within this paradigm (Asghar, 2013). Applying the critical research paradigm to the dynamics of power in DWE-DW relations involves critically examining the underlying structures of oppression and inequality within this context and working towards transformative change.

This critical research paradigm recognises the inherent power imbalances within the DWE-DW relationship. This includes acknowledging the historical and societal factors that contribute to the exploitation and marginalisation of DWs. It prioritises amplifying DWs’ and DWEs’ voices, understanding their realities, and addressing their needs. Critical research challenges narratives justifying exploitation, analysing underlying racial, class, and gender ideologies. It emphasises praxis, integrating theory and practice to inform interventions and social change. This calls for a critical analysis of the discourses surrounding domestic work, uncovering the underlying dominant ideologies that inform and reproduce unjust narratives and practices.

4.3 Research Approach: Qualitative

Quantitative, mixed methods, and qualitative research are the primary approaches utilised in research studies. Quantitative research involves assigning numerical values to observations to elucidate and describe phenomena (Basias & Pollalis, 2018). Mixed methods, on the other hand, integrates both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing researchers to combine the strengths of both approaches to address complex research problems that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods can adequately tackle alone. This study employed a qualitative approach to understand the power dynamics in the relations between DWs and DWEs. A qualitative approach utilises empirical information such as life experiences, case studies and stories that display practises and problems that individuals are confronted with by focusing on their in-depth meanings and drives (Taherdoost, 2022). Hence the aim is for depth rather than quantity of understanding. This means that a qualitative approach involves human experiences and behaviours, considering both social interactions and individual actions within broader socio-economic, political and cultural contexts (Mayer, 2015). Qualitative methods stem from the belief that truth is relative, and knowledge is constructed by individuals, shaped by personal assumptions, biases, and prejudices (Ormston et al., 2014).

Unlike quantitative methods, generally rooted in positivism which aim for neutrality, replication and generalisability, qualitative approaches prioritise understanding the complexity and richness of human experiences. Researchers using qualitative methods recognise that individuals interpret the world differently based on their unique backgrounds, beliefs, and cultural contexts. Therefore, in the current study, by acknowledging the role of DWs' and DWEs' assumptions, biases, and prejudices in shaping knowledge, it enabled me to uncover diverse perspectives and insights that may have been overlooked in other research approaches. This recognition of subjectivity allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomena and promotes reflexivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), encouraging me to critically reflect on my own positionality and its potential influence on the research process and findings.

The aim of adopting a qualitative approach was to attain subjective views and experiences of DWs and DWEs, with a particular focus on experiences of power in DW-DWE relationships. The qualitative approach helped capture how DWs and DWEs interpret their environment, shaping their actions or behaviours (Bryman, 2016). The study looked at DWs' and DWEs'

modes of communication, their actions, and, most importantly, their sources of oppression and privilege. As it will be seen in Chapters five and six in this thesis, conducting research using a qualitative approach provided me with rich and detailed data from which the study's findings were drawn.

Providing a broad understanding of the actions, emotions, opinions, experiences, and feelings of the participants allows for the development of appropriate recommendations. In a recent theoretical essay examining the perspectives on dirty work and identities, Pereira et al. (2022) recommended that future research adopts qualitative approaches since the intention is not to identify regularities or trends in the data, but to listen to the participants and their respective life experiences. Qualitative methodologies were suitable in this study because they privileged the subjective experiences of individuals throughout their processes of constructing and reconstructing themselves. Using techniques that allowed for the capturing of individuals' subjectivity, including their emotions, perspectives, opinions, and memories, enhanced the comprehension of meanings.

4.4 Research Design: Participative Narrative Inquiry

Participative Narrative Inquiry (PNI), a branch of participatory action research was selected as the research design for this study (Kurtz, 2009). PNI aims to uncover personal truths, and experiences as raw as possibly narrated by participants, and distinctively allow participants themselves to interpret those experiences (Alasuutari et al., 2008). Kurtz (2009) elegantly defends the merit of narratives in research; she makes an interesting analogy between stories and seeds:

...stories are like seeds. I like this metaphor because it captures how stories condense complex understandings and perspectives into packages that can be transmitted and stored, then retrieved from storage, planted, and germinated again in the fertile soil of receptive minds. And like seeds, stories are organisms of their own, worthy of respect and admiration (p. 11).

Just as seeds are living organisms deserving of respect and admiration, stories carry their own vitality and importance in shaping understanding and awareness of power dynamics in the relationship between DWs and DWEs. The power embedded in telling our stories gives a way of integrating past and present experiences into meaningful learning, which after such introspection can allow foretelling the future (McAlpine, 2016). This coheres with the view

of Sewpaul (2006; 2020) who discussed the liberating potential and power of the narrative or biography within the emancipatory social work theoretical framework.

The founding values of PNI are like some of the principles that guided a critical action research study on children living on the streets in Durban (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009). Like the research study by Sewpaul & Osthus (2009), the current study integrated Freirian strategies of consciousness raising to get DWs and DWEs to comprehend the influence of structural oppressions and advantages. The intention was to engage DWs and DWEs in dialogical encounters with the emancipatory goal of helping "... them develop the confidence and courage to engage constructively as citizens [human beings]" (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009, p. 101). The dialogues were meant to be a reflexive process for all the participants. This strategy serves to reinforce – rather than shrink – their responsibility; and to help them understand their positionality as DWs and DWEs. Sewpaul (2013) argued that;

Since ideology is socially, culturally, and politically constructed, if people are provided with alternative learning experiences, whether formal or informal, they have the ability to disrupt dominant thinking. Sometimes a single word, phrase, or observation can constitute an epiphany that makes us question and alter the ideas and values that we have grown up with (p. 119).

While we must recognise that "for the most part their [DWs] parameters of choice are extremely narrow; [and that] they are markedly powerless to alter their situation" (Cock, 1990, p.15), we must be careful not to negate their (especially as a collective) sense of agency and resilience that can enable them to consider alternatives and champion advocacy initiatives. Such an approach must be complemented with engaging DWEs in understanding their positions of relative advantage, compared with DWs. This is what (Fanon, 1963), Freire (1970; 1976) and Humphries (2008) would support to be praxis-oriented research, the type of research that seeks to influence practical change as part of the research process.

Praxis research can play a crucial role in challenging the powerlessness narrative of DWs by highlighting their agency, amplifying their voices, and advocating for their rights. This study can be seen as praxis-oriented through its alignment with the works of Butler, Freire, Gramsci, Giroux, Fanon, Sewpaul and other critical/emancipatory theorists by empowering participants, promoting dialogue and critical reflection, uncovering hidden realities, and

informing action and change within the realm of power dynamics between DWs and their DWEs.

This study provided a platform for DWs and DWEs to share their stories, experiences, and perspectives. The interviews and focus group discussions (FDGs) gave participants a platform for dialogue and critical reflection, allowing participants to express their agency, encouraging empowerment, even in the smallest form. For instance, one FGD participant said, *“I felt that the conversation was interesting, and as much as you say you have learned a lot from us, I think we have also learnt a lot from you. You got us thinking about things we had never really thought about before. For me, I think you have taken us out of our dark paths and showed us the light, because you are enlightening us in my view. It was interesting”*. This shows the reciprocal nature of the dialogue, where both the researchers and participants gained valuable insights. This also highlights the importance of inclusive conversations that challenge existing perceptions and promote mutual growth and understanding. In this respect, Ghaye's and Sørly's (2019) questions are instructive: “What conversations are worth having? How are they started? Who is involved and who is left out? Whose reality counts?” (p. 35).

By challenging dominant ideologies on domestic work through the interview questions, I engaged them in praxis-oriented research. Freire's concept of conscientisation emphasises the importance of critical reflection and action to challenge oppressive systems (Freire, 1970, 1973). In the design of this study, I aimed to engage both DWs and DWEs in empowering dialogue to critically reflect on their roles and relationships within the context of power dynamics. Gramsci's notion of hegemony highlights the role of dialogue and contestation in challenging dominant ideologies (Bakalov, 2024; Daldal, 2014; Gramsci, 1995, 1999). Informed by praxis-oriented research, I encouraged critical reflection and potential transformation by facilitating discussions that challenge existing power structures.

I explored strategies of resistance, resilience, and empowerment employed by DWs and DWEs in their daily lives. Documenting and highlighting these strategies, I challenge the notion of powerlessness and illuminate the ways in which DWs navigate and negotiate their work and living conditions. This could provide a counter-narrative that emphasises the agency and resourcefulness of DWs. Correlating with Fanon's exploration of the psychological effects of colonialism, this study aimed to uncover hidden realities within the

DW-DWE relationship (Fanon, 1963, 1992; Pithouse, 2016). This research study revealed the deeper power dynamics at play, shedding light on the lived experiences of DWs and DWEs by delving into beneath surface-level interactions.

In conducting this study, I encouraged the active participation and engagement of both DWs and DWEs, with a commitment to avoiding epistemic exploitation, which “is common within institutions of higher education, activist coalitions and alliances, and interpersonal relationships” (Berenstain, 2016, p. 570). By involving DWs and DWEs in the research process, they contributed their knowledge, expertise, and lived experiences to shape future research agendas, policies, and practice. Giroux’s critical pedagogy emphasises the link between education and social change (Giroux, 1999, 2006). This study generated evidence to not only challenge the powerlessness narrative by highlighting the structural factors contributing to these issues, but to also inform policy changes and advocate for labour rights and protections for DWs. Through translating research findings into actionable recommendations as seen in Chapter seven, this study contributes to the broader goal of social transformation in the context of domestic work.

4.5 Sampling

According to Bhardwaj (2019) sampling is the process of selecting a subset from a population group for a specific research purpose, while a sample refers to a subset of people or objects chosen from a larger population for analysis. Probability and non-probability represent the two main types of sampling methods. Probability sampling, also known as random sampling, ensures that every unit within a population has an equal chance of being selected for inclusion in the sample. Conversely, non-probability sampling does not provide an equal opportunity for all members of the population to participate in the study. This is because participants are not selected randomly from the population. Instead, they are chosen based on specific criteria determined by the researcher. Examples of non-probability sampling methods include snowball, purposive, quota, and convenience sampling (Taherdoost, 2016).

4.5.1 Sampling and Recruitment Strategies

Given the qualitative nature of this study, non-probability sampling methods were utilised, specifically convenience and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where existing study participants recruit future participants from among their acquaintances (Bryman, 2016). It is often used when the population of interest is hard to

reach or hidden. Participants are selected based on their ability to provide relevant information or meet specific criteria, and the sampling process continues to grow like a snowball as initial participants refer others. Snowball sampling was utilised by initiating contact with a single DW residing in the building complex in Durban where I resided during the initial phases of data collection. This initial participant was knowledgeable about other DWs and DWEs who met the predetermined inclusion criteria for the study. Subsequently, these initial participants were asked to identify others who met the specified characteristics, with their permission obtained before connecting them with me.

Convenience sampling, also known as incidental sampling, formed a component of the methodology in this study, involving the selection of readily available and accessible individuals to participate (Dammak, 2015). Following the completion of ten interviews with four DWs and five interviews with four DWEs in Durban, a relocation to Empangeni necessitated a shift in the recruitment strategy. Although the inclusion of uMhlatuze municipality accommodated my logistical constraints due to relocation, by incorporating the area into the study, it ensured broader geographical coverage and a more diverse sample pool. This expansion allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of power dynamics within the DW sector across different contexts and demographics. Additionally, it facilitated access to participants who may have been inaccessible if the study had been restricted to Durban alone. Furthermore, including both municipalities acknowledges the significance of regional variations in the experiences of DWs and DWEs. Factors such as socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, and employment practices can vary between urban (eThekweni) and peri-urban (uMhlatuze) areas, influencing power dynamics within domestic work relationships.

Within the uMhlatuze municipality, recruitment predominantly occurred at a personal training gym catering to women of diverse racial backgrounds, facilitating easy access to both DWs (through their DWEs) and independently by DWEs. It is important to note that when a DWE referred their DW, the DWE was not eligible to be interviewed. After receiving two referrals of DWs from DWEs, I noticed that those participants seemed more guarded and cautious during the interview process. Recognising the potential impact of this dynamic on the depth of our conversations, I decided to shift my approach of recruitment. Instead, I began asking for referrals directly from DWs themselves, allowing for a more authentic and open dialogue during the interviews. I also recruited DWs during my morning walks around my

neighbourhood in Empangeni. Sometimes, I would identify DWs by their uniforms while driving, during their lunch breaks, or when they were walking children to and from school.

Initially, recruitment was intended to be conducted through community networks, domestic worker organisations, and direct outreach. While these methods were effective in recruiting DW participants, recruiting DWE participants in Empangeni as I was still new to the area—particularly those willing to engage in critical discussions about power dynamics in domestic work—proved more challenging.

As a result, few employer participants were recruited from within professional and academic peer networks. This shift was driven by accessibility and feasibility but also introduced potential power and influence concerns. The risk was that employer participants might have felt compelled to participate or moderate their responses based on familiarity with me. To mitigate this issue of power and influence, these were the steps taken:

- All participants were explicitly informed that participation was voluntary, confidential, and had no bearing on personal or professional relationships. Measures were in place to ensure that employer participants did not feel obligated to participate or tailor their responses.
- Throughout the study, I engaged in continuous reflexivity to critically assess my role and influence. Recognising my positionality as a researcher with lived experience in domestic work, I was conscious of the potential impact this might have had on the narratives of both employer and domestic worker participants.
- Employer participants were not exclusively drawn from peer networks; efforts were made to ensure diversity in their backgrounds and experiences. By including a range of employers from different racial and socio-economic contexts, the study reduced the risk of homogeneity in perspectives.
- To minimise bias introduced through recruitment within peer circles, findings from employer interviews were analysed alongside domestic worker narratives. This helped identify consistencies, contradictions, and power-laden narratives beyond any potential influence I may have had over employer participants.

For focus group discussions (FGDs), women seeking casual domestic work were approached along a frequented roadside bus stop and recruited for the study. Initially, the research

proposal outlined a plan to conduct FGDs with the same DW participants from the interviews. However, this approach required modification due to several factors. Firstly, a geographical relocation from Durban to Empangeni resulted in the DWs being situated in different areas. Secondly, logistical challenges arose in assembling DWs from the interview pool in a single location, even when attempting to facilitate FGDs through online platforms. These circumstances necessitated a reassessment of the research strategy to adapt to the practical constraints encountered. In instances where the desired participant pool was not fully realised, social media platforms, specifically Facebook groups tailored for DWs in KwaZulu-Natal and through my WhatsApp contacts, were leveraged to identify additional interested participants. The specific inclusion criteria for participants are delineated in the forthcoming table.

4.5.2 Population

The population for this study consisted of DWs and DWEs in KwaZulu-Natal, specifically within eThekweni Municipality and uMhlathuze Municipality. The selection of these municipalities was informed by their diverse socio-economic and racial demographics, allowing for a nuanced exploration of power relations in employer-domestic worker relationships.

The study targeted both current and past DWEs and DWs to capture experiences across different employment arrangements and historical periods. The population criteria were designed to ensure a diverse representation of participants based on gender, race, and employment history while focusing on the evolving power dynamics in domestic work relationships.

This study was designed to capture power dynamics beyond the dominant Black African-White employer model by including Indian and Black African employers, reflecting the shifting landscape of domestic work employment in post-apartheid South Africa. The inclusion of both current and past employers and workers allowed for a broader exploration of how power relations have evolved over time.

The defined population provided a rich and intersectional understanding of employer-domestic worker relations, examining how historical labour structures, socio-economic status,

race, and gender shape contemporary experiences of power, resistance, and negotiation in the domestic work sector.

Table 2: Inclusion Criteria

| Domestic Work Employers (DWEs) | Domestic Workers (DWs) |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female/Male • 18 years and older • Black African/White/Indian • South African • Currently employs a DW full-time or has more than 1 year experience in having a full-time DW but currently employs a DW part-time. • Lives within Ethekwini Municipality or uMhlathuze Municipality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female • 18 years and older • Black African • South African • May have worked as a DW during apartheid and post 1994. (<i>Optional</i>) • Experience working as a DW for not less than one year post 1994. • Live-in/live-out but full-time and currently working as a DW. • May work for one household or several households for more than three times a week. (<i>Optional</i>) • Works within Ethekwini Municipality or uMhlathuze Municipality |

The inclusion criteria for DWEs and DWs in the study were carefully crafted to ensure representation across various demographic and experiential categories. The criteria ensured that I captured the perspectives of both DWEs and DWs across diverse demographic backgrounds, which is essential for exploring how historical and socio-political contexts shape contemporary power dynamics in these contexts. For DWEs, the criteria include gender diversity (female/male), age (18 years and older), racial diversity (Black African/White/Indian), South African nationality, and current or past experience employing a DW either full-time or part-time within two specific municipalities.

The decision to exclude Coloured DWEs from the study was based on both socio-historical factors and practical research considerations. Unlike other provinces where Coloured employers may have a more prominent role in domestic work employment, KwaZulu-Natal's historical labour migration patterns have uniquely shaped employer demographics in this sector. Indian labour migration resulted in a significant concentration of Indian employers, alongside historically dominant White employers and an emerging group of Black African employers. Additionally, from a practical research standpoint, the exclusion was also influenced by the demographic distribution of racial groups in the study's selected municipalities. Coloured communities were not significantly concentrated in central Durban nor in uMhlatuze Municipality, including Coloured employers would have required expanding the research sites beyond the chosen municipalities, which was not feasible within the study's methodological design.

Given the study's focus on power dynamics in employer-domestic worker relationships, it was methodologically necessary to prioritise the racial groups most prominently engaged in employing domestic workers within these specific locations. This approach ensured a contextually grounded and in-depth exploration of power relations, rather than a broader but potentially superficial inclusion of all racial groups. Therefore, the study was designed to reflect the lived realities of employer-domestic worker relations in KZN, capturing the dominant patterns of employment without assuming national racial distributions applied uniformly across regions.

The inclusion criteria for DWs also reflects a similar emphasis on demographic diversity, including gender (female), age (18 years and older), racial identity (Black African), South African nationality, and specific work-related experiences post-apartheid. These experiences include a minimum of one year working as a DW post-1994, either full-time or part-time, and within designated municipalities. Additionally, the criteria allow for flexibility regarding the nature of employment (live-in/live-out) and the number of households served, reflecting the varied circumstances in which DWs may be employed. Post-apartheid South Africa has seen significant socio-economic and political changes, including the implementation of policies aimed at redressing past injustices and promoting social justice and equality. However, despite these efforts, many Black African DWs continue to experience various forms of exploitation, discrimination, and marginalisation in the labour market. Concentrating on Black African South African DWs aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the

ongoing challenges faced by this demographic group in the post-apartheid era. Moreover, focusing on Black African DWs allows for a more nuanced analysis of intersectional dynamics, considering how race intersects with other axes of inequality that shape the experiences of DWs in South Africa.

4.5.3 Sample Size

The total sample size was 38 participants. The specific sample size for participants is presented in the following table.

Table 3: Sample Size

| Participant Group | Data Collection Tool | Sample Size |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|
| Black African DWs working for Black African DWEs | Interview (in-depth) | 5 |
| Black African DWs working for White DWEs | Interview (in-depth) | 5 |
| Black African DWs working for Indian DWEs | Interview (in-depth) | 5 |
| Black African DWEs | Interview (in-depth) | 4 |
| White DWEs | Interview (in-depth) | 4 |
| Indian DWEs | Interview (in-depth) | 4 |
| DWs | Focus Group Discussion | FGD 1 = 3 FGD 2 = 8 |

The sample size and composition demonstrate a deliberate effort to focus on the experiences of Black African DWs across different racial contexts, alongside the perspectives of DWEs from various racial backgrounds. Interviewing five Black African DWs each who are employed by Black African, White, and Indian DWEs allowed for an exploration of how power is negotiated and exercised within racially diverse settings, shedding light on the intersectionality of race and employment dynamics. It also provided a comparative lens through which to examine power dynamics from the perspective of those in positions of authority.

The focus group discussions with DWs, divided into two groups (FGD 1 and FGD 2), further enriched the study by encouraging collective dialogue and allowing participants to share their

experiences within a supportive group setting. This group dynamic facilitated deeper insights into the ways in which power operates within the domestic work sector, particularly among Black African DWs. Focusing on Black African DWs and DWEs while also considering other racial groups, the study illuminated the multifaceted nature of power dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa's domestic work sector.

4.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

4.6.1 Individual in-depth interviews

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research method wherein researchers conduct detailed individual interviews with a limited number of participants to understand their viewpoints regarding a specific idea or circumstance (Roller, 2020). In this study, I used qualitative in-depth interviews where the importance of giving interviewees a platform to voice their experiences and perceptions was emphasised (Bryman, 2016). Because of the praxis-oriented nature of the study, I aimed for the interviews to be “more reflexive and interactive, aiming to take a non-hierarchical approach which avoids objectifying the participant” (Ruhl, 2004, p. 140). As a researcher, I had to move away from the conventional ways of interviewing whereby “the interviewer poses questions in order to obtain knowledge about the interviewee’s world, and rarely enters into tenacious arguments about the logic and truth of what the interviewee says...or to try to change the subject’s convictions” (Kvale, 2012, p. 16).

I followed a dialectical interviewing style, which focuses on identifying contradictions in the stories or narratives shared, with an emphasis on the transformative aspects of an interview (Ruhl, 2004). I did this by adopting interview strategies that allowed DWs to articulate their experiences, using these interviews to highlight, challenge and disrupt dominant narratives and promoting counter-hegemonic narratives, aimed to make DWs challenge their constructed powerlessness. I also asked questions that uncovered contradictions in the social and material aspects of the interactions between DWs and DWEs, such as disparities in decision-making authority or unequal distribution of resources within the household. For example, “Can you give an example of a time when you disagreed with your DWE about how to handle a task? What happened?”, “How are resources like food, supplies, and amenities allocated in the household? Do you feel you have equal access to these resources?”

and “How is your compensation determined, and how does it compare to the value of the work you perform?”

When interviewing DWEs, I developed questions that prompted reflection on their perceptions and attitudes towards DWs, encouraging them to question underlying beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions. I engaged DWEs in discussions about power dynamics and how hegemonic narratives influenced their behaviour and their experiences of DWs. Some examples of these questions include: “Can you describe your general perceptions and attitudes towards domestic work and DWs?”, “What qualities do you believe are most important in a DW, and why?”, “Can you think of any privileges you have that your DW does not? How do these impact your interactions?” and “Have you ever considered the DW’s perspective on their role and working conditions? What do you think their perspective might be?” By employing a dialectical interviewing style, I was able to reveal and address the contradictions in the narratives of DWs and DWEs, challenging the power imbalances inherent in their interactions.

As an interviewer, I deliberately aimed to metaphorically be the miner as asserted by Kvale (2012):

Knowledge is understood as buried metal and the interviewer is a miner who unearths the valuable metal ...The knowledge is waiting in the subject’s interior to be uncovered, uncontaminated by the miner. The interviewer digs nuggets of data or meanings out of a subject’s pure experiences, unpolluted by any leading questions (p. 19).

Although it is almost impossible for a researcher not to have their own biases or influences, I delicately excavated insights from the participants’ experiences, without tainting them with leading questions. The interview guide was semi-structured, using open-ended questions to gain narrative-type of descriptions about each participant’s experiences (see Appendix 1-4). Relatable to the current study, Ross (2017) discusses moments of empowerment observed during the research study they conducted, emphasising that through open-ended interviews, participants were empowered to voice concerns and critiques that diverged from dominant discourse. These non-dominant perspectives were crucial in shaping their research findings and promoting participant empowerment. The questions for DWs and DWEs explored various aspects such as hiring preferences, historical context, communication, relationships, boundaries, and perceptions of power. Additionally, inquiries were made about self-worth

and self-determination, aiming to comprehend DWs' and DWEs' perspectives on their interactions and the underlying structures of oppression, privilege, and inequality.

The objective of the interviews was to foster reflexive dialogue between me and the participants, drawing on theories of change to facilitate individual and relational transformations. In a dialogue, one learns different ways of seeing and being in the world, and there is also the possibility for value-convergence. In turn, certain attitudes are cultivated such as compassion, empathy, trust, mutual respect, and tolerance, which underpin the transformation of seeing the "other" in a fundamentally different light (Neufeldt, 2011). Put simply, dialogue can produce deep individual and relational changes that can produce new behaviours through re-learning, re-humanisation, and empowerment.

While the interviewing style successfully uncovered valuable insights into participants' lived experiences, it may have limited deeper exploration of the broader socio-economic structures shaping the domestic worker-employer relationship. For instance, when an employer remarked, "*Compared to White and Indian employers... the expectations of how they [DWs] deliver the service to us Black employers is not the same*" (**Mpilo - DWE - B - 1**), I missed an opportunity to probe further into the historical and racial roots of these disparities, as explored by Fanon (1967). In few instances, deeper interrogation into systemic factors like class, race, and labour rights could have revealed how historical inequalities persist in contemporary domestic work and for participants to recognise it. Sewpaul's (2013) emphasis on linking individual experiences to broader systemic forces could have been better addressed through more focused questioning, potentially deepening the analysis of personal resistance within larger patterns of worker empowerment.

In this study, I acknowledge that conversational style of the open-ended interviews sometimes led me to focus on personal narratives, which may have overshadowed the broader socio-political and economic contexts. Some participants seemed reluctant or lacked the language to discuss issues like race, class, or inequality, which sometimes limited the depth of our discussions. I also found myself being sensitive to power dynamics, avoiding pushing participants into uncomfortable topics, particularly around systemic oppression. At times, the complexity of systemic issues, coupled with the influence of sociocultural norms that normalised inequality, made it challenging for me to fully explore these factors. Looking

back, I recognise that I could have integrated direct questions about systemic structures while still valuing participants' personal experiences.

Most of the interviews were conducted serially, as a single interview was often insufficient to establish rapport and engage thoroughly with the study's praxis-oriented nature and objectives. Read (2018) suggests that serial interviewing is appropriate when "studying complex or ill-defined issues, when interviews are subject to time constraints, when exploring change or variation over time, when participants are reluctant to share valid information...A further benefit is the opportunity it provides for verifying and cross-checking information" (p. 1). Over a series of encounters, with most participants, I established rapport, explored various topics from different perspectives and experiences, and learned from unfolding events. This approach helped with participants not to provide simplified answers, minimise experiences, and present themselves in a favourable manner which is common in once-off interviews.

The approach involved intensive and extended data collection with a maximum of three interviews with each participant. During the initial interview, participants were guided through a retrospective tool known as the Lifegrid (LG) to stimulate recall, facilitate discussion, and enhance rapport (Groenewald & Bhana, 2015). The LG chart documented participants' life changes and developments by listing years in rows and areas like family and work experiences in columns. For DWs, it included their work history; for DWEs, it detailed their hiring practices over the years. This facilitated iterative conversations. It also facilitated the collection of demographic details organically through participants' narratives rather than direct questioning. Hence, the tool proved invaluable during the second and third interviews by aiding in the reconstruction of questions to elicit richer descriptions as well as revisiting of experiences shared during the initial interview.

Each interview took approximately 45 to 90 minutes. In total, I conducted 24 interviews with 15 DWs, and 17 interviews with 12 DWEs, equalling 41 interview transcripts. While all the interviews were intended to be conducted serially with both DWs and DWEs, some participants responded more promptly than others, and rapport was established more quickly with some than with others. Quicker rapport and prompt responses were more common with DWEs than with DWs, although it was the same with few DWs. Additionally, DWs showed greater interest and engagement in participating in multiple interviews compared to DWEs. Another possibility is existing power dynamics between researchers and participants, which

could have influenced the willingness of more DWs to engage in serial interviews. DWs, who often occupy a less powerful position in the DWE-DW relationship, might have felt more comfortable to participate in multiple interviews and were willing to share their stories with an empathetic listener. Lastly, considering my personal background related to domestic work, it is possible that I might have been more drawn to exploring DWs' experiences in greater depth.

Interviews were conducted at the location chosen by the participants. Three DWEs requested the interview to be conducted at their workplace, four DWEs chose to be interviewed at their homes while the five DWEs opted for online interviews via Microsoft Teams. Virtual interviews are now a well-established research method that gained more traction during the COVID-19 pandemic. It offers various benefits, such as flexibility and accessibility, but also present challenges, such as issues with voice call quality and difficulty in interpreting emotions (Knott et al., 2022). To address this, I first contacted participants via WhatsApp text messages, allowing them to respond at their convenience. Additionally, a brief initial phone call helped build rapport with some participants. Most DWs (11) chose to be interviewed in my car, parked near their workplace, for convenience and clearer recordings. I made sure I brought tissues, wet wipes, bottled water, a hand sanitiser, and some candy or gum for added comfort. Only four DWs allowed interviews in their quarters, and only when DWEs were not home.

All interviews were audio-recorded with written and audio-recorded consent from all the participants. A consent form and an information sheet were given to the participants and was sent via WhatsApp and on Microsoft Teams for the virtual interviews (see Appendix 7-12). Before the interview, the information on these forms was verbally conveyed to participants in both English and IsiZulu depending on their choice. The consent from online participants was obtained over Microsoft Teams as a recorded audio (participants consented). Participants were given the choice to be interviewed in English or IsiZulu; all DWs opted for IsiZulu, and majority of the DWEs chose English while others mixed both languages. Recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English for analysis. To ensure no data was lost in outsourced transcription and translation, I verified the translations by listening to the audio recordings while reading the transcripts. As IsiZulu is my home language and having conducted the interviews myself, I was able to make necessary changes before uploading the transcripts into the analysis software.

4.6.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) can be central to the emancipatory goals of identifying sources of both advantage and of oppression, and it is also a context for consciousness raising (Moosa-Mitha, 2015). FGDs enable obtaining opinions at another level, and group agreement and/or disagreement, which can produce rich information and greater exploration on participants' narratives. Hence, in addition to the individual interviews, I conducted two FGDs with casual DWs. Unlike DWs who were involved in in-depth interviews, casual DWs are not employed full-time by a single DWE. Instead, they typically wait along the roadside, offering their services to individuals who require domestic services for the day. This arrangement allows casual DWs to be hired by multiple people within a week, exposing them to a diverse range of experiences across different racial contexts in Empangeni.

Originally, the research proposal aimed to conduct FGDs with the same DW participants from the interviews, as well as include FGDs for their DWEs. However, this plan had to be adjusted due to these reasons:

- (a) The DWs and DWEs interviewed were in different areas, as I had relocated from Durban to Empangeni.
- (b) It proved challenging to gather DWEs and DWs (those who participated in the interviews) in one location, even when attempting to conduct the FGDs via online platforms such as Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp.

The FGDs took place on a side road under a bus stop shelter, a spot commonly frequented by DWs awaiting potential job offers. This location was strategically chosen near a school that began classes at 8:00 AM. To avoid the peak hours when some potential DWEs, who were parents dropping off their children at school, might be present, I scheduled the FGDs from 10:00 AM. This timing not only reduced the likelihood of interruptions but also facilitated clearer conversations during the FGDs. Although conducting FGDs with casual DWs was not initially planned, it enhanced the credibility of the research study. This approach not only diversified the study's sample but also strengthened the triangulation of the research methodology.

According to Stahl and King (2020) credibility can be improved by employing various forms of triangulation, such as methodological triangulation involving multiple data collection. Using FGDs allowed me to gather insights and perspectives from multiple participants, providing a diverse range of viewpoints on the power dynamics between DWEs and DWs. This multiplicity of perspectives enhances the credibility of the findings by capturing the complexity and nuances of the phenomenon under study. Also, FGDs encouraged interactive dialogue among participants, enabling them to build upon each other's responses, challenge assumptions, and co-construct knowledge. DWs did this through voicing their concerns and understanding their struggles as part of a larger systemic issue, they moved from passive acceptance to recognising their agency. This interactive process helped validate the findings through the collective sense-making and consensus-building among participants.

Engaging in the FGDs drove the discussions towards transformative moments or experiences where shifts in power dynamics occurred or where perceptions and attitudes of DWs evolved. The FGDs offered a chance for participants to recognise, question, and analyse prevailing beliefs and behaviours that perpetuate oppressive relations between DWEs and DWs. The use of FGDs were also useful as a way of bringing me closer to the participants' truth, without changing or interpreting that truth (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). The use of FGDs when using the PNI research design can allow stories to connect people within each group. All FGDs were audio-recorded as consented by participants. Participants were interviewed in IsiZulu. The FGDs were transcribed word for word from the recordings and then translated into English for analysis. To guarantee the accuracy of the outsourced transcription and translation, I cross-checked the translations by simultaneously listening to the audio recordings and reading the transcripts. Given that IsiZulu is my native language, and I was the one who conducted the FGDs, I had the ability to make any required adjustments before uploading the transcripts into the analysis software.

4.7 Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis involves examining raw information to uncover relevant insights, draw comparisons, identify similarities, draw conclusions, and support decision-making (Bhatia, 2017; Pandey & Pandey, 2021). This means that data analysis is a process that condenses, structures, and assigns significance to data. Data were analysed using a combination of critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis.

4.7.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was the methodology employed in this study. CDA is a method influenced by critical theory and deeply rooted in analysing structural relationships of dominance, control, and power, as expressed in language (Fairclough, 2017; Seepamore, 2018). According to Alejandro and Zhao (2023), CDA typically originates from a post-structuralist standpoint, which questions the assumption that individuals possess singular, inherent social identities or immutable cultural, social class, or gender traits, thereby challenging structuralists' assertions of scientific objectivity and universality. For Fairclough (2017), CDA is where analysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power.

To attempt giving discourse a single term or definition would prove rather difficult and limiting. Foucault (1972) himself also found it difficult, and instead in *The archaeology of knowledge*, asserted that he treated discourse as the “general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements” (p. 80). He goes on to provide a more detailed definition of discourse:

We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history; the problem is not therefore to ask oneself how and why it was able to emerge and become embodied at this point in time; it is, from beginning to end, historical - a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complicities of time (Foucault, 1972, p. 117).

Simply put, Foucault's logic is that discourse reflects the historical and social conditions within which it emerges and operates. The focus should not solely be on how or why discourse arises at a particular moment, but also on understanding its historical development,

limitations, transformations, and the specific contexts that shape its temporality. In this study, this meant that analysing discourse on domestic work in the South African context involved considering its historical roots, the societal conditions that influenced its formation, and how it evolved over time, ultimately shedding light on contemporary power dynamics inherent in the interactions between DWs and DWEs within specific historical and social contexts.

Most critical discourse analysts would endorse Habermas's claim that "language is a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. Insofar as the legitimizations of power relations ... are not articulated... language is also ideological" (Habermas, 1967, p. 259). This suggests that language not only communicates ideas but also serves to reinforce existing power structures. Writing in relation to the use of commonplace, demeaning language that normalises the diminishing of DWs, Sewpaul (2020) asserts that "language is never neutral; it both reflects and reproduces our thinking and the world we live in" (p. 70). For example, in interviews with IsiZulu-speaking DWs and DWEs, both groups casually referred to DWs as 'isisebenzi,' which means a servant. The prefix 'isi' in IsiZulu is used to describe an object or animal or a thing, not a person. In contrast, when DWEs were citing examples from their own workplaces, they referred to themselves or their colleagues as 'umusebenzi' (singular) or 'abasebenzi' (plural) where the prefix 'umu' and 'ubu' signifies a person (umuntu/ubuntu) in IsiZulu. This linguistic distinction depersonalises DWs, reinforcing their status as mere instruments rather than human beings. This reflects a deeper societal issue where language perpetuates power imbalances and dehumanisation. Additionally, DWs referred to their Black African DWEs as 'umulungu wami,' directly translating to 'my White person'. In this context, the term implies DWE, highlighting an association between Black African DWEs and Whiteness, which is linked to privilege. This use of language demonstrates how DWs internalise societal hierarchies, equating their DWEs with the historical and systemic privileges of Whiteness. This association also reinforces the DWE's superior status and the DW's subordinate position, perpetuating class and racial inequalities.

These terms were used casually and normalised within everyday conversations, showing how deeply ingrained these power dynamics are in the cultural and social fabric. When I challenged a DWE participant about this linguistic distinction, she paused, looked up to the roof and said, "*Mhhh, I had never thought of it like that. Yoh, I have never thought of it.*" Similarly, when I asked one of the DWs interviewed in the study, she shared that it was just

the “normal way” of how people in society refer to them and she had never considered it as an issue. This moment of realisation demonstrated how language, often used unconsciously, can reinforce and perpetuate systems of privilege and oppression. When power relations are not openly acknowledged or discussed, language can perpetuate ideological beliefs that support these relations, thereby influencing societal norms and values.

For Derrida (1967), we cannot grasp or act outside of the language that we have, and that means that reality is textual. The reality consists of multiple narratives and discourses that create a meaningful world to people. The problem highlighted by poststructuralists is that the narrations in the discourses that make up our world always comes with an element of power (Bevir, 1999; Fairclough, 2017), but because we are accustomed to them, we fail to see that. This means that narratives are not neutral; they are imbued with power dynamics, and because these narratives are so ingrained in our societal norms, they often go unnoticed or unquestioned. In the case of domestic work, narratives constructed by both DWEs and DWs are not just simple stories, but carry power dynamics that reflect and reinforce societal structures. For example, the narrative that domestic work is “women’s work” may reinforce gender inequalities and position DWs as inferior to their DWEs. Similarly, narratives that portray DWs as unskilled workers or as part of the family may obscure the power imbalances inherent in the employment relationship.

In our everyday normal speaking, language creates winners and losers, “rendering individuals as powerful at times and powerless at other times, positioned within competing social and institutional discourses” (Henderson, 2005, p. 18). For instance, the narratives constructed around domestic work, both culturally and within individual households, can perpetuate unequal power dynamics. These narratives often dictate who is seen as the ‘winner’ or the one with more agency and who is positioned as the ‘loser’ or the subordinate. DWs might find themselves marginalised within these narratives, with their voices and experiences often being overlooked or devalued. Our narratives are storylines that give meaning to our collective being, and as such, they function as cornerstones for our culture, they are stories that we construct that give meaning to our being (Rogers, 2011). Therefore, language shapes our reality and constructs our narratives. As Sewpaul (2013) argued, “because language plays a powerful role in maintaining ideological hegemony, we have to analyze and deconstruct language - and to deconstruct stereotypes and attributes attached to certain categories - on a regular and consistent basis” (p. 123).

Embedded within narratives are metanarratives, which are interpretive frameworks that shape our understanding of the world and our experiences within it. Metanarratives have been described as grand narratives or overarching stories that legitimise power, knowledge, and cultural norms (Datta, 2018). For example, societal beliefs about gender, class, and labour contribute to the ways in which domestic work is perceived and valued. These metanarratives can influence how both DWEs and DWs view their roles and responsibilities, as well as how they interact with one another. Poststructuralists argue that we often mistake these metanarratives for reality, obscuring the power relations they perpetuate (Bordo, 2013; Newman, 2016). To address this, Jacques Derrida advocates for deconstructing metanarratives to reveal the underlying power dynamics and challenge dominant ideologies (Debnath, 2019; Derrida, 1967, 2020). While acknowledging the challenges of this endeavour due to the limitations of language, poststructuralists maintain that efforts to unveil the realities constructed by language are essential for promoting critical consciousness and social change.

Fairclough's (1989, 1992, 2003, 2013) model for CDA outlines three interconnected dimensions of discourse analysis: (1) the object of analysis (verbal and visual texts), (2) the processes by means of which the object is produced and received (such as writing, speaking, designing, reading, listening, or viewing), and (3) the socio-historical conditions that shape these processes. Each dimension necessitates a distinct form of analysis: text analysis for describing the object, processing analysis for interpreting the processes, and social analysis for explaining the socio-historical context.

a) The object of analysis (text analysis)

This step involves closely examining the linguistic features of the discourse, such as vocabulary and grammar. Text analysis seeks to uncover how language is used to construct meanings, ideologies, and power relations within the discourse. Applying Fairclough's model of CDA to the qualitative data gathered from DWs and DWEs involved a comprehensive approach that considered each dimension of the model to analyse the data. Firstly, I analysed the interview transcripts detailing the power dynamics between DWs and DWEs. My analysis centred on interview transcripts and written field notes gathered during interviews with both DWs and DWEs. I paid close attention to the language used by participants, their choice of

words, tone, and gestures. Subsequently, I closely looked at how power dynamics were portrayed in these interview transcripts through language choices and narratives. For instance, I scrutinised how DWs and DWEs characterised their relationship and the associated expectations. This analytical process entailed identifying patterns, themes, and contradictions within the interview transcripts to illuminate the power relations between DWs and DWEs.

b) The processes by means of which the object is produced and received (processing analysis)

This dimension focuses on the processes involved in producing, disseminating, and interpreting the discourse. It explores the social practices, institutions, and power relations that shape these processes. It involves processing questions such as who produces the discourse, how it is disseminated through various channels, and how it is interpreted by different audiences. This meant understanding how the relationship between DWs and DWEs operates on a day-to-day basis. Through the interviews and FDGs conducted, translated, and subsequently transcribed, I interpreted the processes inherent in their relationship. This included examining the tasks performed, the division of labour, and communication patterns. Such analysis offered valuable insights into how power dynamics played out in their lived experiences.

c) The socio-historical conditions that shape these processes (sociocultural analysis)

To analyse and explain the socio-historical context, the process of analysis entailed considering factors such as cultural norms, historical power dynamics, economic structures, and legal frameworks that impact the relationship between DWs and DWEs. This analysis helped to understand why certain patterns or behaviours existed within this relationship and how they were influenced by larger social forces. This was achieved by connecting the study's findings to the theoretical framework and existing literature on power dynamics, labour relations, and social justice, thus providing deeper insights into the socio-historical context that shape these relationships. Through this analysis, we can better understand the complexities of power dynamics within the domestic work sector and explore avenues for promoting more equitable and just conditions for all involved parties.

Given the study's theoretical framework and research design, the use of CDA was to "...reveal often unspoken and unacknowledged aspects of human behaviour, making salient either hidden or dominant discourses that maintain marginalised positions in society" (Morgan, 2010, p. 4). Because people construct meaning on the basis of their prior experiences with language, CDA facilitates an analysis that captures the nuanced power dynamics as they emerge from participants' narratives (Mogashoa, 2014). CDA was valuable in this study because it allowed me to examine power dynamics within discourses of domestic work by analysing how the dynamics unfolded through the narratives provided by DWs and DWEs.

CDA enabled me to uncover and understand the intricate ways in which power operates and manifests within language and communication contexts, as expressed through the stories and accounts of DWs and DWEs. This included finding answers to who has the authority to speak, whose voices are marginalised, and how power is exercised through language. This shed light on asymmetrical power dynamics between DWEs and DWs and how these dynamics were maintained or resisted through discourse, thereby revealing ideologies embedded in discourse, such as gender, class, and racial biases and the ways in which these ideologies were constructed, reinforced, or challenged. Deconstructing and analysing discourse can disrupt hegemonic discourses that perpetuate existing power imbalances and amplify marginalised perspectives, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics between DWEs and DWs and potentially informing interventions aimed at promoting more equitable relationships.

While I have followed the three interconnected dimensions of discourse analysis developed by Fairclough, there is no commonly accepted way to conduct a discourse analysis (Mejia et al., 2021; Mogashoa, 2014). For this reason, I opted to integrate CDA with Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework to further analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis is characterised as a method used to detect, examine, and interpret patterns of meaning or themes within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Its objective is to identify significant themes or patterns in the data set and utilise them to address the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Literature highlights the advantages of combining analysis methods in textual data analysis, arguing that diverse research traditions can enhance each other and contribute to the overall research endeavour (see for example, Baker & Levon, 2015; Botelle & Willott, 2020; Tian & Dumlao, 2020; Zhang, 2012). In fact,

in Seawright's words "well-designed and well-executed multi-method research has inferential advantages over research relying on a single method" (Seawright, 2016, p. 1). Thus, incorporating various approaches to research can uncover connections between different phenomena and empirically evaluate them, enhancing the depth and trustworthiness of the findings.

According to Alejandro and Zhao (2023) "while DA [discourse analysis] unpacks language use in context and sheds light on the processes through which meaning-making contributes to the social construction of the world, TA [thematic analysis] focuses on themes: what is said" (p.6). This means that CDA delves into the contextual use of language and sheds light on the processes of creating meaning, while thematic analysis (TA) focuses on the identification of themes. Combining these methods enhanced the clarity and transparency of this study's analysis, I used CDA to guide TA's coding and interpretation, allowing for a nuanced analysis of text (transcripts) as themes and text as discourse. The following details how I analysed data using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis: (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes and (6) writing up the analysis.

1) Familiarising yourself with your data

Clarke and Braun (2017) define familiarisation as the process of dedicating time to reading and re-reading the dataset to grasp its significance. To achieve this, I repeatedly read the transcribed interviews and FGDs to discern meanings and patterns within the dataset. The analysis involved breaking down the narratives that emanated from the interviews and FGDs to further understand the discourse in the phenomenon of domestic work. I read interview transcripts holistically, making notes of possible themes of focus and potential angles for interpretation. This process helped me to gain a deep understanding of the dataset and to identify potential areas of interest.

2) Generating initial codes

Coding, as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2016) involves condensing textual or visual data into small informational categories and assigning specific labels to these codes. A code denotes and labels significant aspects within a dataset relevant to the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2017). With the assistance of the NVivo analysis software, I systematically

coded the data by identifying and labelling meaningful segments of text. I then coded transcripts by generating new codes and sub-codes, iteratively, and then re-coding transcripts once major salient themes were clear. These codes captured the essence of the data and reflected themes related to power dynamics between DWEs and DWs. As I coded, I remained open to new insights and connections that emerged from the data.

3) Searching for themes

A theme can be described as a word or group of words that encapsulate an important idea recurring throughout a dataset (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Once I had generated a comprehensive set of codes, I began organising them into potential themes. I looked for patterns, similarities, and variations across codes that suggested broader thematic categories. I considered how these themes related to the research question and CDA which guided my analysis.

4) Reviewing themes

I reviewed the themes by revisiting participants' transcripts to ensure that the identified themes aligned with the research objectives. I ensured that each theme captured a distinct aspect of the power dynamics between DWEs and DWs and that there was sufficient evidence to support it. I may have needed to merge, split, or discard themes based on the data.

5) Defining and naming themes

Once I had finalised the set of themes, I provided clear definitions and descriptive labels for each theme. I articulated the core idea or concept encapsulated by each theme and provided illustrative examples from the data to support my interpretations. I ensured that the themes accurately reflected the nuances and complexities of the data. These themes represent major findings in qualitative research and serve as section headings in the findings' sections (Chapters five and six).

6) Producing the report

Finally, I wrote up the analysis by organising my findings into a coherent narrative. I present each theme systematically, discussing its relevance to the research objectives, its theoretical implications, and its connection to existing literature. I use excerpts from the transcripts to

illustrate participants' perspectives to enhance the credibility of my analysis. I conclude by summarising the main findings, discussing their significance, and reflecting on any limitations or areas for future research.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics are crucial for ensuring accountability, building trust, promoting justice, and ensuring that research benefits everyone involved. Therefore research ethics ultimately come down to the concern about the moral and ethical conduct involved in carrying out research which includes both the integrity of the research practice, as well as the welfare of the participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It is meant to protect the participants and ensure that their interests are considered and examined for ethical soundness of the research activities. Adhering to ethical procedures ensures the integrity of the scientific process and balances the risks and benefits inherent in research, mitigating potential harm.

The risk of participating in this study was minimal to the participants as the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Research Ethics Policy guided the study. This Policy defines research ethics as principles and practices that guide the ethical conduct of research. The UKZN Research Ethics Policy applies to all members of staff, graduate and undergraduate students who are involved in research on or off the campuses of University of KwaZulu-Natal. Each member of the University community is responsible for implementing this Policy in relation to scholarly work with which one is associated, and to avoid any activity which might be in violation of this Policy. The Policy also mentions that these principles should reflect a regard for the rights of all individuals who may be impacted, either directly or indirectly, by the research. These rights encompass aspects such as privacy and confidentiality, safeguarding against harm, obtaining informed consent, providing access to information before and after the research, and ensuring appropriate acknowledgment. Additionally, my personal background as a DW, Black African female and my current role as an DWE necessitated a heightened awareness of ethical considerations. Hence, I reflect on my own positionality and potential biases, highlighting a more reflexive and ethical approach to the study.

4.8.1 Permission

The ethical clearance (**Protocol Reference Number: HSSREC/00001697/2020**) was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal prior to data collection (see Appendix 11) and was valid throughout data collection.

4.8.2 Informed consent

Informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical research which entails presenting information to participants, who then either give or withhold consent, often symbolised by the signing of forms or recording verbal agreement (Van Goidsenhoven & De Schauwer, 2022). I ensured that participants were verbally informed in advance about the nature, purpose, and procedures of the study, as well as the publication of results. To ensure that participants had a clear understanding of praxis and the nature of the study, I defined praxis in simple terms during the initial engagements with participants. I explained that their lived experiences and reflections can inform broader social change. During the initial consent process, I outlined the types of questions participants may encounter. For example, reflective and critical questions that encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences and perceptions of domestic work such as ‘How do you perceive the value of domestic work in society?’ ‘Have there been instances where you felt your work was undervalued or unrecognised?’ ‘How do you think societal attitudes towards domestic work influence the treatment of DWs?’ I emphasised that these questions were intentionally designed to elicit reflections, experiences, and perspectives that challenge dominant narratives on domestic work with the hope to promote social change. I encouraged participants to feel comfortable to asking questions or seek clarification related to the study, stop me or opt not to answer questions they felt uncomfortable with.

Informed consent forms (ICFs) were distributed to participants in their preferred language (option between IsiZulu and English), accompanied by verbal explanations in a language they preferred and understood. Each participant was asked to voluntarily sign a consent form before data collection began. Consent for virtual interviews was obtained through a structured process. Participants received a consent form and an information sheet via WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams. Before the interview, the information on these forms was verbally explained to participants in their preferred language, either English or IsiZulu. Consent was then recorded as an audio file over Microsoft Teams. This form outlined what participants could expect during data collection. Emphasising the importance of recording the interviews was crucial, and to particularly request their consent to do so. By signing the consent form, participants confirmed their voluntary participation in the research study (Alston, 2020). I retained the signed consent forms and provided participants with the information sheet for further reference to the study or to contact me or my supervisor if needed (see Appendix 7-12). Participants were aged 18 years and above, therefore at a signing age according to the

South African Constitution. The form acknowledged that participants' rights would be protected during data collection, and they were not pressured or coerced to sign it.

4.8.3 Autonomy, privacy and confidentiality

Informed consent and autonomy are closely linked to confidentiality and privacy, ensuring that participants' information is protected and shared only as necessary. Autonomy was upheld through informed consent, where participants were clearly informed about the study's purpose, risks, benefits, and their rights to withdraw without penalty. Respect for autonomy was also extended to two DWs that could not read, ensuring they had the capacity to consent using a thumb signature. I verbally explained each point in the ICF to participants who could not read, confirming their understanding as I read through it.

Participants were assured that the information they shared would not be disclosed without their knowledge or consent. During FGDs, participants were asked to maintain the confidentiality of group discussions and refrain from sharing information with non-members. However, it was clarified that I could not guarantee confidentiality within FGDs, as it was beyond my control to ensure that other group members kept shared information confidential.

4.8.4 Anonymity

In the subsequent dissemination of the research findings in the form of the finished thesis, oral presentations and publications, pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of participants. In the process of data collection, analysis and reporting, I avoided any information that could help to identify research participants.

4.8.5 Doing no harm

The principle of doing no harm underscores the need to balance risks and benefits, considering physical, psychological, social, and economic harms that participants may encounter (Tullis, 2021). The research took place in environments selected by participants for their convenience, with the aim of ensuring their safety and comfort. To ensure fairness and inclusion and being cognisant of power imbalances and possible fear on the part of DWs, they were excluded from being sampled if their DWEs were included in the study.

The primary focus was on prioritising the physical and emotional well-being of the participants throughout the study. The questions were not intended to elicit stress or harm; however, they required participants to deeply reflect on their past and present experiences, diving into the emotionally charged terrain of domestic relations. Some domestic workers became emotional, with some crying during their narration of difficult experiences. Employing my professional judgment as a social worker, I was prepared to provide immediate emotional support if participants exhibited signs of distress before referring participants to a qualified counsellor that was on standby for referrals should any participant have required further psychosocial support. Participants were also provided with my contact details in case they wished to seek assistance after the interview. However, while some participants expressed emotional responses, no situation necessitated a formal referral for counselling or psychosocial services. Minimising extensive probing, especially when participants displayed discomfort and distress was essential. I frequently emphasised participants' right to withdraw or pause the interview as needed, aiming to minimise or avoid emotional pain and stress. Since this study was not conducted within an institution nor did it utilise data from any organisation, the sole permission required was that of the participants.

4.8.6 Knowledge dissemination

Research participants frequently receive minimal or no feedback following their participation in a research study (Amtmann et al., 2020). Thus, post examination of the thesis, the main findings will be communicated to participants through a straightforward leaflet distributed via WhatsApp, inviting them to provide feedback or pose questions. This way of providing feedback to participants is feasible, with all logistics considered. In fact, by sharing findings with participants and seeking their feedback, researchers can ensure that the interpretations align with participants perspectives and increase the trustworthiness of the research. The leaflet's content will avoid academic jargon and be presented in both IsiZulu and English. Additionally, research articles derived from the study's findings will be submitted to Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) accredited journals, and the thesis will be accessible in both physical and digital formats through the university library.

4.8.7 Reciprocity for participants

In research, reciprocity entails providing participants with acknowledgment for the time they dedicated to the study (Creswell & Báez, 2020). All participants sampled for interviews were compensated for their time and transport with ZAR 150 (about US\$ 8). DWE participants

who participated in qualitative online interviews were provided with mobile data of equivalent value. All participants were clearly informed that the token of appreciation provided was not intended as payment for their perceptions and experiences, and that it did not impede their ability to withdraw from the study. All FGD participants received compensation of ZAR 200 (US\$ 10) for their time and transport, equivalent to the amount they typically earned per day. This compensation aimed to mitigate any potential disruption to their daily earnings and served as motivation for their participation.

4.8.8 Researcher positionality

Creswell and Creswell-Baez (2021) emphasise the importance of qualitative researchers engaging in self-reflection to recognise how their own biases might influence the research, particularly when studying marginalised groups like DWs. My position is uniquely situated at the intersection of both personal and professional experiences within the domestic work sector. On the one flipside of the coin, I have a personal experience of seven years as a Black South African female DW, along with my close observation of the struggles faced by DWs within my own family, thus I connect deeply with the oppressive experiences that many DWs in South Africa continue to face. On the other side, I am an employer of a DW, a professional social worker and lecturer, pursuing doctoral studies, young and married, with access to material comforts such as a car, house and living in a suburban area. This places me in a position of relative privilege and influence. This dual perspective offered valuable insights, but also risked compromising my objectivity.

One of the initial struggles was recruiting DWs as participants. I found myself overthinking my approach: how should I present myself to DWs? Should I disclose my past as a DW, or would it be better to withhold that information? The first time I wanted to approach a DW without a referral, I instinctively recognised that she was a DW, despite her not being in uniform. This realisation prompted a moment of self-reflection as I was walking past her (I did not recruit her on that day) - was I profiling her based on appearance and behaviour? When I greeted this lady, she responded and made small talk about how she is rushing to work. She complained about how public transport does not reach that neighbourhood. What made me decide not to recruit her immediately was what she said next, "Good for you that you are taking a walk for fun and health. Some of us do this daily because our children must eat back at home".

According to Hibbert et al. (2014) adopting a critical research paradigm necessitates a reflexive approach, requiring researchers to critically reflect on their own biases and positions of privilege, which can be complicated and uncomfortable. When I returned from my walk, I looked at myself in the mirror and realised that first, I was wearing luxury branded eyeglasses, branded sports shoes, I had ear pods on my ears and a matching gym set. Plus, I was out walking on a Wednesday after 7:00 AM, suggesting that I was either not working or working from home, or had flexible hours - something that DWs often do not have. It was in that moment when I realised that I carry visible markers of privilege that could potentially intimidate DWs, making them feel alienated when I recruit or collect data from them. To mitigate this, I consciously adjusted my appearance and behaviour when approaching DW participants. On recruitment days, I avoided using a car, I wore simpler clothing and used everyday eyeglasses and a basic deodorant. I also carried a recruitment flyer written in IsiZulu to communicate directly and respectfully. I opted to engage with DWs in group settings, such as during lunch breaks, rather than approaching individuals in uniform especially in public spaces, which could further “other” DWs. I knew very well how highly conscious most DWs are of public perception and the social stigma associated with their job, particularly regarding their uniforms. This is confirmed by Crous (2018) who discusses how domestic worker uniforms in South Africa symbolise power imbalances and social exclusion. Having worn a uniform as a DW for White families, I knew it marked the boundaries between employer and worker, often highlighting racial and socio-economic disparities.

Recruiting employers of different racial backgrounds also posed a challenge. Many non-Black employers that I approached without referral, without saying, perceived participation in the study as a form of scrutiny, especially given the sensitive nature of domestic work in a racially charged context. I received more rejections from Indian and White employers compared to Black African employers. As a Black African woman approaching employers about a topic so closely tied to race, I was aware of the potential biases and discomfort. However, recruiting from shared spaces, like the gym where I interact with other academics and professionals, facilitated greater participation and trust. Hence the sample is dominated by academics. It is worth mentioning that at times, I felt frustration, especially when interviewing White and Indian employers who seemed unaware of their role in perpetuating oppression. However, there was a sense of satisfaction when they reflected on historical inequalities. Interacting with Black employers brought different challenges; it was

disheartening to hear justifications for oppressive practices that overlooked the well-being of DWs.

At the beginning of data collection, I sometimes grappled with recognising power within the dominant narratives of powerlessness among DWs and acknowledging vulnerabilities in employer narratives. As I became more immersed in the data and conducted more interviews, I found it easier to challenge DWs about their narratives of powerlessness, as these conversations directed them towards self-valuation. In contrast though, challenging employers about their privilege was more difficult. When we (I include myself) are privileged, we often perceive equality as oppression, making conversations about privilege and power dynamics sensitive (Morley et al., 2019; Pease, 2021b). Engaging with employers that were academics and professionals, particularly those in the humanities, often led to greater awareness of structural injustices, but even these discussions sometimes felt calculated. Because the questions were many and reflexive in nature, as conversations deepened, raw experiences and perspectives would emerge, offering opportunities to challenge their thinking.

Engaging with critical theories and literature on domestic work heightened my awareness of these complexities. I revisited my research proposal and literature review multiple times to remain aligned with the objectives of the study. Reflecting with my research supervisor, colleagues and friends helped me maintain a balanced perspective and avoid falling into the dominant discourse of victimhood, which could have obscured the nuanced and multifaceted nature of power relations. Theoretical frameworks, such as post-structural feminism among other emancipatory theories, allowed me to examine how different identities or factors intersect in shaping these dynamics, reinforcing the importance of challenging socio-political constructs.

My positionality as a former DW turned researcher both aided and hindered my attempts at praxis-oriented research. My firsthand experience enabled empathy, and a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by both DWs and employers, enriching the research questions and facilitating trust with participants. However, these personal experiences also introduced potential biases that needed careful management. Reflexivity was a crucial practice, involving regular self-reflection to recognise and mitigate bias. Transparency with participants about my positionality and adherence to ethical considerations, such as

confidentiality and empowerment, were fundamental in maintaining research integrity (Berger, 2015; Bryman, 2006). I also often drew on the principles of ubuntu, seeking to understand employers' perspectives and reconcile my own emotions. This approach was inspired by Nelson Mandela's principles of forgiveness, focusing on understanding and reconciliation rather than retribution (Crocker, 2017). This perspective helped me approach the study as a project of conscientisation, aiming to challenge privilege and reimagine fair and just relationships between DWs and their employers, rather than as a personal vendetta (Bozalek, 2011).

When DWs shared painful experiences or emotions, I occasionally stepped out of my neutral role to comfort them or share my own experiences, aligning with Bryman (2006), who acknowledges the benefits of moving beyond the formal interviewer role to connect personally. Debriefing with colleagues and journaling my feelings were essential strategies for processing these encounters and maintaining emotional well-being. In my writing, I deliberately chose pseudonyms for DWs that were culturally appropriate and avoided common anglicised names like "Mavis" or "Joyce" or "Mary" to respect their cultural identity and dignity. This decision was rooted in my own experience when I was a DW, where I named myself with an English biblical name (Ruth) to make it easier for my employers when they called me, even so, my employers would forget and call me different names (such as Rose or Ruby) which felt dehumanising and dismissive. Although in pseudonyms, acknowledging the significance of naming and cultural identity was a small yet powerful way to counteract invisibility. Conclusively, conducting this study was not just about gathering data, but also about reflecting on my own identity, biases, and the broader socio-political structures that shape the lived experiences of those involved in domestic work, whether as employers or workers. This study has challenged me in a way that has forced me to learn, unlearn and relearn.

4.8.9 Data storage and management

The research data will be retained and will be destroyed after a period of five years. The recording obtained from the interviews will be deleted from the recording device after they have been transferred to a password protected online folder. After five years, these recordings will be deleted as mandated by UKZN. The written documents such as transcripts and notes were kept safe in a password protected online folder which will be shredded in five years.

4.8.10 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research pertains to the systematic rigour of the research design, the credibility of the researcher, the believability of the findings, and the applicability of the research methods (Johnson & Parry, 2022). It encompasses the overall impression of quality associated with a research endeavour, which is essential for maintaining the integrity of qualitative research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). To ensure credibility of this study based on the theoretical and methodological approach used, the study was guided by principles underpinning trustworthiness. Trustworthiness within the context of qualitative research can be assessed by the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, discussed below (Anney, 2014; Shenton, 2004).

4.9.9.1 Credibility

According to Adler (2022), credibility is the confidence in the truth of the data and its interpretation. Credibility is also achieved when research findings are convincing and believable (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This was ensured by identifying shared life events among participants, immersing in the collected data, and describing it from their perspectives, while also integrating relevant literature for praxis research analysis and reporting. For Stahl and King (2020) credibility can be enhanced by using various forms of triangulation, such as methodological triangulation involving multiple data collection or analysis methods like interviews, focus groups, and observations. Notably, this study employed both critical discourse and thematic analysis, enhancing methodological depth. Furthermore, this study used semi-structured interviews which were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The recording and detailed transcription of participants' responses ensured that no information was lost. Additionally, the study used FGDs which facilitated gathering insights from multiple participants, providing a diverse range of viewpoints on the research topic. This multiplicity of perspectives enhances the credibility of the findings by capturing the complexity and nuances of the phenomenon under study. Moreover, CDA was used to analyse the data, which followed a thematic framework of coding individual extracts into themes and grouping them based on their relationships.

4.9.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of the research findings in another setting (Adler, 2022). To be successful in transferring data, Terre Blanche et al. (2006) suggest that

researchers should produce rich and detailed descriptions of the context. This was ensured by employing appropriate interviewing skills, such as open-ended questions, which enabled the participants to reflect on and recount their stories in depth. For Stahl and King (2020), “transfer applications...rely on the researchers’ thick descriptions that would include contextual information about the field worksite” (p. 27). Additionally, research methods and timeframes for the collection of data in this study were descriptively explained with justification for the choices made. These factors influence the degree to which this study may have application to a different context.

4.9.9.3 Dependability

Dependability is achieved through rich and detailed descriptions that show certain actions and opinions are rooted in, and develop out of contextual interaction (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This was ensured by employing consistent sampling methods which allowed for cross checking data that emerged. I also maintained consistency and transparency throughout the research process, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, to ensure the reliability of the findings over time. Following this strategy allowed for further validation of data.

4.9.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the qualitative researcher’s comparable concern with the quantitative emphasis on objectivity (Shenton, 2004). This was ensured by keeping evidence that the narratives belong to participants, this includes recordings, transcripts, and signed consent forms. After each interview, I wrote key points from the conversation, sometimes I would record myself on the phone to capture my own thoughts and feelings on the interaction. Although used in a different context, Sewpaul et al. (2014) value deconstructing ideology through self-reflexivity by journaling. Similarly, for me to guard against my own biases and my partiality towards DWs, to remain aware of my own position of power as a researcher, and to encourage open and free flowing conversations with the participants, I kept reflective journals and engaged in reflexive dialogue with my supervisor throughout the process of data collection and analysis. I also relied on peer debriefing (a close colleague who is an academic

researcher) to support my interpretations, in line with accepted standards for ensuring trustworthiness.

4.9 Methodological Limitations

4.9.1 Short duration of the study

The data gathering phase of the study spanned a year due to qualification requirements. While this short-term study offered immediate and valuable insights from participants, sometimes participants' narratives provided me with only a surface-level understanding of power dynamics as I could not track or observe changes over a longer period. However, conducting serial interviews were beneficial as they enabled the development of a stronger rapport between me and the participants (Read, 2018). With each subsequent interview, I could observe that many participants felt more comfortable sharing personal experiences and perspectives which led to more candid and insightful responses. Still, a longitudinal study, perhaps over a period of five years, would have allowed me to track changes over time, which would have captured changes, developments, and patterns over a longer period than the one year. Yet, longitudinal studies are often logistically difficult and costly.

4.9.2 Power imbalances in the researcher-participant relationship

Despite efforts to ensure autonomy and participant comfort, power imbalances in the researcher-participant relationship persisted, particularly affecting some DWs. Unfortunately, power imbalances are inherent in the researcher-participant relationship (Bashir, 2020; Råheim et al., 2016). It is important to acknowledge that these dynamics exist in all research settings, regardless of study duration. However, as this was a short-term study, its short length mitigated this issue by minimising the duration of the interaction, potentially reducing the influence of perceived power differences. Additionally, I employed ethical practices such as informed consent and confidentiality to mitigate these imbalances, along with vigilance and reflexivity.

4.9.3 Limited generalisability

The limited generalisability of the study stems from its small sample size, exclusion of Coloured people which limited diversity of perspectives and the exclusion of male DWs. However, qualitative research prioritises depth over breadth, allowing for in-depth exploration within a specific context (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017; Basias & Pollalis, 2018),

with generalisability focusing on theoretical or conceptual transferability rather than statistical representativeness. Additionally, while the exclusions of male DWs and Coloured people may limit the generalisability of the study, there were valid reasons for making these decisions in a qualitative study. The research focus was specifically on a subgroup (female Black African DWs). This research focus was narrow to understand the experiences of female Black African DWs' experiences in-depth, and it required homogeneity within the sample to effectively address the research questions. Focusing on a narrower demographic allowed me to dive deeper into the unique perspectives, challenges, and dynamics within that group, leading to more nuanced and detailed findings.

4.10 Summary

This chapter points out the critical role of research methodology in addressing research problems and achieving study objectives. It highlights the significance of the chosen methodology as a roadmap for data collection aligned with the study's aims, objectives, and research questions. The chapter discusses various methodological components, including research paradigm, design, approach, sampling techniques, data collection procedures, analysis methods, and ethical considerations, providing a comprehensive guide for conducting the study with trustworthiness and coherence. The critical research paradigm, rooted in critical theory, aimed at challenging existing power structures, and promoting social change within DWE-DW relations. Using PNI as the research design, the study sought to uncover personal truths and experiences narrated by participants themselves, integrating Freirian strategies of consciousness raising to promote critical reflection and action. Through CDA, the study analysed qualitative data to identify significant themes and patterns, ultimately contributing to a nuanced understanding of power dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa's domestic work sector. Furthermore, this chapter addresses methodological limitations, and discusses the researcher's positionality. The next chapter presents and discusses findings emanated from that collected data with DWs.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Interpretation of Participants’ Demographic Data

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the biographical characteristics of domestic workers (DWs) and their employers (DWEs), revealing significant disparities in education, income, and socio-economic stability, which underpin the complex power dynamics in this sector. The findings illustrate how race, gender, and class intersect to shape employment relationships, with employers, predominantly from economically stable backgrounds, exercising varying degrees of authority and control. Additionally, findings highlight the vulnerability of DWs, who experience wage exploitation, excessive workloads, and limited access to formal labour protections, exacerbated by their economic dependency and a lack of knowledge about their rights.

5.2 Participants’ Demographics: Domestic Workers and Employers

5.2.1 Age

The pie chart below illustrates the age distribution of the 26 domestic workers (DWs) interviewed. The largest age group was 31-40 years, comprising 50% (13) of the participants. The next largest group was those aged 41-50 years, making up 34.6% (9) of the participants. Workers aged 51-60 years accounted for 11.5% (3), while the youngest age group, 18-30 years, represented only 3.8% (1) of the sample.

26 responses

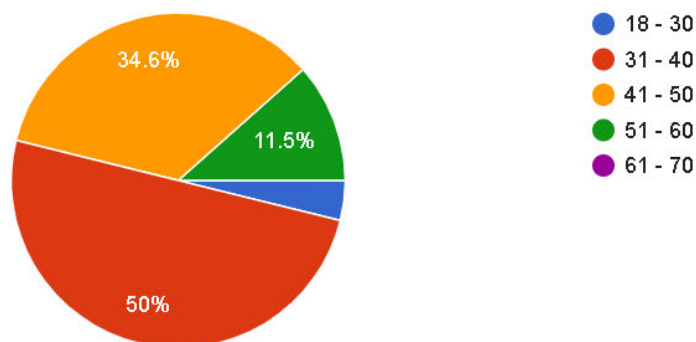


Figure 3: Domestic workers’ age

The bar chart that follows shows the age distribution of 12 domestic work employers (DWEs) who were interviewed. The data show that most employers were between the ages of 26 and 71. Specifically, the most common ages among the employers are 32 and 40, representing 91.7% of the participants.

12 responses

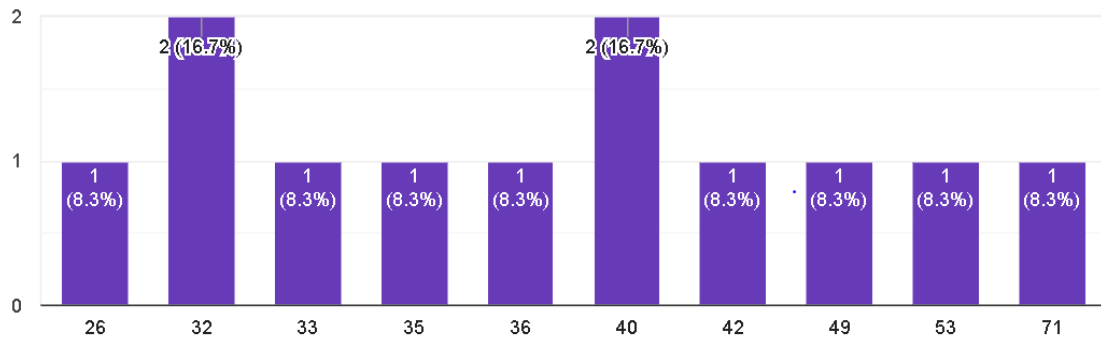


Figure 4: Employers' age

The age distribution of DWEs shows a diverse range of ages among participants, spanning from mid-twenties to early seventies. On the one hand, the younger employers reflect a demographic commonly associated with mid-career stages, where individuals often balance professional responsibilities with family obligations. This highlights the growing reliance on DWs as means to manage work-life balance and the economic capacity to hire DWs, which is increasingly seen as a necessity rather than a luxury in dual-income households (Anwar & Brukwe, 2023; Jansen, 2019). On the other hand, older employers, such as those aged 53 and 71, might represent more established households where domestic assistance is required due to health reasons or the need for additional support in managing household responsibilities. This reflects broader societal trends where older individuals increasingly rely on domestic work to maintain their quality of life, especially in urban settings where extended family support may be limited (Finch & Groves, 2022).

5.2.2 Race

All 26 DWs were Black African, while the 12 employers represented a more diverse group, with four participants each from Black African, White, and Indian backgrounds.

5.2.3 Gender

All participants in the study were female. Although the inclusion criteria for employers permitted male participants, none were willing to participate. Post-structural feminism

suggests that because domestic work is traditionally viewed as a female domain (Butler, 1988), both the actual performance of domestic duties and the supervision of those tasks are culturally assigned to women. Men who are involved in domestic work might experience tension between societal expectations of masculinity and the perceived feminisation of domestic tasks (Mushunje & Sewpaul, 2021). This could explain why male DWEs may have chosen not to participate in the study, as their involvement in domestic management might be seen as inconsistent with traditional masculine roles.

5.2.4 Education

Domestic work is often characterised by low educational requirements, which aligns with the educational levels depicted in the chart. Educational attainment is closely linked to job opportunities and income potential, with individuals having higher education levels accessing better job opportunities and higher-paying positions (Thanabal et al., 2022).

26 responses

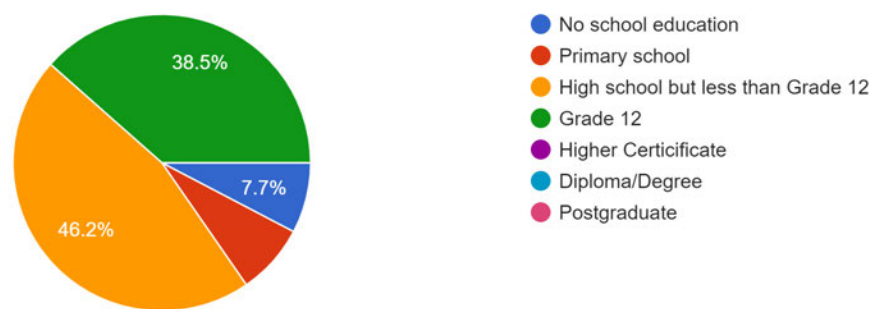


Figure 5: Domestic workers' level of education

The above figure shows that a small proportion of DWs that participated in the study had no formal education (7.7%), and similarly, a minor percentage had only primary education (7.7%). The largest segment of DWs had some high school education, but had not completed Grade 12 (46.2%). A significant portion had completed their high school education, reaching Grade 12 (38.5%). None of the DWs interviewed had achieved education beyond high school, such as a higher certificate, diploma or degree, or postgraduate qualification. This data reflects broader trends in the domestic work sector, where educational attainment is generally low due to systemic barriers and socio-economic factors.

Biographical data indicates a relatively high level of education among the employers interviewed in this study.

12 responses

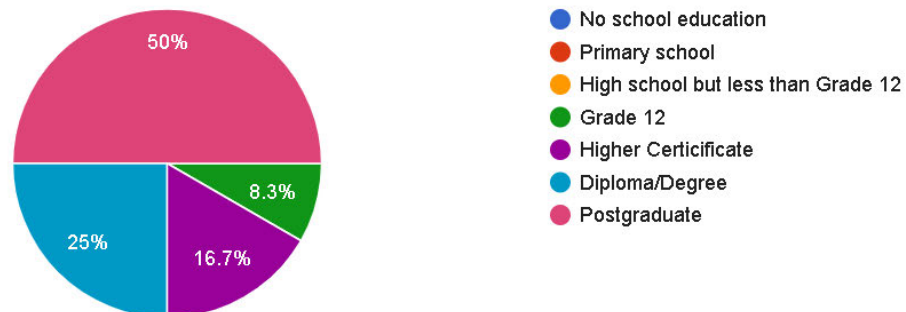


Figure 6: Employers' level of education

As observable in the above figure, a smaller portion (16.7%) (two) held a higher certificate, with only 8.3% (one) of employers having completed Grade 12 without pursuing further studies. The majority (50%) of employers had attained postgraduate qualifications while a quarter of the participants (25%) completed a diploma or degree. This suggests that a significant portion possessed formal tertiary education, which likely contributed to their greater economic stability and ability to employ DWs. It might also link to professional careers requiring hiring domestic help to manage work-life balance, and to sampling bias as discussed in the methodology chapter.

It is important to note that the most common occupation among the employers was that of a lecturer, accounting for 25% (3 out of 12) of the participants as depicted on Figure 7.

12 responses

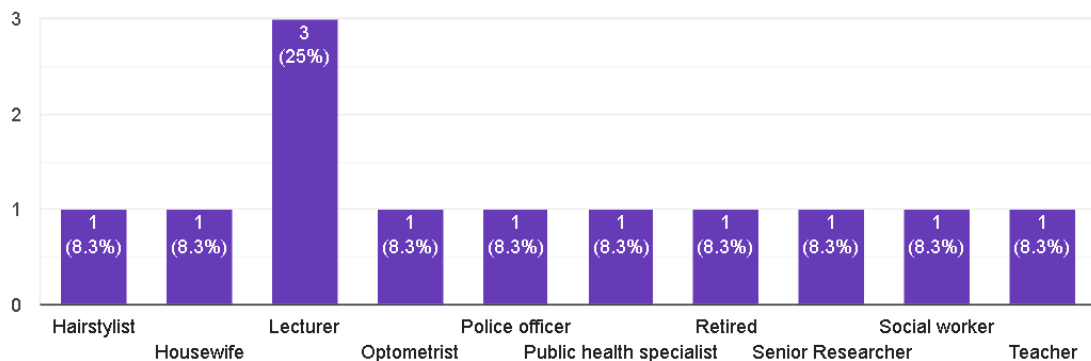


Figure 7: Employers' occupation

The dominance of lecturers among the employers (25%) can be attributed to the recruitment method employed in this study. As a lecturer myself, I leveraged my network within the academic community, particularly at the gym where I interacted with fellow lecturers who employed DWs. This shared environment facilitated conversations about the study and encouraged participation, leading to a higher representation of lecturers among the participants. The other occupations were evenly distributed, each representing 8.3% of the sample.

5.2.5 Marital Status

Marital status is another key demographic that provides insights into the personal and socio-economic context of DWs. It influences their work choices, vulnerability to exploitation, and overall well-being. Figure 8 reveals that an overwhelming majority (96.2%) of DWs were single, with a very small proportion (3.8%) married and none were engaged or cohabiting.

26 responses

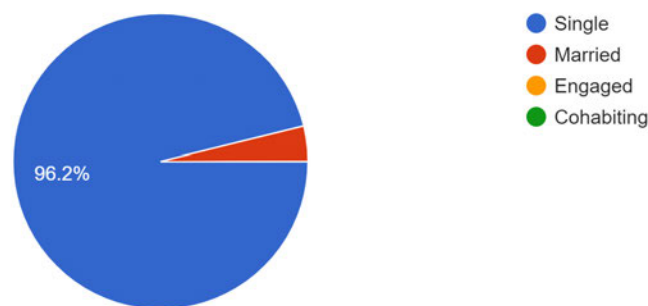


Figure 8: Domestic workers' marital status

This demographic profile suggests specific socio-economic dynamics influencing their employment, as single women are often overrepresented in domestic work due to economic necessity and familial responsibilities (Finch & Groves, 2022). This high proportion of single DWs points to potential social isolation and vulnerability, facing unique challenges such as lack of social support, increased risk of exploitation, and limited bargaining power (Anderson & Anderson, 2000; Cock, 1980b; Wright, 2002).

In contrast to DWs' marital status, the majority (58.3%) of the employers were married. The remaining participants were distributed among other categories: 16.7% were engaged, 16.7% were widowed, and 8.3% were cohabiting. Notably, there were no single employers in this sample.

12 responses

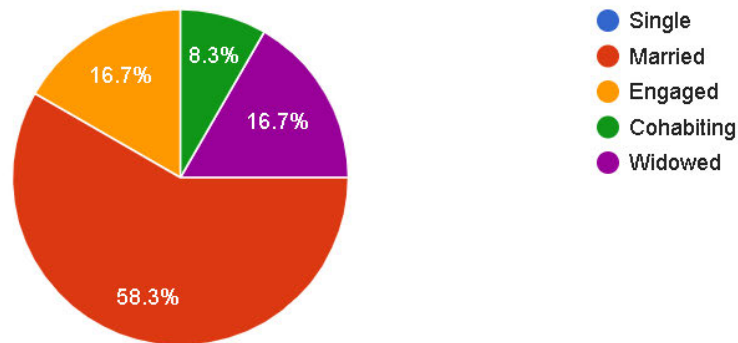


Figure 9: Employers' marital status

The difference in marital status between employers and DWs highlights existing socio-economic and cultural dynamics. The high percentage of married employers suggest greater socio-economic stability, which is often associated with dual-income households, shared financial responsibilities, and perhaps a greater capacity to afford domestic help (Budlender, 2019). This factor also potentially reflects power dynamics within the DWE-DW relationship. Employers in this study, often enjoying marital stability, may have exerted more control over their DWs, who lacked similar stability and may have been more dependent on their employment for survival.

5.2.6 Knowledge of Minimum Wage and Perceived Fair Compensation

Out of the 26 DWs interviewed, only two were aware of the recommended minimum wage, highlighting a clear lack of knowledge regarding labour laws and policies that directly impacted them. A sizable portion of DWs were uncertain about what the government mandates of the minimum wage. Similarly, employers had varied understanding of the legal minimum wage for DWs. As displayed in the following pie chart, 50% of employers indicated that they did not know how much the minimum domestic worker wage was, which could have led to non-compliance with labour laws and potential exploitation.

12 responses

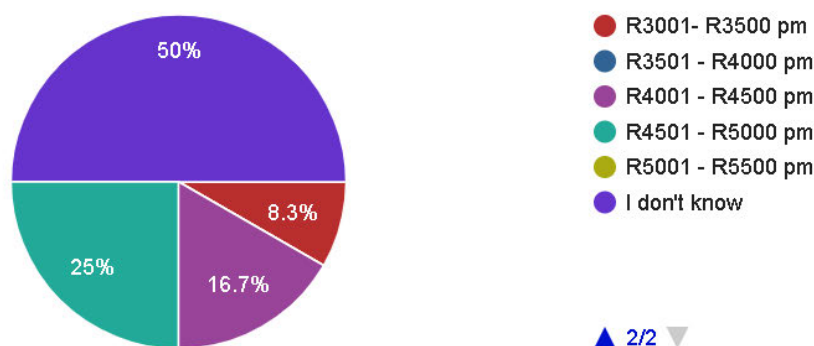


Figure 10: Employers' knowledge of minimum wage

A quarter of the participants (25%) believed the minimum wage should be within the range of ZAR 1501 (\$79) to ZAR 2000 (\$105) per month, which is considerably lower than the minimum wage, highlighting a discrepancy between actual wage practices and legal expectations. Disturbingly, 16.7% of the employers thought the minimum wage should be between ZAR 1000 (\$52) and ZAR 1500 (\$79) per month, indicating an even greater underestimation of the legally mandated wage. A small percentage (8.3%) estimated the minimum wage to be between ZAR 3001 (\$158) and ZAR 3500 (\$184) per month, which, while closer to some legal wage expectations, still reflected varied understanding of what constituted a fair wage for DWs. The low amount that DWE thought to be fair pay is a reflection of the under-valuing of DW and it is a source of exploitation of DWs, that call for targeted interventions involving both employers and workers.

In contrast, when DWs were asked how much they believed they deserved to be paid, the majority cited figures around ZAR 5000 (\$263) and more per month. In a few DWs' words, the reasons were:

"I have children, and the amount of work I do is demanding and I work more days than what they are currently paying me."

"I cook, clean, wash and tend to her (elderly employer) diaper day and night. I must clean after her when she pees and does number two. So, between ZAR 6000-ZAR 7000 is the fitting payment because I work alone. If she wakes up during the night, I must attend to her."

"Because I am minding the grandchildren of my employer, I also take care of my employer's children needs, on top of that I take care of her and her husband."

“Just because my employers can afford to pay me that much.”

“I have raised their children - some from birth and I work very hard, no time to leave work.”

These quotes collectively reflect a sense of exploitation, where DWs feel overworked and underpaid. The economic vulnerability is evident as workers often depend on their employers’ discretion rather than standardised wages. Despite the significant emotional and physical labour involved, there is a lack of recognition of DWs’ contributions. The demand for fair wages reflects a need for acknowledgment of their labour’s true value. The disconnect between legal entitlements and workers’ perceptions of fair wages shows the need for better education and outreach regarding labour rights and fair compensation.

5.2.7 Wage Earnings Among Domestic Workers

Over half of the participants (53.8%) said they earned between ZAR 100 to ZAR 200 per day (\$5.26 to \$10.53), while smaller percentages reported earning between ZAR 210 to ZAR 300 per day (7.7%) (\$11.05 to \$15.79). Monthly wages ranged from ZAR 1000 to more than ZAR 4500 (\$52 to \$237), with 15.4% reported earning between ZAR 3010 and ZAR 3500 per month (\$158 to \$184).

26 responses

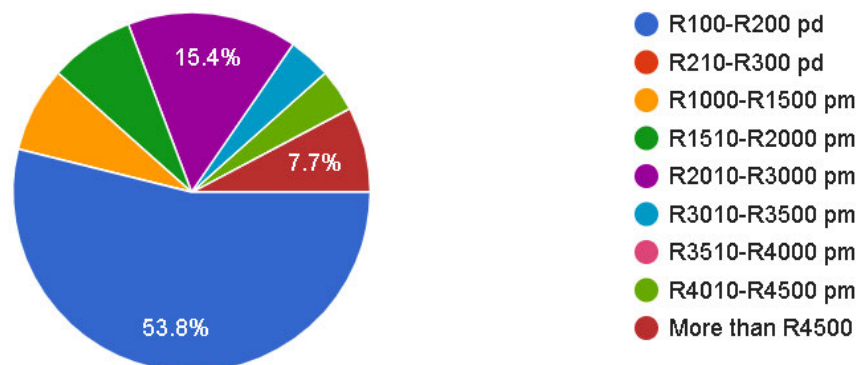


Figure 11: Wage earnings

When considering the South African minimum wage of ZAR 27.58 per hour, DWs should legally earn at least ZAR 220.64 for an 8-hour workday. The pie chart (Figure 11) shows that most DWs (53.8%) are earning between ZAR 100 and ZAR 200 (\$5 to \$10) per day, which is below the minimum wage threshold. Moreover, even those earning between ZAR 210 to ZAR 300 per day (\$10 to \$16) (7.7%) may have been receiving wages close to or slightly

above the minimum wage, but this does not account for the overtime that many DWs in this study alluded to.

The lower monthly salaries (ZAR 1000-ZAR 1500 [\$52-\$78], and ZAR 1510-ZAR 2000 [\$79-\$105]) suggest a severe underpayment relative to the legal minimum wage standards, highlighting a significant issue of wage exploitation. These low wages were particularly associated with Black African DWEs. In contrast, DWs earning ZAR 2010-ZAR 3000 per month (\$106-\$158) were employed by Indian DWEs, while those earning between ZAR 3010 and more than ZAR 4500 (\$159-\$237) were employed by White DWEs. This situation is also indicative of broader systemic issues related to the undervaluation of domestic work within certain demographic groups, potentially influenced by South Africa’s historical and socio-economic injustices that were deep-rooted along racial lines.

Similar reflections were discovered in the employer sample as displayed in the following Figure 12, where a majority of employers (50%) reported paying their DWs between ZAR 2010 and ZAR 3000 per month. Other salary ranges included ZAR 1510-ZAR 2000 per month (8.3%), ZAR 3510-ZAR 4000 per month (8.3%), and ZAR 4010-ZAR 4500 per month (8.3%). Only 8.3% of employers reported paying more than R4500 per month. Notably, 16.7% of employers chose not to disclose the salary information.

12 responses

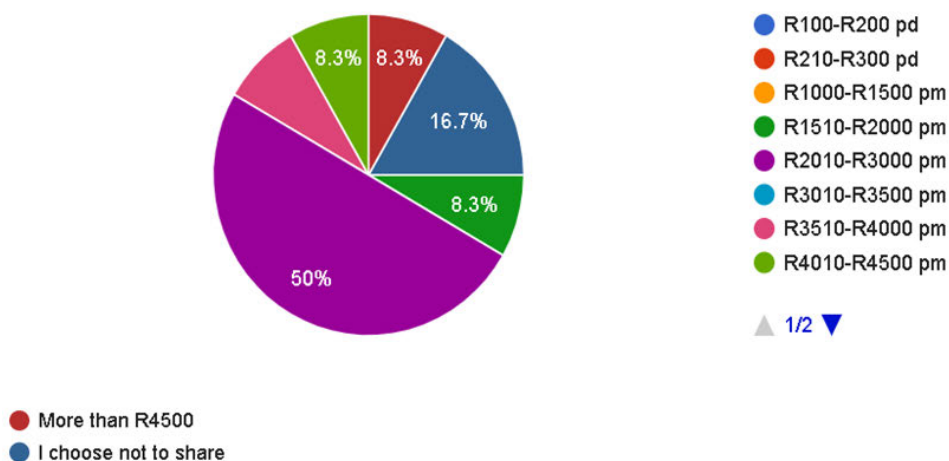


Figure 12: Domestic workers’ salary reported by employers

The data reveals huge disparities in wages paid to DWs, with most earning between ZAR 2010-ZAR 3000 per month, suggesting that many receive relatively low wages. Only a small percentage of employers pay above ZAR 3500 per month, indicating that few DWs are compensated at levels that reflect fair labour standards and the cost of living. Importantly, I noted that all salaries above ZAR 3500 per month were paid by White employers, highlighting potential racial disparities in wage practices within the domestic work sector. The choice of some employers not to disclose their DWs' salary further indicates either discomfort or a lack of transparency regarding wage practices.

The wage disparities in domestic work reflect broader socio-economic inequalities rooted in South Africa's history, which continue to affect Black African employers. Historically disadvantaged by systemic inequalities, Black African DWEs might pay lower wages than their White or Indian counterparts, perpetuating a cycle of economic inequality that disproportionately affects Black African DWs. However, as Fanon (1963) and Freire (1970) have argued, the oppressed can internalise the values of the oppressors and, in turn, become oppressors themselves. This dynamic is evident as some Black African DWEs, despite now earning more than White or Indian DWEs, still underpay their DWs.

Fanon's concept of the colonised mind suggests that those who were once oppressed may adopt the same oppressive practices once they gain power or economic stability (Fanon, 1963). This internalisation of oppressive norms could explain why some Black African DWEs continue to offer lower wages, as they may have internalised the practices of paying DWs less from earlier generations or colonial structures where this was standard. Freire's idea of the oppressor consciousness further illustrates how the oppressed, once in positions of power, might replicate the same structures of exploitation they once resisted. Higher-earning Black African South Africans might prioritise their own social mobility and financial security, leading them to allocate less income to DW wages, thereby perpetuating the very cycle of inequality they have overcome.

While it is important to recognise the socio-economic pressures that Black African DWEs still face, such as extended family obligations and financial commitments, these contextual factors do not excuse the failure to ensure fair compensation for DWs. Even if Black African DWEs are navigating the complexities of economic advancement and social mobility, the practice of underpaying DWs, especially when it falls below legal standards, reflects a

troubling continuation of exploitative practices in a neoliberal context that enables labour exploitation. As Fanon and Freire have both highlighted, the transition from oppressed to oppressor is not merely a reversal of roles but a perpetuation of systemic inequality that needs to be consciously dismantled.

5.2.8 Household Structures and Roles

Many DWs (16) were employed in nuclear family households, with seven serving single-parent families, two working for extended families, and one employed by an elderly individual living alone. Likewise, most employers, 10 (83.3%), identified as living in nuclear family households. One (8.3%) employer reported living in extended family households, which may include additional relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins. Another one (8.3%) employer indicated they were in grandparent-headed households, suggesting a family structure where grandparents are the primary caregivers and heads of the household. The diversity in household structures provided insight into the varied roles that DWs fulfilled as required by DWEs. In nuclear and single-parent households, DWs often managed a broad range of tasks, from childcare and cleaning to cooking, making them integral to the functioning of these households.

Correspondingly, all employers (100%) interviewed in this study indicated that their DWs were responsible for cleaning and cooking, highlighting these as the most common and essential tasks in domestic work. A majority, 83.3%, reported that their DWs also babysit, reflecting the importance of childcare in domestic responsibilities. In extended families, the complexity of family dynamics may have required workers to care for multiple generations, while those employed by elderly individuals often provided companionship and specialised care. These different settings shape the nature of domestic work, emphasising the need for recognition of the unique contributions DWs make across various household contexts

5.2.9 Experience and Commuting Challenges

The DWs interviewed had a wide range of experience, with the most experienced having 30 years in the field and the least experienced just four (4) years. This range reflected the diversity within the domestic work sector, where some workers had developed extensive expertise over decades, while others were still relatively new to the profession. Among live-out DWs, the cost of commuting posed a significant financial burden, with taxi fares ranging

from ZAR 16 (\$0.90) to ZAR 70 (\$3.92) per day, consuming 15-27% of their daily income. These costs highlighted the economic challenges faced by DWs, particularly those who had to travel long distances to work. The early wake-up times reported by DWs, often as early as 3:00 AM, compounded these challenges, especially for those with children. Employers were asked to share the times that their DW starts and finishes work (see Figure 13 and 14).

12 responses

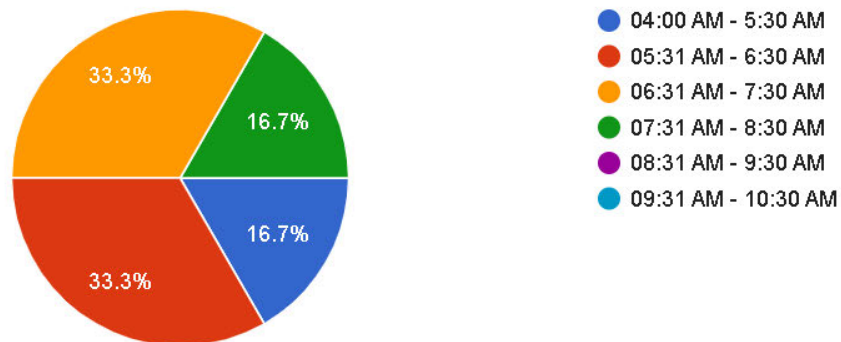


Figure 13: Employer reported domestic workers' start time

12 responses

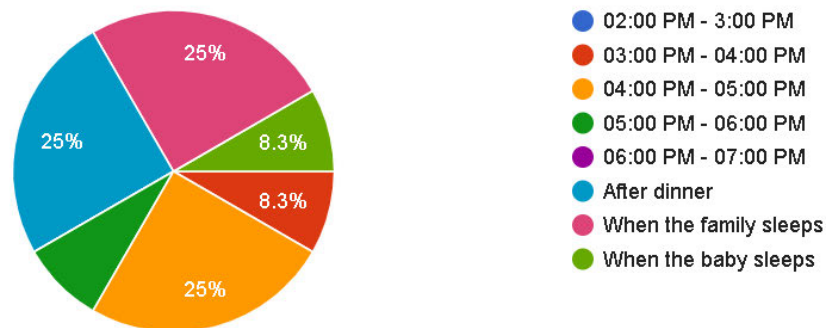


Figure 14: Employer reported domestic workers' finish time

The data suggest that DWs generally start their workday early, with the majority beginning before 7:30 AM, which aligns with common morning routines and family needs. The variability in finishing times, ranging from early afternoon to after dinner, and even until the family sleeps, indicates that DWs often have long and unpredictable working hours. The extended hours reported by some employers, particularly those indicating work until family members sleep, highlight a demand for flexibility and availability from DWs, potentially leading to overwork without clear boundaries or compensation for overtime.

5.2.10 Lack of Formal Protections and Union Membership

A striking finding from the participants was the lack of formal protections for DWs. Out of 26 participants, 88.5% were not registered with the Department of Labour, and a staggering 100% were not registered with the Compensation Fund against injuries on duty, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and without access to legal protections such as fair wages, safe working conditions, and compensation for workplace injuries. While some employers were paying minimum wage or higher, the absence of formal contracts indicates a gap in legally binding agreements, which are essential for DWs' rights. Only one employer had registered her DWs with the Department of Labour, indicating a widespread non-compliance with legal requirements designed for DWs.

Apart from one, all DWs were not part of a workers' union, which further isolated them from the collective support that unions provided. This lack of union membership was particularly concerning given the crucial role that unions play in advocating for workers' rights and providing a platform for voicing concerns. This reveals a critical gap in the formal regulation and protection of DWs, highlighting the urgent need for interventions to ensure that DWs are informed of their rights and have access to the necessary protections.

5.3 Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the complex realities of domestic work in contemporary South Africa, focusing on the biographical characteristics of DWs and DWEs, such as age, marital status, education level, salary, duties and responsibilities, occupation, and household structures and roles. These biographical details are crucial for contextualising the lived experiences of DWs and the dynamics within their workplaces, revealing how personal and socio-economic factors shape the relationships between DWs and their employers.

Despite contributing essential labour to households, DWs remain underpaid, unprotected, and largely unaware of their legal rights, further marginalising them within the labour market. The stark contrast between DWs and their employers in terms of education, marital stability, and financial security highlights the structural barriers that limit social mobility for DWs. The study also reveals the absence of union representation and formal labour protections, exposing a critical gap in the enforcement of fair labour practices. The next chapter explores key findings on power dynamics, helplessness, and resistance in domestic work.

Chapter Six: Power, Helplessness, and Resistance in Domestic Work

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores key themes from findings such as the construction of domestic work, narratives of helplessness and power, and strategies of resistance and agency among DWs. It first outlines the coding process and identified themes and subthemes. Then follows the discussion of the findings which highlight the economic pressures and lack of job opportunities that drive women into domestic work, the complex power dynamics between workers and employers, and the various ways in which DWs navigate their roles and assert their agency.

6.2 Coding Process and Themes' Outline

As lengthily discussed in Chapter Four, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Analysis (TA) were complementary methods used to interrogate the power dynamics embedded in employer-domestic worker relationships. The combined approach enabled a nuanced examination of how language, social positioning, and broader historical and structural forces influence the lived realities of both DWs and DWEs. The analytical process was conducted in two phases: the discourse analysis phase, which applied CDA to examine power-laden narratives, and the thematic analysis phase, which structured the data into coherent themes for interpretation. Below is a summary of the coding process, detailing how thematic categories were refined and validated against participant narratives, ensuring alignment with the research objectives:

1. Identifying Initial Codes

Initial codes are small units of meaning extracted from the data. These codes emerged from participants' narratives, reflecting common ideas, statements, and experiences shared during interviews and focus group discussions.

| Example of Participant Quote | Initial Code |
|--|---|
| "I work because I have no choice. I have children to feed, and there are no other jobs." | Economic necessity, Limited job choices |
| "Being a domestic worker is not respected. People look | Inferior status, Social stigma |

| | |
|---|--|
| down on us.” | |
| “My employer treats me like family. She gives me food and helps me when I have problems.” | Emotional attachment, Familial relationship |
| “I know my rights, and I tell my employer what I can and cannot do.” | Asserting boundaries, Self-worth |
| “Without me, my employer would struggle. She needs me just as much as I need this job.” | Mutual dependency, Worker importance |
| “Some employers abuse their power. They track everything I do.” | Employer control, Surveillance |
| “Sometimes, I do things in my own way, even if she doesn’t like it.” | Subtle resistance, Agency |

2. Grouping Related Codes into Themes

Once the initial codes were generated, they were grouped into broader **themes** that encapsulated key aspects of the domestic worker-employer relationship.

| Theme | Related Codes |
|--|--|
| Constructions of Domestic Work | Economic necessity, Limited job choices, Inferior status, Social stigma, Emotional attachment, Familial relationship, Self-worth |
| Narratives of Helplessness | Limited job choices, Economic necessity, Lack of rights, Dependence on employer |
| Narratives of Power | Mutual dependency, Employer control, Surveillance, Worker importance, Asserting boundaries |
| Resistance, Retaliation, and Agency | Asserting boundaries, Subtle resistance, Worker importance, Retaliation against mistreatment |

3. Defining Themes and Subthemes

Once themes were established, each was defined to clarify its meaning and relevance to the study.

a) Constructions of Domestic Work

This theme explores how domestic work is conceptualised by both domestic workers and employers. It captures the economic, social, and emotional dimensions of domestic work, illustrating how it is perceived as both a livelihood necessity and a site of exploitation or emotional connection.

- **Subtheme: Domestic work as an economic necessity with limited choices** – Many DWs enter the profession due to financial constraints and a lack of alternative employment opportunities.
- **Subtheme: Domestic work as incurring an inferior status and exploitation** – Participants highlighted how domestic work is undervalued in society and often linked to social stigma and exploitation.
- **Subtheme: Domestic work as love and duty: emotional bonds and attachment** – Some domestic workers and employers describe their relationships as familial, where emotional connections and dependency shape work dynamics.
- **Subtheme: Domestic workers as worthy and autonomous** – Despite systemic inequalities, some DWs assert their value and autonomy, challenging the notion of domestic work as inherently demeaning.

b) Narratives of Helplessness

This theme captures the sense of vulnerability expressed by domestic workers, highlighting their limited ability to negotiate work conditions and their reliance on employment for survival.

- **Subtheme: Narratives of helplessness** – DWs shared feelings of powerlessness, fear of job loss, and lack of legal protection. Many expressed that their livelihoods depend on their employer's goodwill, limiting their ability to resist unfair treatment.

c) Narratives of Power

This theme examines how power is exercised and negotiated in the DWE-DW relationship.

- **Subtheme: Mutual dependency** – While power disparities exist, both DWs and DWEs acknowledge a form of interdependence, where employers rely on workers for household management, and workers depend on employment.
- **Subtheme: Legitimate assertions of power** – DWs and DWEs exercise authority in ways that are perceived as fair and necessary, such as defining job expectations.
- **Subtheme: Illegitimate assertions of power** – Some DWs and DWEs abuse their power, engaging in intrusive surveillance or imposing excessive control over workers' personal lives.

d) Resistance, Retaliation, and Agency

This theme explores how domestic workers navigate power imbalances through acts of assertion, retaliation, or subtle resistance.

- **Subtheme: Asserting boundaries and authority** – Some DWs negotiate their work conditions, refusing unreasonable demands and asserting their rights.
- **Subtheme: Retaliation against perceived injustices and confrontation** – DWs sometimes resist unfair treatment through confrontation or covert acts, such as slowing down work or ignoring instructions.
- **Subtheme: Subtle and overt resistance** – Resistance is not always direct; some DWs adopt indirect strategies to reclaim autonomy without openly defying employers.

6.3 Presentation of Findings and Discussion

To ensure the systematic categorisation of participant quotes and anonymity throughout the presentation of findings and discussion, this table provides a system for identifying participants and referencing their quotes in the study.

| Participant Quote Identifier | Explanation |
|--|---|
| P1/2/3 - DWs - FGD1/2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P1/2/3: Refers to Participant 1, Participant 2, or Participant 3. • DWs: Stands for domestic workers. • FGD1/2: Indicates that the quote is from a Focus Group Discussion, either from Group 1 (FGD1) or Group 2 (FGD2) |
| Pseudonym - DWE – I/W/B – 1/2/3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pseudonym: Fictional name i.e. Lelo. • DWE: Stands for domestic work employer. • I or W or B: Represents the racial or ethnic background of the employer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I: Indian ○ W: White ○ B: Black African • 1/2/3: Indicates the interview number (1, 2, or 3). |
| Pseudonym - DW – I/W/B – 1/2/3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pseudonym: Fictional name i.e. Hlengiwe. • DW: Stands for domestic worker. • I or W or B: Represents the racial or ethnic |

| | |
|--|--|
| | background of the employer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I: Indian ○ W: White ○ B: Black African ● 1/2/3: Indicates the interview number (1, 2, or 3). |
|--|--|

6.4 Constructions of Domestic Work

Participants' perceptions of domestic work are shaped by their personal experiences and broader societal constructions. This theme explores these views, reflecting on ladder ratings and distinguishing between personal and societal constructions of domestic work. Participants were asked to rate their job satisfaction on a ladder scale and explain their reasoning. This question encouraged self-reflection, helping participants consider their overall satisfaction and the reasons behind their feelings. This reflective process served as a starting point for deeper conversations between me and the participants. Discussing the reasons behind their ratings led to broader discussions about the challenges, rewards, and nuances of domestic work.

6.4.1 Domestic work as an economic necessity with limited choices

In her seminal work, Cock (1980) describes DWs as being trapped within a tightly woven structure of constraints, highlighting the intersectional nature of their oppression and employers' privilege. It is not merely the lack of economic opportunities that confine DWs, but a complex interplay of sociocultural and political factors that collectively limit their agency and reinforce their marginalisation. This coheres with the principles of intersectionality, which look at how multiple social categories interact to shape the experiences of DWs. Intersectionality, as discussed by Mkhize (2019), reveals how the compounding effects of various axes of inequality intersect to create unique modes of discrimination and privilege in shaping the power relations between employers and DWs in South Africa. These categories do not function independently but intersect to create a complex matrix of domination.

To many, domestic work is the last resort and solution towards securing employment (Anderson & Anderson, 2000; Finch & Groves, 2022; Parreñas, 2021).

“Domestic work? No, it is not important. What is important is that I get something out of it since I have no other work options” (Sihle - DW - I - 1)

“I took up this domestic work because there was no breadwinner at home, but I am the only one looking after everything.” (P5 - DW - FGD1)

“It is not a satisfying job. I do it because I do not have another option” (Celiwe - DW - I - 1)

“I do see its value in terms of putting bread on the table, but it is not a job that I can say to my child, ‘Go and pursue it and do domestic work in people’s houses because it does not have future development.’” (P1 - DW - FGD1)

These remarks reflect the economic necessity that compels individuals into domestic work despite their personal aspirations. This sentiment echoes Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony, where societal norms and economic pressures force individuals to internalise and accept their roles, making them seem natural and inevitable (Mayo, 2015) .

Zinzi’s narrative, *“I wanted to be something different, but this is what I can do to support my family because I didn’t finish school” (Zinzi - DW - W - 1)*, shows the economic constraints that led her to domestic work. This shows how unfair systems and a history of being taken advantage of limit the job options available to people who are already on the margins of society (Fanon, 1963). This also underlines how societal structures, and economic constraints compel women into domestic work, despite their aspirations. The idea of Foucault’s biopolitics is applicable (Gros, 2016; Siisiäinen, 2018), where power dynamics control bodies and life through economic necessity, making survival a primary concern over personal ambitions.

Statements like Nono’s, *“I know I am worth more than just cleaning someone’s house” (Nono - DW - I - 2)*, and Sipiwe’s, *“It is not a bad job...but it wouldn’t be my first choice, but because I want money, then I have to do it” (Sipiwe - DW - W - 1)*, highlight the tension between economic necessity and personal fulfilment. This reflects the broader struggle for autonomy within their socio-economic positions. The theory on the performative nature of identity is applicable, as DWs challenge societal scripts imposed on them by asserting their worth and seeking better conditions (Butler, 1990). Nosipho’s comment, *“I wish I was getting ZAR2500; that would be much better or even ZAR3000” (Nosipho - DW - B - 1)*, points to the low remuneration of domestic work. Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony explains how societal norms and economic pressures force individuals to accept

and internalise these roles (Bakalov, 2024). Sihle elaborates on the stigma associated with domestic work: *“It is [domestic work as a job] low. If you work in the office, it is better. When you walk into the office, nobody knows how much you are earning. When you are a maid, everybody can see that you are a maid in a uniform sometimes, as you walk into the home that you work in”* (Sihle - DW - I - 1). This public visibility and associated stigma reinforce the low status and societal judgement of domestic work, perpetuating its marginalisation (Crous, 2018; Harisunker, 2010).

For some employers like Soomaya, providing employment is seen as an act of benevolence and social responsibility. She remarks, *“I was now able to give someone else an income... I am making changes in her family”* (Soomaya - DWE - I - 1), reflecting the concept of powerarchy, as described by Joy (2019). In powerarchy, a hierarchy of moral worth justifies oppression, perpetuating the subjugation of those deemed inferior. Soomaya’s sense of self-worth is tied to her ability to uplift her employee, viewing her role as a benefactor who provides guidance and support. This paternalistic approach reinforces the idea that the DW is dependent and in need of help, maintaining the existing power imbalance and justifying the DW’s subordination within the social hierarchy. Thus, Soomaya’s statement exemplifies how powerarchy operates by framing acts of kindness as means to sustain dominance and control.

The economic instability faced by DWs working for employers with limited financial means is starkly presented in the quote: *“Working for a black person is a gamble my sister...my livelihood is always on the edge. Many black people don’t have money to afford us, yet they want the most out of us”* (P2 - DW - FGD1). This statement reflects the DW’s awareness of the financial instability inherent in their employment, showing the precariousness of their livelihood. The comparison between different racial groups of employers highlights economic disparities. According to the participant, white employers offer higher wages and longer job tenure, which contrasts with the perceived or actual instability and lower pay when working for black employers. This reflects the broader societal inequities in wealth distribution and employment practices, supporting Fanon’s analysis of post-colonial socio-economic conditions which helps to contextualise these disparities, showing how historical and systemic factors contribute to the current economic challenges faced by DWs (Pithouse, 2016).

These narratives reveal how neoliberal capitalism and poverty contribute to the perpetuation of domestic work as a survival mechanism for those marginalised by economic and social structures. Neoliberal policies promote deregulation, flexible labour markets, and the privatisation of public services, ultimately restricting accessible job options and fair salaries for low-income workers, especially Black African women in South Africa. Sewpaul (2015) argues that neoliberalism has exacerbated global inequalities, further marginalising women, particularly in the Global South, where the feminisation of poverty has intensified. These insights are crucial for developing strategies to challenge and transform oppressive structures, promoting more equitable and dignified conditions for DWs.

6.4.2 Domestic work as incurring an inferior status and exploitation

The racialised exploitation and inferiority of domestic work, dominantly constructed as “women’s work” is deeply entrenched in neoliberal societal structures, perpetuating devaluation of essential work. Virdee (2019), for example, argues that capitalism’s success rested on colonial invention of racism, and “the extinguishing of the emancipatory visions of subaltern populations” (p. 10), as reflected in the narratives of the DWs in this study. Their narratives shed light on the pervasive frustration and dissatisfaction stemming from societal undervaluation inherent in domestic work. Zanele’s experience of a unilateral salary reduction exemplifies this exploitation: “*No, we did not [agree on the reduced salary]. I was told that this is how much I am going to get*” (**Zanele - DW - I - 1**). This shows the lack of agency and economic exploitation that DWs often face, reflecting the broader societal stigma and devaluation of domestic work (Nimri et al., 2020; Ravenelle, 2019; Shigihara, 2018).

Similarly, Sihle’s account emphasises the significant wage disparity and intense labour demands: “*I was paid ZAR 3000 per month... For that kind of a job where I work day and night full time, I deserve to be paid between R6000-R7000*” (**Sihle - DW - I - 1**). This discrepancy reflects the broader societal minimisation of domestic work, which is often seen as dirty work and less meaningful (Baran et al., 2016). Earning ZAR 3000 per month for a “day and night” workload suggests a deep devaluation of the physical and mental demands inherent in the job. This ingrained devaluation continues to influence perceptions today, even when DWs are paid employees, as reflected in this study where only three DWs were paid according to the minimum wage out of 15 that were interviewed. Sihle’s demand for fairer compensation (between ZAR6000-ZAR7000) becomes a powerful challenge to this societal marginalisation. It highlights the complex skills, dedication, and physical labour required to

maintain a household, arguing for domestic work to be valued on par with other professions requiring similar levels of effort.

Sbonga's ladder rating further illuminates the gap between personal recognition and societal marginalisation: *"On a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate the importance of domestic workers at a 10. But in terms of how society values them, maybe a 3 or 4. It's frustrating because their work is so essential... People always talk about domestic workers as if they are not important. But they are the ones who keep our homes together, who take care of our children. Society doesn't see them the way I do."* (**Sbonga - DWE - B - 1**). This highlights the frustration that some employers feel regarding society's failure to appreciate the critical role of DWs, a sentiment echoed in the literature on the multiple axes of oppression existent in domestic work (Bloom, 2015; Hochschild, 2012; Masterson & Hoobler, 2019). However, Sbonga displays double standards here, while she outwardly acknowledges the importance of DWs, her private actions reveal an alignment with societal norms that exploit her DW. *"When I come back from home... for her [DW], it is to take care of the house because the baby is with me."* (**Sbonga - DWE - B - 2**), her high expectations regarding the worker's constant availability and performance reveal a lack of concern for the DW's own well-being or personal time. This may reflect a conflict between personal beliefs and societal pressures, or it could indicate an internalised hierarchy where, despite recognising the value of domestic work, Sbonga's actions reinforce the cycle of exploitation that she herself criticises.

Power dynamics are also central to this societal construction. Nosipho acknowledges the power imbalance in her workplace: *"My employer has power over me because she is the one who gives instructions"* (**Nosipho - DW - B - 1**). This aligns with Foucault's biopower (Foucault, 1972), where a person's sense of self is shaped over time by the power dynamics present in the discourses they are part of. This links identity to power, showing how societal labels can justify oppression. This is relevant where employers exert control over the daily lives and activities of DWs, perpetuating internalised oppression and a sense of powerlessness (Anderson & Anderson, 2000; Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020).

Sihle's low job satisfaction rating of three (3) entirely contrasts with the pride some workers take in their roles. Sihle states, *"Ayi I am low. I will not be high because I am not happy... I will choose three because there is no way I can even get to five"* (**Sihle - DW - I - 1**). This profound dissatisfaction stems from the exploitation and lack of fulfilment in her job,

reflecting the broader societal devaluation of domestic work and the limited opportunities for economic and career mobility (Sineke, 2023; Hoobler, 2016). Similarly, Celiwe rates her job extremely low, indicating deep dissatisfaction and a lack of confidence in her role: *“I am not so confident. I see myself being at one [laughs]... If there was a zero rating, I would choose it. I do not like this job.”* (Celiwe - DW - I - 1). The participant’s desire for a zero rating is an implicit critique of the job conditions that have led to such dissatisfaction. This rating signifies her perception of domestic work as a bottom-rung job, devoid of respect or recognition, further highlighting the exploitation inherent in her work (Cock, 1989; Ladegaard, 2022). The insertion of laughter in the statement may be indicative of masking the seriousness of her dissatisfaction or an attempt to lessen the impact of her harsh reality through humour. This power imbalance can lead to internalised oppression, where DWs adopt societal beliefs that undermine their self-worth and agency (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020).

It becomes clear that domestic work is deeply embedded in social structures and cultural practices that perpetuate these exploitative dynamics and inferior status. The narratives from both DWs and DWEs show the need for a re-evaluation of societal norms to recognise and value the essential labour provided by DWs.

6.4.3 Domestic work as love and duty: Emotional bonds and attachment

The literature on domestic work highlights the unique emotional bonds and the perception of DWs as part of the family, which significantly influences their work dynamics. Domestic work goes beyond mere task performance and is deeply intertwined with the private space in which it occurs. Researchers argue that the uniqueness of domestic work lies in the intimacy resulting from care work’s physical nature, the privacy of the domestic setting, and the interpersonal dimension involved (Boris, 2016, 2017, 2018; Boris & Coles, 2021; Griffin, 2020; Wee et al., 2023).

The emotional attachment and personal bonds formed with the employer’s family were crucial to how most participants constructed their roles. Nosipho illustrates this by describing her care for the children: *“The child grew under my care and her mother would go in the morning and then come back in the evening, and I really love those children”* (Nosipho - DW - B - 1). This attachment provides a sense of purpose and fulfilment beyond the job’s basic requirements, highlighting the personal and emotional dimensions of domestic work.

Similarly, when an employer was asked about reasons for high turnover of DWs, she explained that “...if you are a person who doesn't have the love for kids then it's turn off for me even though you are also here to take care of other domestic work but the core for you is to look after my children” (Mpilo - DWE - B - 1). Further on during the interview, when I asked Mpilo if she would say that she paid for affection or love, she confidently agreed. This aligns with the literature that emphasises the intimate nature of domestic work, where workers are not merely providing a service but are essentially selling a relationship (Marchetti, 2022; Hochschild, 2012).

The domestic worker, Thandi, described the children she cared for as being “like my own children.” (Thandi - DW - B - 1), which signals a deep emotional bond and a sense of maternal responsibility towards the employer's children. Such relationships are often characterised by a blend of professional duty and personal affection, which can blur the boundaries between work and personal life. Thandi continued to share that “...the old one [child] does not even want me to look at my own child's pictures because she gets jealous. She does not want me to even sleep with the younger one [child] as she feels like I love the younger one more.” (Thandi - DW - B - 1). This dynamic aligns with the concept of maternalism, where the employer-employee relationship takes on a familial role, often leading to the DW being seen as an extension of the mother in the family (Ally, 2010; King, 2012).

While DWs are seen as extensions of mother figures influencing childrearing, they face challenges fulfilling their own maternal roles due to constant duty and surveillance in live-in arrangements (Jansen, 2019; Wu, 2017; Dawood & Seedat-Khan, 2023). DWs often raise the children of their DWEs, while being denied the opportunity to be mothers to their own children. Sewpaul (2020) writes of the phenomenon of out-sourcing of parenting with workers raising children in privileged families, while workers longed to be with their left behind children at their homes, framing this as “the burden of poverty and the burden of affluence” (p. 184). Domestic labour, is a manifestation of unequal societies, characterised by neoliberal, deregulatory and exploitative practices, as discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis. Some of the DWs in this study talked about adopting child-rearing roles, sometimes as surrogate mothers, and their emotional investments on this.

Nosipho illustrated this emotional investment by describing the extensive time spent caring for her DWE's child, saying “The child grew up under my care and its mother would go in

the morning and come back in the evening.” (Nosipho - DW - B - 1). This quote highlights the primary role Nosipho plays in the child’s daily life, effectively becoming a surrogate caregiver in the absence of the parents. The child’s dependence on Nosipho illustrates the worker’s indispensable role in the household. Similarly, Lulama expressed her dedication to childcare, emphasising her commitment to excellence in her work asserting that *“I take care of her baby even more than her. When I do my job I do it joyfully, and to the best of my ability.”* (Lulama - DW - B - 1). Lulama’s narrative reflects a deep sense of personal responsibility and pride in her work. Her claim of caring for the baby even more than the mother signifies the emotional bond and the high standards she sets for herself in fulfilling her duties. She added that *“I am sure that when I am away she [employer] says ‘If Lulama was around, this and that would have been done.’ I am that kind of a person.”* (Lulama - DW - B - 1). Her reliability and the trust placed in her by the employer signify the critical role she plays within the household dynamics. This also matches the eight she rated the importance of her work on the ladder. These narratives collectively illustrate the profound emotional and practical investment DWs make in their roles. Their sense of responsibility goes beyond contractual obligations, highlighting their integral presence in the lives of the families they work for. This emotional labour creates strong bonds and a high level of trust.

As seen in prior discussion, many DWS that were involved in childcare acknowledged these bonds to provide a sense of purpose and personal fulfilment beyond the job’s basic requirements, reflecting Freire’s emphasis on the humanisation of work through meaningful relationships (Govender, 2020). Although these emotional bonds can provide a counterbalance, offering DWs a sense of dignity and self-worth (Sineke, 2023), this aspect of their work is rarely compensated or acknowledged adequately (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020).

Despite societal devaluation, many employers recognised and appreciated the importance of domestic work. Claire’s high rating of her DW displays this recognition: *“I have rated her high on the ladder because I recognise her worth and the essential part she plays in keeping our home running smoothly”* (Claire - DWE - W - 1). This rating reflects her personal appreciation and the emotional bonds formed with the worker, contrasting with the broader societal norm of underrating. This sentiment was echoed by many employers in the study. In fact, the development of a close, almost familial relationship between Sbonga and her nanny highlights the emotional and practical support they provide each other. *“She respected me. I loved that about her. I ended up finding a sister, you know. A person that really cared about*

me.” (Sbonga - DWE - B - 1). This mutual dependency goes beyond professional duties, reflecting a deeper bond and interdependence that blurs the lines of traditional employer-employee relationships. This disparity between personal and societal valuations is a source of frustration for employers like Sbonga, who saw the crucial role DWs play in maintaining households and supporting families. Nandi’s reflection reveals a high personal valuation of her DW despite societal norms: “*She plays a huge role because when I am not there, I know that everything is fine at home, and I don’t have to stress about anything*” (Nandi - DWE - B - 1). This duality highlights the tension between personal appreciation and societal hierarchies in the construction of domestic work. The literature underlines this tension, noting that while DWs are essential for alleviating work-family conflicts for employers, they often face limited opportunities for their own economic advancement (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020; Tizon, 2017).

The two employers’ perspectives on treating DWs as family reflects an attempt to counteract societal stigmatisation:

“When I treat her like family, she takes better care of my children and does her work with more dedication.” (Saanvi - DWE - I - 1).

“I have told her that she should take this place as her home even though she is at work and I know she needs the income.” (Mpilo - DWE - B - 1)

This approach highlights the potential for positive, respectful relationships within the structural constraints of domestic work. The literature supports this view, suggesting that recognising the emotional and relational aspects of domestic work can help mitigate some of the exploitation and devaluation inherent in the job (Boris, 2016; Griffin, 2020). However, in the context of domestic work, this “family” treatment must be critically examined. When kindness and family-like dynamics are not paired with fair wages, clear role expectations, and respect for the DW’s autonomy, they risk reinforcing a paternalistic relationship that serves to maintain the employer’s superior position. As Marais and Van Wyk (2015b) suggest, without structural support and fair economic conditions, domestic work remains a dead-end job rather than a pathway to socio-economic mobility. Thus, while relational dynamics can mitigate some structural challenges, they should not overshadow the need for material and policy changes that secure DWs’ rights and protect them from exploitation.

One could argue that in formal employment, performance bonuses are often awarded as a means of recognising and encouraging excellence, serving as a form of appreciation from the

employer for work well done. However, DWs may challenge this perspective by noting that in formal employment, such bonuses are typically based on objective and measurable criteria, whereas in domestic work, performance assessments are often subjective and lack standardised evaluation. Despite this, there is evidence to suggest that when DWs are treated with respect and dignity, their job performance and overall satisfaction are likely to improve, showing the importance of equitable treatment in all forms of employment, as Yvette asserts: *“It is important to respect and treat them well so that they can also feel at home and be comfortable in doing their work”* (Yvette - DWE - W - 1). This approach highlights the employer’s recognition of the worker’s contributions and the need for mutual respect. The literature suggests that such respectful relationships can help DWs feel more valued and less marginalised, despite the societal norms that often devalue their work (Cock, 1989; Ladegaard, 2022).

The perception of domestic work varies among DWs, reflecting a complex interplay of personal experiences and societal norms. While some DWs, like Nosipho, expressed a sense of belonging and familial connection, stating, *“I sometimes don’t feel like I am at work but instead feel as though I am staying with my own family”* (Nosipho - DW - B - 1), others had a starkly different experience. For example, the following participants highlight the clear demarcation between being an employee and a family member:

“In that household you work as an employee and not a fellow household member. That is something that isn’t pleasant with this job.” (P2 - DW - FGD2)

“See I am not part of the family my sister. If there’s a family function, I am not part of it. I would either be outside doing the washing or something. But after the party, all dishes will need me, the person that was not part of the party.” (P4 - DW - FGD2)

“...it is like that they are my family because I am in their house from morning until sunset...but it’s not the same with my real family. You see, when you are with your real family you eat whatever, you do whatever you like. But when you are at work you do what they tell you to do.” (Celiwe - DW - I - 1)

The uniform, a symbol of their role, reinforces this separation. Celiwe poignantly remarks, *“...the uniform is the very thing that shows that they are not my family really, I am the worker in their home”* (Celiwe - DW - I - 1). Likewise, Sihle’s experience further explains the societal devaluation of domestic work, especially when it is visual like with the wearing of uniforms. She shared her feelings of low self-worth and dissatisfaction, stating, *“...the feelings inside about my job and the uniform I wear is not nice...Then people also add in that*

they have negative comments about domestic work...such comments make me feel low” (Sihle - DW - I - 2). This is evidence of the pervasive impact of societal attitudes and comments on the emotional well-being and self-esteem of DWs, as highlighted by scholars in previous research (see Bloom, 2015; Masterson & Hoobler, 2019). It also aligns with the literature on the demeaning language experienced by DWs, which often reinforces social inequality (Cervone et al., 2021; Bianchi et al., 2019). The narratives of these DWs reveal the deep-seated issues of power imbalance, societal stigma, and the lack of recognition and respect for their labour. While some may find a semblance of familial connection in their roles, the overarching reality for many is one of exploitation. They also emphasise the need to address the damaging stereotypes and discriminatory rhetoric that perpetuate the marginalisation and exploitation of DWs.

6.4.4 Domestic workers as worthy and autonomous

While participants acknowledged the challenging conditions they faced, as it can be observed in the subthemes discussed prior, for many DWs in this study, their work is not just a means of survival, but a significant part of their identity and self-worth. This pride often stems from their ability to provide for their families and the personal satisfaction they gain from their work.

“I like doing my job to the best of my ability...” (Celiwe - DW - I - 1)

“I am very proud of the money I make from doing domestic work. If you are taking out your ZAR100 and I take out mine when we are buying something, your money is the same as mine.” (P2 - DW - FGD1)

“This job is important to me because I was able to take my three children to school.” (P1 - DW - FGD2)

“My job is very important; they need me to keep things running smoothly... my work doesn't only benefit me, but my employers can see the impact on my work in their household as well. I help a lot in their household” (Nonjabulo - DW - W - 1)

“When I work, I dedicate myself...” (Nosipho - DW - B - 1)

The quotes reveal how DWs construct their professional identities through dedication and a strong work ethic, at the same time it is the way they actively negotiate their identities and assert their autonomy, challenging societal perceptions that often devalue their work and personhood. The participants' statements also reflect a sense of empowerment derived from

their dedication and the recognition of their contributions to household management. Participant 2's expression of pride in earning her own money reflects an awareness of her self-worth. By comparing her earnings to others in different professions like me as the interviewer, she asserted her financial autonomy and challenged economic marginalisation. The acknowledgment from Nonjabulo's employers provides her with a sense of power and importance within the household, reflecting Foucault's idea of power relations being omnipresent and negotiated through recognition and validation. This parallels literature on the resilience and agency of DWs, emphasising the importance of recognising their labour as valuable and essential (Sineke, 2023). Notably, this personal pride contrasts with societal undervaluation, highlighting a dissonance between DWs' own views and the broader societal attitude towards DWs, that they have also internalised to a certain extent.

Domestic workers like Nono articulated how their work, often looked down upon by others, contributes to their growth and self-worth, "*It [domestic work as a job] means a lot you know. Another person might look down on the job, but it helps me to grow,*" (**Nono - DW - I - 2**) highlights the intrinsic value they find in their roles, challenging societal perceptions of domestic work. Lulama and Thandi further illustrate this by emphasising the personal satisfaction and autonomy they derive from their work. Lulama said, "*I like this job now, and I am well familiar with it,*" (**Lulama - DW - B - 1**) while Thandi mentions, "*Having a job as a domestic work helps me*" (**Thandi - DW - B - 1**).

These DWs' recollections on their work highlight how recognition and appreciation from employers can positively impact their sense of self-worth. Zanele states, "*Currently I see myself at the top...The reason why I feel I am at 10 is because when I do my work, I get a lot of good compliments and that makes me feel appreciated*" (**Zanele - DW - W - 1**), while Zinzi notes, "*They appreciate what I do, and that makes me feel valued*" (**Zinzi - DW - W - 1**). This recognition not only boosts their morale but also challenges the demeaning perceptions of domestic work, echoing the literature on the power dynamics and societal construction of domestic work (Bloom, 2015; Hochschild, 2012; Masterson & Hoobler, 2019). By receiving acknowledgment and small benefits, DWs can navigate and partially resist the dominant power structures that seek to marginalise them. The narratives of the participants demonstrate that, despite the often strict and demanding nature of their work, DWs find ways to assert their autonomy and take pride in their contributions, which might be a source of their resilience.

6.5 Narratives of Helplessness

The narratives of helplessness and victimhood among both employers and DWs manifested in multifaceted ways, often reflecting deep-seated power imbalances and entrenched social hierarchies. The experiences of participants reveal the complex dynamics of power and identity within domestic work relationships.

Employers frequently expressed a profound sense of dependency on their DWs, which can lead to feelings of helplessness when DWs are unavailable. For instance, Nelita's narrative illustrates her deep reliance on her nanny, not only for childcare but also as a source of emotional and practical support. She stated,

“It was not going to be possible to continue with life without her. So, it was important to have her in my life because she was like my pillar in everything. She was more than a nanny; she was like a parent because it was my first experience.” (Nelita - DWE - B - 1)

This dependency creates a power imbalance, as the DW's indispensability grants her a unique, albeit limited, form of power within the household. Butler's concept of performativity is applicable in this situation, where the employer's role as a mother is enacted through the guidance and actions of her DW, highlighting her reliance that results in the sense of helplessness (Butler, 1988). Nelita's statement, *“I had no experience of taking care of the child, so she taught me everything because she was a mother herself.”* (Nelita - DWE - B - 1), shows this performative dependency, suggesting that her identity as a mother is constructed through the DW's expertise rather than her own innate abilities.

Similarly, Saanvi's narrative reflects a sense of powerlessness when faced with the sudden unavailability of her DW. She describes the chaos and confusion that ensue when her DW does not return:

“The sudden changes are quite intense because sometimes you find that you have to wake up and go to work and she did not come back. The school has opened and you have to prepare the children and at the same time you are going to work as well. The washing and the uniform or creche clothes so it is quite an intense change and it is very sudden. It brings a lot of confusion and powerlessness because if you have

responsibilities and there are people you are responsible for like children you try to plan” (Saanvi - DWE - I - 1)

The sudden unavailability of the domestic worker creates a situation where the employer, Saanvi, feels overwhelmed and powerless. The suddenness of these changes highlight the employer’s dependency on the DW for maintaining household order and managing responsibilities. This dependency reflects a significant power dynamic where the DW, though often perceived as subordinate, holds substantial control over the employer’s daily functioning and routine stability. This situation demonstrates how employers’ perceived power can be undermined by their reliance on DWs (Bakalov, 2024). The specific mention of preparing children for school, managing laundry, and getting ready for work illustrates the complex nature of these responsibilities. This intersectionality reflects the broader societal expectation placed on women to balance professional and domestic roles, often without adequate support. Saanvi’s role as a working mother is a performance, as Butler (1988) might argue, and her daily activities highlight the stress and strain involved in balancing work and family life.

Gendered expectations also contribute significantly to the narratives of helplessness among both employers and DWs. Nandi’s narrative further exemplifies this as she discusses the dual burden of managing both work and household duties: *“The main reason was the kids and the work; I could not do it all at once. Managing the house and on the other side I must go to work and that is why I employed my sister, especially because the kids were young” (Nandi - DWE - B - 1)*. Butler’s concept of performativity and the societal expectations placed on women resonate with Nandi’s narrative (McKinlay, 2010), highlighting how gendered expectations contribute to feelings of helplessness and the subsequent reliance on DWs. Employers like Sbonga express a similar dependency, admitting their inability to manage without their “helpers”:

“I do not think I would survive without a helper in my house. I cannot. I think that they fill so many shoes in terms of the house, the child, my husband and myself. Their presence is important to me, they become the security guards of the house while you are not at home.” (Sbonga - DWE - B - 2).

This quote illustrates the mutual dependency between Sbonga and her domestic worker. Sbonga’s admission that she cannot manage without the DW highlights the essential role the worker plays in maintaining the household. This dependence is reciprocal, as the worker

relies on the job for financial stability, while Sbonga relies on the worker for the smooth functioning of her household.

Domestic workers, on the other hand, frequently expressed narratives of helplessness and victimhood driven by social and economic limitations. Nono's statement, "*They treat us like we are not humans, just because we are poor and black*" (**Nono - DW - I - 2**). Here the DW's identity is created through repeated actions that reinforce their subjugated status, similar to Butler's concept of performativity (Butler, 1990). This sentiment aligns with Gramsci's and Sewpaul's ideas on hegemony, where in this case societal norms favouring employers' racial and economic privilege normalise the subservient roles of DWs. This normalisation coerces workers into accepting their oppressed state, as reflected in their reluctance to complain out of fear of losing their jobs: "*We can't complain too much; otherwise, we lose our jobs*" (**Ntombi - DW - W - 1**). The coercive acceptance of their oppressed status is a powerful illustration of how cultural hegemony operates to maintain the status quo.

Economic exploitation further exacerbates the sense of helplessness among DWs. Zanele's narrative reflects this through her inability to negotiate her salary. When she questioned the reduction in her wages from ZAR 4000 to ZAR 1500, her employer's response was dismissive and unresponsive: "*I was told that this is how much I am going to get. You know when you have been called up to come and work and they just tell you this is what we going to give you.*" (**Zanele - DW - W - 1**). This scenario displays the power imbalance where DWs are often forced to accept unfavourable terms due to their vulnerable positions. The economic dominance of employers, though sometimes masked as generosity, often dictates the worker's livelihood and conditions, reinforcing hierarchical control.

Many DWs in the study exemplify a careful balance of compliance and subtle resistance. Their identities and roles are shaped by taken-for-granted assumptions about domestic work and economic pressures, reinforcing a sense of limited agency and choice. This is evident in Nonjabulo's statement: "*I know when to speak and when to stay silent, it's a way to keep the peace but also gets me what I need*" (**Nonjabulo - DW - W - 1**). The phrase "*it's a way to keep the peace*" shows how Nonjabulo's silence is a performative act, aligning with the expectations of her employer and the broader societal norms dictating the behaviour of DWs. This performative compliance reinforces the power imbalance, as DWs must conform to these expectations to ensure continued employment and stability. Despite this apparent powerlessness, Nonjabulo's statement also reveals a form of subtle resistance. By carefully

choosing when to speak and when to remain silent, she exercises a form of agency and control over her situation. The phrase *“but also get what I need”* indicates that her strategic silence is not merely passive submission, but a deliberate tactic to achieve her own goals and needs within the confines of the power structure.

Both employers and DWs tell stories of powerlessness, showing the complicated ways power works in these relationships. These stories reveal deep inequalities and social structures. Employers often rely heavily on their DWs, feeling helpless without them, as shown by Nelita and Saanvi. This dependence creates a strange situation where DWs, despite being lower in social status, have a lot of control over how the household runs. On the other hand, DWs often face many kinds of oppression, and their jobs and lives are shaped by economic hardship and societal expectations. Nonjabulo’s careful balancing act of following the rules and pushing back shows how DWs can find ways to act independently even in difficult situations. These stories highlight the need to see the true nature of power in domestic work and create fairer, more respectful ways of doing things that protect DWs’ dignity and independence while acknowledging that both employers and DWs depend on each other.

6.6 Narratives of Power

Analysing the narratives of power between domestic workers and their employers, it becomes evident that power dynamics are multifaceted and often involve both legitimate and illegitimate assertions of authority. The various subthemes that emerge from the participants’ quotes highlight how power is perceived, negotiated, and enacted within the DW-DWE relationship, drawing on theoretical frameworks to deepen our analysis.

6.6.1 Mutual Dependency

Domestic workers and employers are bound by a mutual dependency where the employer relies on the labour and services of the worker, while the worker depends on the employer for wages and livelihood (Sennet, 2003). This interdependence creates a space where power is continuously negotiated, and both parties must engage in a delicate balancing act to maintain the relationship. Freire’s idea of mutual humanisation complements this, emphasising that both the oppressed and the oppressor are locked in a cycle of interdependence. Freire argues that genuine liberation and humanisation can only occur when both parties recognise their mutual dependence and work together to create a more equitable and just relationship (Freire, 2018a). Shweta, an employer, acknowledged this mutual dependency, understanding that the

stability and success of their relationship with the DW hinged on recognising and respecting this balance of power:

“I would say that the employer obviously has the power because ultimately your financial needs are dependent on them... but in this type of situation, I have learned we actually both have the power.” (Shweta - DWE - I - 1)

According to Gramsci, hegemony involves the domination of one group over another, not merely through coercive means but by securing the consent of the subordinate group through cultural and ideological means (Daldal, 2014; Sewpaul, 2013). This form of power is maintained by creating a shared belief system that makes the existing social order appear natural and inevitable (Bakalov, 2024; Sewpaul, 2020). The realisation of this dynamic challenges traditional hierarchical power structures, as it highlights the continuous negotiation and re-negotiation of power between the employer and the DW. Similarly, other employers noticed this shift:

“In my mind... I have this idea of thinking that both of us have power. We both need each other. I need her as much as she needs me.” (Yvette - DWE - W - 1)

“Both of us... we both have power because she has power to quit and leave if she is no longer interested in working here and I cannot stop her from doing that.” (Melany - DWE - I - 1)

“I think you must be a leader and collectively talk as to how things should happen and not use power to say I am paying you and therefore you need to do one, two, and three. I never used power in that way at the time.” (Soomaya - DWE - I - 1)

As Mayo (2015) explains, this perspective aligns with Gramsci’s idea of hegemony, demonstrating the ongoing negotiation of power dynamics between employers and DWs. Reciprocal power dynamics are evident in the narratives of both employers and DWs. Claire articulates this reciprocal power, *“Power is exercised in different ways... she [DW] could just say that she quits or decide to not pitch for work, and who is at the mercy of her? I am.”* (Claire - DWE - W - 1). This demonstrates Foucault’s concept of power relations, where power is not simply top-down but is exercised within interactions. The employer recognises that while she has authority over the worker, the worker also holds power by virtue of her role and the potential to disrupt the household by refusing to work. This reciprocal power

dynamic shows how Foucault's idea of power is omnipresent and operates within interactions, rather than being a possession (Daldal, 2014).

Nonjabulo's experiences reveal both overt and subtle power dynamics. She feels a sense of empowerment because her employers depend on her intimate knowledge of the household and skills in managing the household. She mentions:

“Where I am currently, I can say I have power because I know that they need me... There is a lot that they do not know about their own household themselves. They end up asking you how certain things are done in their own house.” (Nonjabulo - DW - W - 1)

Foucault's theory of power and knowledge posits that power and knowledge are inextricably linked and that knowledge is a form of power (Keenan, 2017; Rouse, 1994). According to Foucault (1972), power is not only exerted through overt control or coercion but also through the production and dissemination of knowledge. This knowledge shapes norms, behaviours, and perceptions, thereby subtly influencing and controlling individuals and society. Foucault argues that institutions, discourses, and practices are mechanisms through which power circulates and is maintained, creating a network of relations that perpetuate power structures (Bevir, 1999). Nonjabulo's intimate knowledge of the household gives her a certain power that she recognised. This dependency is twofold, as her employers rely on her for the smooth running of their household, while Nonjabulo depends on them for financial support and assistance with her children's education. She further explains the reciprocal nature of this relationship, noting that *“...they now know that the state of their home is the way it is because of my work and that's why they are able to assist me with many things...like paying my child's school fees at a private school.”* (Nonjabulo - DW - W - 1). This statement makes us see the interdependence where her work is indispensable to her employers, and in turn, they provide her with benefits that extend beyond her salary. The majority of DWs in this study recognised a symbiotic relationship with their employers where both the DW and employer rely on each other for different needs.

“When I started going with them [employers] in their leisure trips, I realised that ‘these people need me.’ They wouldn't be able to cope without me.” (Zinzi - DW - W - 1)

“I need her, she also needs me. Without me she is nothing because the kids are safe when I am there. Even myself my family have something to eat at the end of the month. We are helping each other.” (Thandi - DW - B - 1)

“I know that she needs me as much as I need her.” (Sethabile - DW - B - 2)

These quotes collectively illustrate how the power dynamics in the DWE-DW relationship are not solely one-sided, but involve a shared dependence that shapes their interactions and responsibilities.

The narratives of DWs and their employers illustrate the complex and interdependent nature of their relationships, shaped by mutual dependency and shared power dynamics. Hall’s theory of mutual dependency and Freire’s concept of mutual humanisation help us understand how both parties navigate their roles within economic and social constraints, constantly negotiating power to maintain a balanced relationship. Gramsci’s notion of hegemony is evident as both employers and workers recognise the reciprocal nature of their interactions, where authority and dependence are shared and negotiated for mutual benefit. These dynamics highlight that power is not one-dimensional but rather a fluid and omnipresent force within relationships, as seen in the significant roles DWs play in childcare and household management. The emotional and practical investments made by DWs zoom into the deep sense of responsibility and trust that characterise these interdependent relationships, ultimately reflecting a shared and negotiated power dynamic that challenges traditional hierarchies.

6.6.2 Legitimate Assertions of Power

In analysing how power is both expressed and contested in the interactions between DWs and employers, we uncover the subtle and overt ways in which authority is negotiated and asserted. Legitimate assertions of power are characterised by actions that are perceived as fair and respectful. These actions often involve clear communication, mutual respect, and adherence to agreed-upon roles and responsibilities. For instance, Likuwe’s appreciation for open communication with her employer confirms the importance of dialogue and mutual respect in exercising legitimate power.

“I like it when my employer seats me to say, ‘My sister I do not like this and that.’ I can then say ‘My sister I am sorry I didn’t know.’ It is great when we can sit and talk about things.” (Likuwe - DW - B - 1)

Her narrative reveals that phrases like *“I can then say”* indicates a reciprocal exchange, where both parties have a voice in the discussion. This aligns with Foucault’s concept of productive power, which operates through shared norms and mutual understanding rather than coercion (Gordon & Foucault, 1980b). Power shapes identities, institutions, and discourses. It creates what is considered normal or acceptable in society, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and others (Foucault, 1991). To *“sit and talk”* suggests a level playing field, reinforcing the idea of mutual respect and highlighting how respectful communication can serve as a mechanism for legitimate power. Nosipho’s account further supports this notion of legitimate power:

“If she doesn’t like something she would respectfully tell you and say, ‘When it comes to this, I do not like it.’ She would not be angry at the time, but she would speak to you well.” (Nosipho - DW - B - 1)

This narrative aligns with Foucault’s principles of productive power, where authority is maintained through positive reinforcement and clear communication (Foucault, 1991). Such respectful interaction promotes a healthy power dynamic, where the worker feels valued and understood. Words like *“respectfully”* and *“speak to you well”* lay emphasis on a power dynamic where authority is exercised without diminishing the worker’s dignity.

Training also plays a significant role in establishing legitimate power, as seen in Nosipho’s value for the training provided by her employer. She states, *“I do my work accordingly because when I arrived, I was trained on how to do it properly.”* (Nosipho - DW - B - 1). This shows the employer’s role in setting standards and expectations, which reflects a structured approach to power. This training enhances the DW’s competence and confidence, aligning with Foucault’s view that legitimate authority can be empowering when it provides individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge (Gordon & Foucault, 1980b).

Shweta, an employer, provides further insights into the positive impacts of legitimate power. Her clear delineation of work boundaries illustrates a structured and respectful approach to power. She explains, *“...during the day we are both at work; me and my husband. So that is when the domestic worker plays a big role and leads the household because we are not in this physical space. When we come back at 6pm that is when all her duties stop.”* (Shweta - DWE - I - 1). This structured approach ensures that the DW’s duties are well-defined, creating a work environment based on mutual respect and understanding. According to

Foucault, such structured roles contribute to a legitimate exercise of power, where authority is clear and agreed upon (Gordon & Foucault, 1980b).

Soomaya's narrative highlights the power of economic support as a form of generous and constructive power. She expresses satisfaction in providing employment, stating, "*I was now able to give someone else an income... knowing her background... knowing her family circumstances... that really made me feel happy.*" (Soomaya - DWE – I - 2). This viewpoint suggests that authority is exercised in a way that benefits everyone involved and strengthens the employer's position. Soomaya's ability to impact her worker's family positively through financial support illustrates a form of power that is both kind and empowering, enhancing the worker's livelihood and well-being. Many DWs like Thandi acknowledged the positive impact of their employer's power, highlighting a symbiotic relationship. She states, "*Because I know that I can support at home because of her. I see my life being better because of her [employer].*" (Thandi - DW - B - 1). This recognition of mutual benefit suggests that the employer's authority enables the worker to improve her circumstances. The power dynamic here is negotiated and shared for mutual benefit, demonstrating how legitimate power can create a supportive and beneficial relationship for both parties. This positive framing of power recognises the potential for authority to be exercised in ways that uplift and support workers.

In analysing how power is both expressed and contested in the DW-DWE relationship, we uncover subtle and overt ways authority is negotiated and asserted. Legitimate assertions of power, characterised by clear communication, mutual respect, and adherence to agreed-upon roles, promoting healthy and equitable dynamics. It highlights the importance of reciprocal communication, aligning with Foucault's concept of productive power, which operates through mutual understanding rather than coercion (Daldal, 2014).

6.6.3 Illegitimate Assertions of Power

Illegitimate assertions of power occur when boundaries are overstepped, leading to conflicts and potential abuse of authority. In this study this was found to be bidirectional where employers were responsible for crossing boundaries, but DWs also abused their authority.

The narratives provided by DWs reveal deeply ingrained practices of exclusion and marginalisation, often manifesting as everyday acts of dehumanisation and control. Thandi, a domestic worker, recounts a particularly degrading experience: "*There was an Indian that*

used to make me eat outside, even my plate was placed outside; it was not right” (Thandi - DW - B - 1). This act of forcing Thandi to eat outside, with separate utensils, symbolises a clear demarcation of social boundaries, reinforcing her outsider and inferior status. The separation of spaces and objects serves as powerful assertion of hierarchy, control and dehumanisation. Similarly, Sheela, a White employer, describes how it was a common practice in her family for DWs to use different dishes and eat different food: *“When I was growing up, we had a domestic worker and a gardener. I remember that they had their own special dishes, like bowls, cups, and plates, that were completely different from ours. They even ate different food than us! My parents bought them things like beans, maize meal, and rice, while we ate all sorts of other stuff” (Sheela - DWE - W - 1).* This narrative illustrates how the practice of separating workers extends beyond physical space to include everyday objects and sustenance, thereby ingraining notions of social stratification from a young age. Such practices are not merely about dietary preferences; they are manifestations of a deeply entrenched social order that places DWs in a subordinate position. The fact that Sheela’s parents were beneficiaries of the apartheid system further shows the historical context of racial and social hierarchies that inform these practices.

Another domestic worker’s account reveals a similar dynamic of control and marginalisation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant 8 describes being instructed by her employer to use a public toilet rather than the facilities within the home: *“She told me to use the public toilet at the nearby mall... during COVID, she would tell me to leave everything outside the door, including my bag. Then, she would say, ‘spray the sanitiser on your clothes before you wear them’. She would keep checking on me while I clean her bathroom... thank God for the building caretaker who allowed me to use her toilet” (P8 - DW - FGD 2).* The enforced separation and surveillance described in these narratives exemplify Foucault’s disciplinary power, which operates through detailed observation, normalisation, and regulation of behaviour. Foucault conceptualises disciplinary power as a means of maintaining order and exerting control, not through overt coercion but through everyday, sometimes subtle, practices that become internalised by individuals (Bevir, 1999). The employers’ insistence on separate eating and restroom arrangements and the monitoring of the workers’ activities are mechanisms to reinforce hierarchical relationships and maintain a clear distinction between the domestic worker and the family.

Zanele’s narrative reflects another dimension of illegitimate power through economic control. When she raised concerns about transportation costs, her employer’s dismissive response,

“what must she do about it,” (Zanele - DW - W - 2) exemplifies how economic power can be used to silence and control workers. This highlights the frustration felt by DWs, as employers use their economic dominance to maintain authority. Similarly, Nelita shared that *“I was paying her ZAR 2500, and I was the first person to pay ZAR 2500 in the rural area, people were paid ZAR 1000.” (Nelita - DWE - B - 1)*. This employer’s claim of paying her worker above the local norm showcases how economic power, while seemingly kind and generous, reinforces hierarchical control by dictating the worker’s livelihood and conditions that are not legal, as the ZAR 2500 is below minimum wage in a rural area.

On the other hand, Melany’s account of theft and abandonment by a domestic worker illustrates a reversal of power dynamics, where the worker asserts illegitimate power through resistance. Melany recounted:

“There was this domestic worker that was sleeping in the other room with my child because I was off sick at the time in another room. When I woke up the child was alone in the room but fortunately, she did not leave with my child. She decided to take her clothes and just left like that without saying goodbye. She even stole some clothes from the house and took food as well then left, but I am happy that she didn’t take my baby with her.” (Melany - DWE - I - 1)

This narrative indicates a deep-seated fear that DWs, despite being entrusted with significant responsibilities such as childcare, are not wholly trusted. This suggests that even when DWs are given roles that imply intimacy and trust, like caring for a child, there remains an underlying suspicion and anxiety about their loyalty and intentions. When the DW suddenly leaves, it disrupts the employer’s control, challenging the traditional power dynamics that align with Butler’s performativity theory. Such actions can undermine and challenge traditional power structures (McKinlay, 2010). Relatively, Soomaya’s fear of confronting her worker due to potential retaliation highlights the complexity of power relations.

“I was afraid to address certain things because I wanted a better life for my baby. Unlike me saying all the time to her ‘You are stealing from me; you are stealing from me.’ So, I pretended as if all was okay.” (Soomaya - DWE - I - 2)

Her reluctance highlights the DW’s ability to exert illegitimate power through implicit threats, showing how power is fluid and context-dependent, as asserted by Foucault (ADD DATE).

Illegitimate assertions of power within domestic worker-employer relationships often manifest through surveillance and control, both of which undermine the autonomy and dignity of the worker. Highlighted by most DWs was the issue of surveillance and control which were pervasive mechanisms used by employers to maintain power over DWs. Foucault's concept of surveillance, which involves meticulous monitoring to ensure conformity, is highly relevant in this context (Gordon & Foucault, 1980b). Employers extend their control beyond the physical space of the home into personal realms, as seen in Sbonga's monitoring of her worker's WhatsApp status.

"She [DW] posted on WhatsApp status saying that 'people talk about you while you can hear them, I am just here for money, I fake smile just like an Indian'. After viewing her status, I told my husband to confront her. I was upset." (Sbonga - DWE - 2)

This digital surveillance limits the DW's autonomy and personal expression, certifying the power dynamics through ensuring that even private online interactions are subject to employer scrutiny. The act of confronting the worker based on her digital expressions further exemplifies how surveillance is used to reassert dominance and enforce expected behaviours. This act of confrontation exemplifies the notion of surveillance to maintain power and control (Foucault, 1980). The worker's digital expression of dissatisfaction and her comment about "faking a smile" indicate her awareness of the power dynamics and her subtle resistance against enforced performativity.

Physical surveillance, such as the use of cameras in homes also creates a state of constant observation, compelling DWs to self-regulate their behaviour. Phindile, for instance, mentioned, *"There is no room without surveillance cameras except for the bathrooms, and they have access to these cameras even when they are not at home."* (Phindile - DW - I - 1). This aligns with Foucault's panopticon concept, where the possibility of constant observation induces individuals to regulate their own actions (Foucault, 1980). The panopticon functions not merely through overt control but through internalised self-discipline, with the sense of an omnipresent observer instilling compliance and conformity (Foucault, 1980). However, in the South African context, the widespread adoption of surveillance systems also reflects structural issues rooted in neoliberal capitalism, which has contributed to exceptionally high levels of unemployment, poverty, and inequality. These factors are linked to higher crime rates, which, in turn, fuel heightened security measures among those who afford that luxury.

Both the rich and the poor endure the effects of neoliberal capitalism, but the impacts are disproportionately negative for the poor, often pushing them into precarious labour. This socio-economic imbalance intensifies the perceived need for surveillance and security, with those in privileged positions living behind high-security walls and, as Phindile's experience illustrates, using surveillance to monitor DWs. She noted, "*They were not pleased about the area that I came from because the area is notorious for criminals... They said that is why their house had surveillance cameras.*" (Phindile - DW - I - 1). This justification highlights how assumptions of criminality, often based on the socio-economic or geographic background of DWs, reinforce internalised privilege and racial profiling. Another narrative reinforces the theme of control through restriction and deprivation: "*My employers would lock me inside, and I don't know if they thought I would steal or what. They would not leave any food or any bread. So, I was supposed to just drink water during the day and would only come back at my knock-off time*" (P1 - DW - FGD1). This account illustrates how the domestic space becomes a site of surveillance and control, where the worker's autonomy is severely limited.

Indirect forms of surveillance, such as third-party observations, further extend the employer's control. For instance, Nelita's landlord reporting on the nanny's behaviour is a way to indirectly monitor and discipline the worker.

"The landlord said, 'I do not like what is happening because your child is always crying painfully ... Since the child was born your child has been abused here. He cries the whole day and he will get sick because it is not healthy for him to cry like this'" (Nelita - DWE - B - 1)

This continuous oversight creates a psychological environment where workers feel perpetually scrutinised, leading to internalised oppression and compliance. At the same time, the landlord's intervention serves to protect Nelita's child by raising awareness of a potentially harmful situation, encouraging Nelita to take corrective action, and emphasising the importance of addressing the child's distress to prevent health issues. Workers like Nono expressed feeling constantly watched asserting that "*They watch everything I do, like they don't trust me*" (Nono - DW - I - 2). This relentless monitoring exemplifies the coercive nature of power in domestic work, where compliance is maintained through fear and constant observation, further highlighting the oppressive dynamics at play. Relatedly, Participant 3 shared, "*He [employer] used to tell me to clean his bedroom in the morning, but then he*

would get angry and shout at me to leave it because he was busy relieving himself in the bathroom and smoking with the door open. He would even keep reading the newspaper in there for a long time...there were other bathrooms in the house.” (P3 - DW - FGD1). Here, the employer’s overt assertion of authority serves to remind the domestic worker of their subordinate position, thus reinforcing the power dynamics at play. This form of power, where the employer openly demonstrates their control over space and time, echoes Gramsci’s idea of coercive power, which operates alongside consensual power to maintain hegemony.

Illegitimate assertions of power in the DW-DWE relationship often result in conflicts and potential abuses of authority, impacting both parties. Employers frequently overstep boundaries through acts of dehumanisation. Economic control is another tactic used to silence and dominate, this economic dominance, though sometimes masked as generosity, often dictates the worker’s livelihood. Additionally, workers are subjected to increased workloads without corresponding compensation. On the flip side, DWs also engage in acts of illegitimate power through challenging the traditional power structures, such as theft and abandonment, which disrupt the employer’s control. This bidirectional abuse of power showcases the fluid and context-dependent nature of authority within these relationships, where fear of retaliation by employers can play a significant role. Surveillance is a pervasive tool used by employers to maintain power, extending beyond physical spaces into digital realms.

In analysing the narratives of power between DWs and their DWEs, it becomes evident that power dynamics are multifaceted and often involve both legitimate and illegitimate assertions of authority. The various subthemes that emerge from the participants’ quotes highlight how power is perceived, negotiated, and enacted within the DWE-DW relationship, drawing on theoretical frameworks to deepen our analysis.

6.7 Resistance, Retaliation, and Agency

The dynamics between DWs and their employers often involve complex layers of power, resistance, and agency. In analysing the narratives of DWs and employers, it became clear that employers and DWs use a variety of strategies to navigate and resist the oppressive structures within which they work.

6.7.1 Asserting Boundaries and Authority

Salmenniemi (2016) challenges the assumption of fixed power in employer-domestic worker relationships, emphasising that power is fluid as described by post-structural feminists. This perspective recognises that even within power imbalances, marginalised individuals possess agency and can engage in acts of resistance, and this was apparent for many participants in this study. These dynamics are often subtle, involving negotiation, boundary-setting, and strategic defiance. The narrative shared by Participant 5: *“I will not wait until 6pm but will approach her to say it is around 4pm now and I can see that your work is not done yet. So please release me.”* (P5 - DW - FGD2) exhibits how DWs assert their boundaries and authority within an often highly controlled environment. This statement reflects an awareness of one’s time and a clear assertion of personal limits, challenging the assumption that DWs are passively accepting of all demands placed upon them. This narrative resonates with Freire’s idea of praxis (Freire, 1973), which involves a cycle of reflection and action aimed at challenging and transforming oppressive conditions. In articulating her needs and setting limits on her working hours, Participant 5 engages in a form of reflective action that not only preserves her well-being but also challenges the employer’s authority. This kind of assertiveness reflects a conscious effort to redefine the terms of the worker-employer relationship, moving away from a purely submissive role towards one that acknowledges the worker’s rights and dignity.

Nono’s refusal to give her employer a massage, *“I tell her straight to the face that I will not be able to do that because if I do it once she will make it my job responsibility all the time,”* (Nono – DW - I – 1) exemplifies how setting boundaries is a form of resistance. Butler’s concept of performativity suggests that identity and power relations are constructed through repeated actions (McKinlay, 2010). When she refused to give her employer a massage and clearly stated her boundaries, Nono disrupted the expected submissive behaviour of a DW. This act asserted her agency and challenged the normalised expectations placed on her, redefining the power dynamic. Similarly, Bajabulile sets boundaries and protects her personal time by ignoring phone calls after work hours. These acts of silent defiance are forms of resistance against the employer’s expectations of constant availability.

“Now what I do is ignore the phone. If there is something important that she wants to inform me about, she would send a text message... I stopped taking her calls because she would scold me and ask me for things that I do not even know about.” (Bajabulile - DW - I - 2)

The employer's expectation that the worker should be constantly available and responsive to calls, and the act of scolding for unknown issues, reflects a sense of entitlement to the worker's time after work has ended. This boundary-setting challenges the employer's expectation of her constant availability, reinforcing her right to personal time and space. She is also asserting her agency and finding a way to protect herself from verbal abuse. This resistance highlights the DW's effort to create a more manageable and respectful working environment for herself.

Commonly, DWEs that were participants in this study also asserted strict boundaries to maintain their authority and control within the household, reflecting a conscious effort to preserve the established power dynamics in their relationships with DWs. For example, Nandi's experiences illustrate how DWEs assert their boundaries and authority in the face of overstepping by DWs. When her DW began imposing rules on the household members and speaking authoritatively to the employer's husband, Nandi terminated her employment.

"She was starting to be a mother to us. She was even talking to my husband the way she wants as he would say 'By this time after 8PM you are still not yet back at home.' Even when she was cleaning she would say everyone must go outside because we are making the house dirty." (Nandi - DWE - B - 1)

Nandi's response to her DW's overreach demonstrates a clear boundary enforcement, highlighting her resistance to any shift in the established hierarchy. This act of resistance points to the importance of maintaining authority within her household, reflecting a conscious effort to preserve the power structure. In the same vein, another employer's approach to managing her DWs emphasises the importance of asserting boundaries to maintain control. She established strict rules and confronted any behaviour that she perceived as overstepping.

"I had to create boundaries with aunties [DWs], I told her, 'You are here to work and take care of the child, what I do, no matter what I do, I don't think you are supposed to comment on it.'" (Nelita - DWE - B - 1)

Nelita's establishment of boundaries serves as a pre-emptive form of resistance against potential infringement on her authority. This act clearly delineated the limits of the DW's role aimed at protecting her personal and professional life from interference, maintaining her dominance in the relationship. Also protecting her personal life, a DW, Lulama established a non-negotiable aspect of her personal freedom when her employer had issues about her romantic relationships. She said, *"She had a problem with me dating saying that I did not*

come here for men, so that meant I had no life. She must be the one to have a life yet she is the parent but I must not have a life. I told her to find another nanny that will not date.” (Lulama - DW - B - 1). Here, the employer expected the DW’s role to be limited strictly to professional duties, this denial of personal autonomy highlights the employer’s internalised privilege. However, the directness of Lulama’s statement suggests a moment of assertive communication and a form of resistance against this intrusion. She sets a clear boundary regarding her personal relationships, implying a demand for respect in areas that she believes should be beyond the employer’s control. This act of communication serves as a declaration of her autonomy and a plea for the employer to respect her personal choices. Foucault’s theories on power relations stress that power is not only imposed from above but is also contested and negotiated through everyday interactions (Daldal, 2014; Foucault, 1998), as seen in the strategic defiance of DWs. This also highlights the fluid and dynamic nature of power within domestic work, where both workers and employers actively participate in shaping their interactions and asserting their autonomy.

6.7.2 Retaliation Against Perceived Injustices and Confrontation

Retaliation against perceived injustices and confrontation in the DW-employer relationship can take various forms, often reflecting the complex dynamics of resistance and support. Another participant, Ntombi, highlighted the multifaceted nature of resistance to oppressive structures through the supportive actions of her employer, Rose. This occurs in the context of Ntombi’s previous employer deciding to help her secure another job when the family she worked for was migrating. She shared:

“I went to do an interview to an Indian family. She accompanied me, and as we were talking with the potential employer, she only talked to Rose as if I was not there. Rose was so annoyed...The minute we entered the car she said, “Ntombi you are not going to work there, you will be abused. She was talking as if you were not there while you were there. I do not want her”. She continued and assisted me with looking until I got another job. She was the one who came to the house, I was then called, and Rose said “This time I am not going to give them time to interview you, I will be the one telling them what I want for you. She told the potential employers that, “I pay her R7000 per month. Are you going to afford her?”. Then Rose went on to explain to them that, “when Ntombi is babysitting, she gets paid for the extra hours. Will you be able to do

that?” The potential employers agreed. She then asked me, “Are you sure this is what you want Ntombi?” I said yes.” (Ntombi - DM - W - 1).

The employer assumes a role that challenges the traditional employer-employee dynamic as the DW disrupts the usual power structures and redefines the expected interactions between a DW and potential employers by advocating on her DW's behalf and negotiating terms directly. This narrative demonstrates a positive use of privilege that contrasts with the more typical narratives of oppression and control in employer-DW dynamics. Rose's final question to Ntombi, *“Are you sure this is what you want?”* empowers Ntombi to make the final decision, ensuring that her autonomy and preferences are respected. This act of agency aligns with Butler's (1988) idea of performative acts that can subvert established norms and assert new identities, whereby the DW reclaims her dignity and resists internalising an inferior status. The employer helped the DW navigate the power dynamics of job interviews, ensuring that her voice and needs are acknowledged, thus promoting a critical awareness of her rights and worth. Yet, within a broader structural dimension, it is systemic injustice and inequality that place Rose, a White privileged woman, in the position of rescuer of Ntombi, who is poor and marginalised. Rose used the power of her White privilege to advocate for Ntombi.

Aligned with the findings of Seepamore (2018) and Nyamnjoh (2005), despite the apparent power imbalance favouring employers, the reality is more nuanced, involving ongoing negotiation and concessions to the DWs. Most of the participants encountered experiences in the employer-employee relationship that dehumanised them, but there were many instances of resistance. This narrative from a DW presents a poignant example of resistance against dehumanising treatment by an employer.

Siphiwe - DW - W -1: *You know a White person does know how to make something so annoying...Sometimes they do not flush the toilet intentionally. I am talking about an old man, there is no child in this family, an old man. You see when I started working for them the father used to not flush the toilet after doing number two [to defecate or pass stool]. So, I had to face them straight, at that point I didn't care if they would fire me or not, but I just wanted to face them straight and ask why they were doing that.*

Interviewer: *What did you say?*

Siphiwe - DW - W -1: *I put it more politely, and said, 'I do not understand whether the toilet downstairs is working or not, or it's no longer flushing or something like that? Because it has happened maybe twice now'.*

Interviewer: What did they say?

Siphiwe - DW - W -1: I did not get any response from them. They both kept quiet and after that, I have never seen that nonsense again. Sometimes you just have to risk and talk, no matter whether you need the money or not, but you have to speak and not allow people to destroy you while watching.

Siphiwe's act of confronting the employer illustrates Butler's concept of performativity, by which she disrupts the normalised power dynamic and asserts her agency, challenging the scripted role of passivity often imposed on DWs. Butler's theory of performativity posits that gender and identity are constructed through repeated social performances, rather than being innate qualities (Butler, 1990). By confronting her employer, Siphiwe engages in a performative act that subverts the expected behaviour of DWs, thereby asserting her self-worth and agency.

Foucault argues that power operates through surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms that regulate behaviour and enforce conformity (Bevir, 1999). The employer's actions can be seen as an exercise of this disciplinary power to maintain control. The experiences of many participants in this study highlight that such confrontations disrupt the employer-employee dynamic, redirecting the gaze back onto the employer and challenging the established power structures. Addressing issues directly, DWs engage in acts of psychological liberation, reclaiming their dignity and highlighting the complex interplay of asserting self-worth and agency in the face of systemic oppression.

Employers' narratives provide clear examples of how employers retaliate against perceived deception and emotional manipulation by DWs. Employers' immediate decisions to terminate employment of workers who do not meet her standards or engage in unacceptable traditional practices highlight her use of retaliation to reassert control. For instance, when Nelita found her DW boiling traditional medicine and leaving the child unattended she said:

"Get dressed, throw away the dirt that was inside the pot, and leave with the pot or throw it away. I will buy another one. I no longer want you in my life please leave right now" ... She asked to throw away the traditional medicine [umuthi] and give her another chance. I said, "No, I cannot risk with my child". I have trauma...I almost lost my child" (Nelita - DWE - B - 1).

The employer's swift decision to terminate employment upon a breach of trust exemplifies her method of maintaining control and mitigating perceived threats. This shows her assertion of authority over acceptable practices within her household, reinforcing her role as the primary decision-maker regarding her child's care. This behaviour aligns with Foucault who posits that power is not only repressive but also productive, functioning through surveillance and normalisation to regulate behaviour and enforce conformity (Gordon & Foucault, 1980b). The frequent firings observed among employers in this study reflect a strategy to uphold high standards and exert control.

"Maybe I have had about 50 domestic workers [laughs]... I have lost count of how many of them I have fired. If I am not satisfied, I fire and then hire another one."
(Mpilo - DWE - B - 1)

"I am not attached to them [DWs] as people...I am more attached to the need of the service if that makes sense. I am okay with starting someone new over and over again as long as she will do the work. In fact, I think between 2018 and 2019 we had about eight different domestic workers. That's in one year. "
(Saanvi - DWE - I - 1)

The above quotes reveal important aspects of employers' resistance and retaliation strategies when their authority is challenged within their households. Employers like Mpilo and Saanvi resort to immediate dismissal as their primary resistance and retaliation strategy, which is unlawful. This illustrates a broader pattern of behaviour among most employers in the study, characterised by high turnover, lack of emotional engagement, and a transactional approach to domestic work. The employers' frequent replacement of DWs reveals deep-seated power imbalances and highlights the precarious nature of domestic work, where workers are often treated as replaceable commodities, rather than valued employees (Mendonca & D'Cruz, 2021). Yet, an employer like Saanvi acknowledges her dependence on the service provided rather than the individual, which underscores the functional dependency in the employer-DW relationship, wherein DWs are objectified. Mpilo declared, *"I do respect this job [domestic work] that they [DWs] do. But that's the same reason why as an employer you can end up hiring 50 and then fire them all if they don't do the job properly."* **(Mpilo - DWE - B - 1)**. This employer's acknowledgment of respect for domestic work indicates an understanding of the essential role DWs play and the mutual dependency, where the employer relies on the worker for maintaining household order and the worker depends on the job for financial stability. However, the casualness with which firing is mentioned and the detachment

expressed by the employers point to a systemic issue of exploitation within the domestic work sector as these dismissals are often not guided by any legal labour contracts.

While most participants encountered dehumanising experiences in their employer-employee relationships, they also demonstrated various forms of resistance. Whether through Ntombi's employer advocating on her behalf or Siphwe confronting unsanitary practices, these acts illustrate the fluid dynamics of power and resistance. Employer's swift actions to terminate employment when trust is breached further highlight how employers use retaliation and confrontation to reassert control and manage power dynamics within their households.

6.7.3 Subtle and Overt Resistance

Domestic workers might outwardly appear submissive as a survival tactic, yet harbour profound dissatisfaction or resentment that employers might not recognise. At the same time, employers might outwardly appear authoritative and powerful, but find it difficult to confront DWs when they retaliate as noted by Jadezweni (2019). This creates a complex dynamic where the appearance of power does not necessarily translate to the ability to confront and manage employee retaliation effectively. Linzy's narrative reveals how fear of retaliation and emotional manipulation by DWs can lead to passive resistance for employers. Her strategies included avoiding direct confrontation and using non-verbal cues to express her dissatisfaction. She shared, *"I never liked talking to her if there was something that I didn't like because she was quick to drop a tear when you talked with her."* (Linzy - DWE - W - 1). Linzy's reluctance to confront her DW directly reflects a form of passive resistance. The employer navigates the power dynamics using non-verbal cues and avoiding confrontation, maintaining an unstable equilibrium in the employer-DW relationship without risking direct conflict.

Gramsci's war of position suggests that resistance can be a gradual, ongoing effort to change oppressive conditions, not always an open confrontation (Bakalov, 2024). Many DWs in this study exhibited nuanced forms of resistance by strategically remaining silent or altering their work pace.

"If I am upset, I might work slower or just stay quiet" (Zinzi - DW - W - 1)

"When I am not happy, I just become quiet, and they know something is wrong"
(Nonjabulo - DW - W - 1)

“If there is something that I want to convey to you... Rather than talking about it, I would have a way of doing something that would make you see that I am upset.”

(Bajabulile - DW - I - 2)

The excerpts above show how DWs use non-compliance with unfair expectations as a form of resistance, demonstrating their unwillingness to accept mistreatment passively. Mcwatts (2018) highlights that DWs employ silence as a form of hidden resistance, presenting deference in public while concealing underlying disdain. This silent subversion challenges the assumption that compliance equates acceptance, showing the performative aspect of power dynamics. The use of non-verbal cues to express their displeasure is an indirect form of resistance. This strategy allows DWs to assert their feelings and push back against unfair treatment, without risking direct confrontation. In this way they maintain their dignity and autonomy in the face of systemic exploitation. This small act of defiance represents an assertion of agency and self-care against exploitative work conditions. Similarly, Nono and Sihle provide a window into the resistance strategies employed by DWs when dealing with oppressive work conditions.

“Sometimes I take a longer break because I need to rest, even if they don’t like it”

(Nono - DW - I - 2)

“When I am given a few days of leave I take extra days. We used to argue about that...Doing that made me happy [laughs]. When I come back, they would be upset, and they would swear at me...I would just laugh. On the inside I will be very satisfied with myself [laughs].” **(Sihle - DW - I - 3)**

Both Nono and Sihle exhibit forms of resistance that highlight their efforts to reclaim control in their work environment. Nono’s subtle defiance through extended breaks and Sihle’s more deliberate acts of taking extra leave illustrate the various ways DWs cope with the power dynamics in their employment. Nono’s use of “even if they don’t like it” indicates a conscious challenge to the employer’s authority, reflecting a counter-hegemonic practice, where she negotiates her autonomy within the oppressive framework of her employment. Sihle’s laughter and satisfaction upon seeing her employers upset reflect the psychological and emotional relief she derives from these acts of defiance. Another participant understood that the excessive workload, and the employer’s reputation, deterred other potential DWs from taking the job, which allowed her to leverage her position and extend her leave without the fear of immediate replacement.

“Everybody knew she was a slave driver. So I knew that if she gave me two weeks of leave I can add another extra week and would return without her having a replacement... I knew I had power because she [employer] would not get another domestic worker the way there is too much work there.” (Celiwe - DW - I - 3)

Power is not only exercised from the top down but also circulates through various points in a relationship (Bevir, 1999). In this scenario, the DW identified a point of leverage where she could exercise her power. Her awareness of the employer’s inability to find a replacement allowed her to act in ways that would typically be considered insubordinate, but concurrently demonstrates how she manipulates power dynamics to her advantage, showcasing her strategic agency and resilience. These strategies allow DWs to regain a sense of control, emphasising their critical role in the household and the dependency of their employers on the domestic services they provide.

Many DWs highlighted how leaving an exploitative job was a powerful form of resistance against oppressive structures. Butler (1988; 1990) posits that repetitive acts can establish identity and power relations. Celiwe’s strategic departure on a Monday, leaving soaked laundry behind, serves as a performative act of resistance.

“On Mondays I would arrive to find she had soaked so many clothes for me to wash, especially jeans and towels. So, when I decided to leave, I wanted it to be on a Monday. I had not told her that I was not coming back so she was expecting me on a Monday...I did not tell her on purpose. She never increased my wages. I left her to soak things expecting me to come in on a Monday and wash them. She called me asking why I left like that because she had already soaked the washing and why did I not say I was not coming back. On that day, I was already starting my new job elsewhere. I frustrated them. I knew she will have to wash it herself; she would not leave it like that...I wanted her to feel like I how I felt washing all that laundry [laughs]. If I work for someone, I work for them wholeheartedly but when I leave you, I leave you wholeheartedly. I never come back again.” (Celiwe - DW - I - 2)

This deliberate act challenges the normalised expectations of a DW’s role, reclaiming power through her absence and causing the employer to experience the inconvenience and labour burden typically imposed on her. This act demonstrated a form of conscientisation as she was

aware of the exploitative nature of her work conditions (unfair wages, heavy workload) and took deliberate action to disrupt the power dynamics. It can also be seen to subvert the normalising power that seeks to regulate her behaviour and labour which embodies a form of decolonisation at the personal level, rejecting the internalised subservience expected of her. Decolonisation in this context is about recognising and challenging the ingrained beliefs and behaviours that have been normalised by colonial power structures, and actively working towards reclaiming one's dignity, self-worth, and cultural heritage (Pithouse, 2016).

Phindile's and Participant 2's decision to leave without saying goodbye, exemplifies Freire's conscientisation. Their actions demonstrate a critical awareness of their exploitation, understanding that further dialogue or confrontation would not change their oppressive circumstances. Freire's concept of conscientisation describes the process of becoming aware of one's social reality through reflection and action (Freire, 2018a). It involves recognising and challenging oppressive structures and gaining the power to change them. Thus, taking a decision to leave, the two DWs acted on their awareness, rejecting the exploitative situation and asserting their independence.

"Each day she would scold me for something that I had no idea what it was about. I did not even say goodbye when I left because of anger... I did not say goodbye, I just left, and it was the last day I was there." **(Phindile - DW - I - 1)**

"I was given a toothbrush to wash taps with from morning at 6:30 until knock-off time. I worked on them until 4:30 pm standing like that. After that, I just said to myself no more and I won't even tell them. So, I don't wish to work for them anymore." **(P2 - DW - FGD2)**

This act of leaving becomes a form of liberation. Similarly, another domestic worker asserts her humanity and worth, rejecting the role of a "donkey" or slave, and reclaiming her dignity.

"Yoh I was exhausted. She treated me like a donkey. You do not ask a donkey anything, you just place all the load on it. A donkey is a slave. I had enough. I am also a human being, and I can use my head. Although I needed the extra money to help me, I stopped working for them. They pleaded with me to come back...for the rest of that year." **(Lulama - DW - B - 1)**

The interjection "Yoh" expresses a deep sense of fatigue and exasperation, emphasising the extreme physical and emotional toll of Lulama's work. The simile "like a donkey" conveys

dehumanisation, comparing herself to an animal that is often overburdened and undervalued. This DW asserts her humanity and cognitive abilities, challenging the dehumanising treatment she received. The phrase *“I had enough”* marks a turning point, indicating her decision to resist further exploitation. By affirming *“I am also a human being,”* she reclaims her identity and dignity. Lulama’s narrative intersects with broader discourses of resistance and empowerment. Her decision to leave, despite economic pressures, resonate with Freire’s concept of conscientisation, where the oppressed become aware of their oppression and take steps to challenge it (Monasta, 2003; Freire, 2018). Fanon’s theory of decolonisation and psychological liberation is also illustrated in these participants’ narratives. Participants’ departures signify a rejection of internalised oppression and a reclaiming of their autonomy. Fanon’s emphasis on the colonised individual’s need to assert their humanity against dehumanising structures resonates with their decisions to leave oppressive employers (Pithouse, 2016). By doing so, these DWs resist this surveillance and control, turning the power dynamics upside down. Their actions force the employers to face the consequences of their actions, highlighting the power of absence as a form of resistance and disruption of the established order.

As attested by literature, DWs face abuse and violence, being particularly susceptible to bullying, emotional abuse, and harassment due to their identities (Mendonca & D’Cruz, 2021). Verbal abuse in domestic work is also common, including insults, demeaning language, and threats (Acosta & Acosta, 2019; Anwar & Brukwe, 2023). It was found in this study that while the majority of the DWs retaliated subtly, there were others that showed overt refusal to accept verbal and physical abuse through direct confrontation and retaliation. Ntombi’s narrative exemplifies overt resistance against the verbal abuse and demeaning from her employer’s boyfriend.

“He said, “You fuckin bitch, is this the time to come back? Don’t you know you are working?” ... I said, “Don’t because you are not the one who hired me” ... I was so angry I wanted to beat him...I said to him, “You are nothing and I will beat you”
(Ntombi - DW - W - 1).

Her actions assert equality and defy the subservient role typically imposed on DWs. Ntombi’s response to the employer’s boyfriend reflects this critical awareness and refusal to accept an inferior status. She recognised the unjust treatment and chose to resist it overtly, thereby asserting her dignity by challenging the oppressive situation (Freire, 1970). Similarly, Nono

demonstrated overt retaliation to her employer. Upon overhearing the employer accusing her of not dusting the furniture, she confronted the employer, who then pushed her.

“...she pushed me. I almost fell and hit the wall. I thought to myself should I leave this woman? What must I do? I turned around furious, and I snatched her hair and threw it on the floor [laughs]. I strangled that thing...She went to work wearing a scarf because she was bruised. Her husband came rushing in asking “Nono, what are you doing?” ... Her 5-year-old child was smart, she told her dad that “No dad, it was mom who pushed Nono first.” (Nono - DW - I - 1)

Faced with physical aggression, Nono decides to resist by fighting back, which is a direct action against the physical oppression she faces. Her decision to confront and retaliate highlights her awareness of the unjust treatment and resistance to accept it passively. This physical retaliation, although violent, can be seen as a reclaiming of her humanity and a rejection of the submissive role expected of her. Fanon’s concept of decolonisation involves reclaiming one’s identity and dignity, which Nono does by standing up to her oppressor and demanding justice (Fanon, 1998; Fanon et al., 1952; Pithouse, 2016). The incident also sheds light on the complex and often volatile interpersonal relationships between DWs and their employers. The support the DW receives from the child in the household indicates the nuanced dynamics at play, where not all members of the household align with the oppressive actions of the employer.

The narratives of DWs and employers reveal a complex interplay of resistance, retaliation, and agency within the power dynamics of domestic work. Through a combination of direct confrontations, subtle defiance, sometimes overt retaliation and strategic compliance, these women navigate their oppressive environments, asserting their rights and challenging the power structures that seek to control them. These strategies, while often constrained by economic dependency and fear of retaliation, reflect their agency and resilience in asserting their autonomy and challenging the power dynamics within their relationships with employers. The various instances of resistance and retaliation in these transcripts highlight the complex and nuanced ways DWs navigate their relationships with employers. Through direct confrontation, silent defiance, strategic compliance, and boundary-setting, these workers assert their agency and challenge the power dynamics inherent in their roles. Some of the strategies adopted by the DWs resonate with Butler’s (1990) framing of subversive acts wherein normative roles are challenged.

The narratives of power between DWs and their employers is evidence that power dynamics are multifaceted and often involve both legitimate and illegitimate assertions of authority. These subthemes discussed herein highlight how power is perceived, negotiated, and enacted within the DWE-DW relationship, drawing on theoretical frameworks to deepen our analysis. Legitimate assertions of power foster respect, communication, and mutual benefit, while illegitimate assertions can lead to exploitation, conflict, and harm. This nuanced understanding highlights the importance of fair and respectful practices in managing DW-DWE relationships, ensuring that power is exercised in ways that are just and humane.

6.8 Summary

Several key themes emerge from the analysis, offering valuable insights into the intricate nature of domestic work. The construction of domestic work encompasses various perspectives, including viewing it as an economic necessity with limited alternatives, a role associated with inferior status and exploitation, and an act of love and duty characterised by emotional bonds and attachments. Additionally, DWs are recognised as individuals capable of autonomy and self-determination, challenging the conventional narrative of subordination.

The chapter also highlights narratives of helplessness, depicting the vulnerability and lack of control experienced by DWs. These narratives emphasise the systemic barriers and social hierarchies that perpetuate marginalisation and limit the agency of DWs. Conversely, the chapter highlights narratives of power, illustrating the mutual dependency between DWs and employers. Both legitimate and illegitimate assertions of power are evident, showing how power dynamics can manifest constructively or abusively within the domestic setting.

Furthermore, the chapter explores themes of resistance, retaliation, and agency among DWs, revealing various strategies they employ to assert boundaries, confront perceived injustices, and resist exploitation. These strategies range from subtle acts of defiance to overt confrontations, demonstrating how DWs navigate power dynamics and exercise their agency within the constraints of their roles. The next chapter is the second part of the findings, discussing themes such as gender as a performative act in the DW-employer relationship, race, class and gender: more than a triple jeopardy, and praxis-oriented research study constraints and successes.

Chapter Seven: Race, Class, Gender, Social Position and Praxis in Domestic Work

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study’s findings that concentrate on three key intersecting themes: gender, race, and class, and argues that these dynamics extend beyond the concept of triple jeopardy. It first outlines the coding process and identified themes, before analysing how these power relations shape domestic work. While gender, race, and class are often analysed in isolation, this chapter contends that their interaction creates a more complex framework of oppression and privilege. It probes into the role and power of social positioning in perpetuating inequalities, exploring how these social structures shape DW-DWE relationships in ways that are often invisible and normalised. Furthermore, the chapter engages with praxis-oriented research, particularly examining the constraints and possibilities for shifts in entrenched norms and discourses surrounding domestic work. It highlights how such discourses contribute to the normalisation of inequalities and resistance to change.

7.2 Coding Process and Themes’ Outline

1. Identifying Initial Codes

Initial codes were extracted from participant narratives, reflecting key ideas on race, class, gender, and shifts in domestic work discourses.

| Example of Participant Quote | Initial Code |
|---|--|
| “My employer always reminds me that I am lucky to have this job because she could have hired someone else.” | Employer superiority, Power imbalance |
| “They still see us as just maids, not as women trying to make a living.” | Social position, Class-based discrimination |
| “When a white employer hires you, she expects you to serve. A black employer expects you to obey.” | Racialised expectations, Differentiated employer attitudes |
| “She always asks me about my husband, if I am married, and why I don’t have children.” | Gendered expectations, Domestic work and motherhood |
| “It’s different when my employer is a woman. I feel | Gendered perception of threat, |

| | |
|---|---|
| like she doesn't trust me more than she trusts male workers." | Woman-to-woman conflict |
| "Some employers try to be fair, but they are still stuck in the old ways of thinking." | Constraints to transformative shifts, Traditional employer mindset |
| "We try to speak up, but what difference does it make? Employers still have the final say." | Limits to worker empowerment, Structural constraints |

2. Grouping Related Codes into Themes

Once initial codes were developed, they were clustered into broader themes based on conceptual relationships.

| Theme | Related Codes |
|---|---|
| Race, Class, Gender, and Social Position: Beyond the Triple Jeopardy | Employer superiority, Power imbalance, Social position, Class-based discrimination, Racialised expectations, Gendered expectations, Woman-to-woman conflict |
| Praxis-Oriented Research: Shifts in Entrenched Norms and Discourses in Domestic Work | Constraints to transformative shifts, Traditional DWE mindset, Limits to DW empowerment, Structural constraints |

3. Defining Themes and Subthemes

Once themes were established, they were clearly defined to capture their relevance in the study.

a) Race, Class, Gender, and Social Position: Beyond the Triple Jeopardy

This theme examines how race, class, gender, and social status intersect to shape domestic work relationships. It extends beyond the well-documented triple jeopardy (race, class, and gender) by incorporating power hierarchies, cultural expectations, and social positioning within the DW-DWE dynamic.

- **Subtheme: Race, Class, Gender, and Social Position – Beyond the Triple Jeopardy**

DWs experience layered vulnerabilities, where race, class, and gender intersect with their social position in the home. While class divides workers and employers, race and gender expectations further shape power dynamics within the employment relationship.

- **Subtheme: The Gendered Expectations of Care**
Domestic work is deeply gendered, with expectations that women must naturally assume caregiving roles. Employers often impose motherly, sisterly, or subservient roles on DWs, limiting their professional identity. DWs are also judged based on personal aspects such as children and femininity.
- **Subtheme: The Gendered Perception of Threat: Woman-to-Woman**
In female-led employer-employee relationships, woman-to-woman conflicts emerge due to gendered perceptions of threat, authority, and competition. Some female employers see DWs as potentially challenging their authority in the household, leading to increased surveillance, distrust, and emotional tension.

b) Praxis-Oriented Research: Shifts in Entrenched Norms and Discourses in Domestic Work

This theme explores the potential for transforming entrenched norms in the domestic work sector through praxis-oriented research. It examines how historical, cultural, racial, and class-based narratives reinforce power imbalances between domestic workers DWs and DWEs and how reflective engagement can challenge and disrupt these dynamics. This theme highlights both the possibilities for transformative change and the constraints that limit such shifts.

- **Subtheme: Possibilities and Constraints for Transformative Shifts Among Employers**

This subtheme examines how reflective praxis can lead to shifts in employer attitudes and behaviours, fostering more equitable DWE-DW relationships. While some employers acknowledge the historical inequalities embedded in domestic work, meaningful transformation requires moving beyond awareness to concrete changes in treatment, pay, and working conditions. However, deeply entrenched cultural and socio-economic hierarchies often limit these shifts, making it difficult for DWEs to fully relinquish control or reframe their relationships with DWs in truly egalitarian terms.

- **Subtheme: Possibilities and Constraints for Transformative Shifts Among Domestic Workers**

This subtheme explores how DWs navigate structural inequalities, develop self-awareness of their value, and assert agency in ways that challenge traditional employer dominance. While some DWs engage in small acts of resistance, economic

dependency, social norms, and power imbalances remain significant constraints, limiting their ability to demand fair treatment or negotiate better conditions.

7.3 Race, Class, Gender and Social Position: Beyond the triple jeopardy

Domestic work is deeply rooted in histories of slavery, colonialism, and servitude (Mantouvalou, 2006; Neunsinger, 2015; Theodoropoulou, 2020). In South Africa, these legacies continue to shape how DWs, whom are predominantly Black African women are perceived and treated within households. Marais and Van Wyk (2015) highlight that domestic work remains a highly feminised sector, where gender, race, and class play a significant role in shaping the experiences of DWs. The intersection of these social categories profoundly affects not only the lives of DWs but also the dynamics with their employers. In understanding domestic work in South Africa, the concept of triple jeopardy is where women face compounded oppression based on gender, race, and class, which serves as a useful framework to reveal the deeply embedded power relations present in these interactions. However, the findings of this study suggest that these intersections are far more complex than a simplistic understanding of triple jeopardy. Instead, they reveal a dynamic interplay where *social positioning* is constantly contested, leading to nuanced dynamics of resistance as can be observed in the previous chapter on *Theme Four: Resistance, Retaliation, and Agency*.

7.3.1 The Intersection of Race, Class, Gender and Social Positioning in Domestic

Work

The intersection of race and class within domestic work highlights the exploitative power imbalances that shape this sector, especially in South Africa, where Black African women are relegated to the lowest ranking due to persistent racial and economic inequities (Grusky, 2019; Marais, 2014). Sewpaul's (2024) argument that neoliberal global capitalism marginalises the poor and vulnerable, in the context of domestic work sector it highlights the structural forces that sustain economic disparities and limit opportunities for low-income workers, especially Black African women. Neoliberalism reinforces the precarious nature of employment by promoting low wages, limited worker protections, and a lack of upward mobility, collectively DWs at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. The findings illustrate how systemic exclusion operates within this sector, echoing Sewpaul's (2024) assertion that neoliberalism sustains racialised inequalities. For instance, Claire, a White employer, displays a conscious awareness of race and employment in the domestic work

sector. When asked if race factored into her hiring decisions, she acknowledged, “*Not really, but let’s be honest, it’s often Black women who take on these roles in South Africa. That’s the reality of our country*” (**Claire - DWE - W - 1**). Claire’s awareness aligns with MacEachern’s (2012) perspective, which posits that race, rather than an inherent trait, is a socially constructed category used to organise power relations. This understanding demonstrates how even well-intentioned awareness can still perpetuate structural hierarchies, pointing to the complexities within DW-DWE relations.

The lived experiences shared by participants highlight how historical narratives of racial superiority and inferiority continue to govern interactions between DWs and their employers, and how they view their own roles. In participant P2’s internalised racial perspective, she shares: “*a Black person is just naturally bad and black like their hearts... White people are white in colour, it means their hearts are white too*” (**P2 - DW - FGD2**). This troubling self-perception aligns with Sewpaul’s (2024) critique of how neoliberal capitalism not only marginalises but also produces pervasive narratives of inferiority among the most vulnerable and oppressed groups. The colonial legacies that underpin such perceptions are reinforced through neoliberal structures that maintain hierarchies based on race and social class, ultimately shaping how DWs like P2 view themselves in relation to their employers.

The narratives shared by DWs underscore how racialised perceptions and internalised stereotypes influence their experiences and preferences within the domestic work sector. Dominelli’s (2017) view on oppression highlights how power dynamics create a system that privileges certain groups while systematically disadvantaging others. In this context, some DWs express a preference for White employers, attributing to them traits like fairness and generosity. For instance, P5 remarked, “*Whites, when they want to change their furniture, they think of you first. They don’t just give it to their relatives like Black people do*” (**P5 - DW - FGD2**). This appreciation for White employers can be understood through what Joy (2019) terms powerarchy, where White employers are perceived as morally superior in their treatment of workers. However, this perception also disregards the principle of interconnectedness central to many Black African family structures, where the socio-economic legacy of apartheid and the need for prioritising family support over other considerations. Despite these factors, P5’s comment reflects an internalised racialised belief that positions White employers as more humane. Similarly, Lulama shared an aspirational view, stating, “*A White employer may ask me what is troubling me... My White employer*

could easily build me a new house where I can live with my children” (Lulama - DW - B - 1). These statements reflect how socio-economic privilege associated with Whiteness can influence DWs’ perceptions, reinforcing stereotypes that overlook the economic constraints many Black African employers face.

Additionally, Ntombi’s experiences offer insight into how such stereotypes shape worker-employer relationships across racial lines. She shared, *“Black and Indian people, they are the same, they are abusive. But what I know, Thobeka, is that a White person works with time. A White person needs privacy and spending time with the family” (Ntombi - DW - W - 1).* Ntombi’s view illustrates how she associates White employers with respecting boundaries, contrasting this with her perception of Black African and Indian employers as more demanding, an attitude likely rooted in past negative experiences. Parallel to this, DWs’ narratives reveal how their social positioning is often influenced by internalised biases toward their own race. For example, Sethabile expressed a perception of Black African employers as inherently selfish, saying, *“We as black people; we are too selfish.” (Sethabile - DW - B - 1).* This sentiment reflects an internalised belief that Black African people lack empathy for one another, a collection of ideas that are rooted in historic divides that have marginalised Black African South Africans while economically empowering their White counterparts. Such perspectives reinforce structural inequalities and reflect what Wilkerson (2020) describes as the normalisation of the incomprehensible, where workers and employers continue to navigate entrenched racial biases rather than challenge them. These interactions, influenced by socio-economic and racial factors, highlight how enduring historical divides shape contemporary domestic work, perpetuating stereotypes that underscore the necessity for addressing internalised oppression and fostering equitable and respectful relationships in the sector.

Sewpaul (2024) discusses how racial capitalism and coloniality continue to exert control over labour markets by defining roles and reinforcing exclusions based on racialised narratives. This is vividly reflected in the way DWs differentiate between White, Black, and Indian employers. P4’s preference for White employers, viewing them as more considerate than Black or Indian employers, highlights how deeply these racialised distinctions affect employment choices. For example, P4 states, *“I worked for an Indian once, but it was not nice, so I don’t prefer them. I prefer working for Whites and Black people... she made me go to the nearby mall to use the toilet instead of hers...but in a pressing situation I do work for*

them” (P4 - DW - FGD2). Sewpaul’s insight into racial capitalism provides a lens for understanding these distinctions, as neoliberal capitalism frames racial attributes as inherent qualities, which in turn influences internalised stereotypes. It is also notable that P4 qualified her preference for White employers by stating that she would only work for an Indian employer in “*a pressing situation*” due to financial necessity, showing that racial preferences are not absolute but are negotiated based on economic realities. This highlights how, despite personal biases and experiences, DWs must sometimes compromise to maintain employment, showing the complex relationship between race and economic vulnerability in the sector.

Sewpaul (2024) addresses the complicity of neoliberal managerialism in reinforcing power hierarchies through seemingly mundane but symbolic practices. For instance, Sheela, a White employer, recalls, “*When I was growing up, we had a DW and a gardener. I remember that they had their own special dishes, like bowls, cups, and plates, that were completely different from ours*” (Sheela - DWE - W - 1). Her memory illustrates how separate dining arrangements served as markers of racial distinction, positioning Black DWs as fundamentally different from and inferior to White families. Foucault’s (1977) view of disciplinary power is evident in this segregation, as DWs are subtly disciplined through spatial arrangements that reinforce their subordination. This spatial separation serves as a non-verbal reminder of social hierarchy, subtly reinforcing the idea that Black workers belong to a different, lower social category. While Sheela expresses discomfort with such distinctions in retrospect, noting her confusion over a worker’s choice to sit on the floor instead of the couch, her narrative reveals how deep-seated these behaviours are within domestic work settings. Sheela’s comment, “*I always tell her, ‘Don’t sit on the floor, sit at the table,’ but she insists, likely due to how she was raised*” (Sheela - DWE - W - 1), suggests that the DW’s adherence to subordinate behaviours is an internalised response to historic power dynamics. Fanon’s insights into colonial psychology provide a lens through which to understand these behaviours, as Black African DWs may unconsciously accept subjugation, perceiving it as a natural extension of their role within White households.

Nonjabulo’s account of economic dependency, which compels her to tolerate exploitative conditions, highlights the intersectional challenges faced by Black DWs. “*Being a Black African woman and poor, it’s not easy, but I have to keep going for my children*” (Nonjabulo - DW - W - 1), she states, illustrating how race, gender, and class converge to limit her options. This intersectional oppression, as described by Crenshaw (1989), complicates her

ability to assert agency, as her economic vulnerability reinforces her subordination to the employer's demands. Nonjabulo's experience encapsulates the triple jeopardy of race, class, and gender, with her social position as a Black woman intersecting with her economic dependency, making it difficult to negotiate fair treatment within an exploitative system.

The nuanced experiences of participants reveal how deeply embedded racial and class distinctions influence the social positioning of both DWs and DWEs, as internalised biases and economic dependency shape their employment or hiring preferences and aversions based on perceived racial attributes, perpetuating stereotypes that define both social and workplace dynamics. While some employers attempt to mitigate these disparities, the structural inequalities inherent in the DWE-DW relationship persist, accentuating the challenge of achieving equity in the domestic work sector. These findings highlight an urgent need for policy reform and a shift in social attitudes to dismantle the entrenched legacies of colonialism and apartheid, which continue to confine DWs to the lowest position of South Africa's social hierarchy.

7.3.2 The Gendered Expectations of Care

The findings from the study offer nuanced views of how gendered expectations of care are sustained through both explicit preferences and internalised behaviours. They also reveal how deeply embedded gendered expectations shape the roles and responsibilities of DWs, reinforcing traditional norms around care, nurture, and domesticity. The expectation of care is not just a job requirement but a societal expectation rooted in traditional gender roles that assign caregiving to women, reflecting Butler's (1988) gender performativity.

For instance, Sheela, a DWE, stated, "*I grew up very traditionally, so my grandfather would work and my grandmother was a housewife and she cared for whatever was going on inside the house*" (Sheela - DWE - W-1). This reflects how traditional family structures reinforce the idea that caregiving is inherently feminine, an assumption that influences hiring practices and everyday interactions within households. Butler (1988) asserts that domestic work is perceived as women's work, is a performance that sustains the illusion of a stable gender identity.

In South Africa, domestic work is deeply gendered, shaped by historical and social constructs that dictate who performs certain tasks and why. Melany's comment, *"It would feel so absurdly wrong like having a man clean my house,"* (Linzy - DWE - W - 1), shows how the gendered division of labour is naturalised through consistent enactment (Butler, 1990). Tasks associated with nurturing, cleanliness, and caregiving are disproportionately assigned to women, reinforcing societal expectations. This aligns with Cock (1980) and Gaitskell et al. (1983), who argue that domestic work is positioned within a patriarchal structure where women are expected to care for others, often at the expense of their own autonomy. A domestic worker participant further illustrated this dynamic: *"I have to prepare everything for the kids before they go to school, make sure they have their lunchboxes, uniforms are clean, and then clean the house before madam comes back"* (P3 - DW - FGD1). This comprehensive set of duties highlight the expectation that DWs will not only clean but also care for children, embodying a maternal role. Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony helps explain how these gendered roles are normalised; they become part of the common sense that dictates women's labour, sustaining a power dynamic where the invisible work of caregiving is taken for granted.

DWs are often expected to provide not just physical care but also emotional support, an expectation that extends beyond their formal duties.

"She even left her child with me when she was going through a difficult time because she trusted me to take care of her." (P2 - DW - FGD2).

"She said to me, 'You have to treat the children as if they are your own because I need someone who can give them attention and love when I'm not around.'" (P4 - DW - FGD2).

These reflections reveal a gendered expectation that caregiving is not only a woman's responsibility but also an innate quality assumed to be transferable to other people's children. This belief reinforces societal norms that caregiving, especially maternal behaviour, is instinctual for women and disregards the reality that such emotionally demanding work requires skill and professional boundaries. This reflects an embedded social structure where women, especially those in domestic work, are positioned as primary caregivers. Butler's (1990) idea of performativity highlights how DWs must continuously enact qualities like empathy, patience, and nurturance, reinforcing traditional gender norms that cast women as primary caregivers, even when these expectations conflict with the worker's formal job role.

Thus, the intimate labour expected of DWs is devalued, perpetuating the invisibility and lack of compensation for the emotional and psychological burdens they bear.

The findings highlight the vulnerability of female DWs to gendered harassment, illustrating broader structural inequalities within the domestic work sector. Female DWs encounter various forms of abuse, including verbal mistreatment, intimidation, and economic exploitation. These experiences align with Mendonca and D’Cruz’s (2021) and Mekonnen et al.’s (2022) observations that DWs, particularly women, face such because of their marginalised social status and the legally ambiguous nature of their working conditions. As one DW shared, *“male employers will even tell you his sexual intentions while you are still on the way to his house thinking you are going there to clean... They do this often”* (P5 - DW - FGD2). Another DW, Zanele, explained the pressure to comply with these advances: *“The male employer will try to take advantage of you and try to force you into sleeping with him. If you do not know how to stand for yourself, you will end up on the wrong end of the stick because you will sleep with that person”* (Zodwa - DW - W - 2). These accounts reveal how some male employers exploit DWs’ financial vulnerability, blurring professional boundaries to fulfil personal agendas, which aligns with Anwar and Brukwe’s (2023) concept of everyday violence, wherein subtle coercive behaviours become normalised within workplace settings. The fact that *“they do this often”* implies that such behaviour is not uncommon, hinting at a normalised culture of predatory behaviour and objectification towards female DWs. This form of sexualised control also reflects hegemonic masculinity, whereby men’s power is legitimised in private spaces, enabling the abuse of women’s bodies to persist unchecked (Grose et al., 2021). Although not sexual, Sbonga’s account further reinforces this power dynamic, as she describes the hierarchical influence of a male figure in her household: *“With the mama [DW] it was more like a son-in-law... When she arrived, the first person she saw was my husband so it would be greeting him, and she would tell him about all the news. When she arrived, she feared him alot”* (Sbonga - DWE - B - 1). This comment illustrates how male presence within the household can instill fear and reinforce authority, creating a power imbalance DWs must navigate carefully.

The power dynamics within these interactions are reinforced through the expectation that DWs, particularly women, will provide physical and intimate care without formal compensation. For example, Phindile recounted, *“She told me to massage her and she did not pay me for that. I would massage her all the time I went there... My time to work in the house*

would be wasted whilst busy massaging her” (Phindile - DW - I - 1). This aligns with Vyas and Watts (2009), who argue that the unequal social structures in workplaces often foster hidden forms of economic exploitation where control over workers’ bodies becomes normalised. In the domestic work context, Galvaan et al. (2015) document DWs’ subtle biases, often reflected through expectations of constant availability and control over DWs’ activities. Philile’s experience with uncompensated massages not only reflects an exploitative expectation of care but also represents a type of microaggression, reinforcing class and gender hierarchies by assuming she is perpetually available to meet her employer’s physical demands. This expectation subtly communicates a disregard for Philile’s own time and needs, reinforcing a dynamic where DWs’ autonomy and dignity are devalued.

These findings highlight how entrenched gendered expectations assign caregiving and domestic duties predominantly to women, positioning DWs within a framework that normalises emotional labour and maternal roles as inherent to their identity. Rooted in societal norms and reinforced through hiring practices, these expectations often extended beyond formal duties, leaving DWs vulnerable to exploitation, including unpaid intimate labour and, in some cases, verbal abuse or sexual harassment. Butler’s (1988) concept of gender performativity illuminated how these roles are constructed and maintained through repeated actions, reflecting and perpetuating broader systemic inequalities. Despite these challenges, DWs demonstrated resilience, resisting exploitative practices and reasserting their autonomy, thereby challenging traditional power hierarchies and offering insights into the potential for more equitable and respectful domestic work relationships.

7.3.3 The Gendered Perception of Threat: Woman-to-Woman

Findings from this study revealed the gendered anxieties and power dynamics that shape the relationship between DWs and their employers, particularly highlighting how patriarchal norms and sexuality intersect within the domestic sphere. For instance, P6 shared, *“a female potential employer might think ‘This woman must not work for me because she might end up taking my husband’ because I am young and beautiful” (P6 - DW - FGD2).* Her statement reflects the suspicion and jealousy that some female DWEs may feel towards younger DWs. The fear that a DW could pose a threat to marital stability shows how the home, as a workplace, is not just a site of labour but also a space where intimate and personal boundaries are negotiated. These concerns reveal deep-seated patriarchal anxieties about infidelity,

which are projected onto the DW. Young, attractive women are thus perceived not only as potential employees but also as potential rivals, illustrating how the employment relationship is complicated by gendered assumptions about beauty, sexuality, and loyalty. This dynamic perpetuates stereotypes that equate youth and attractiveness with promiscuity or temptation, thus reinforcing a gendered hierarchy within the home.

The literature suggests that these perceptions are not isolated incidents but reflect broader societal norms. According to Bloom (2015), a woman's social rank has historically been associated with her position relative to domestic work, either as someone who employs a DW or as a DW herself. These connections persist as households navigate the often conflicting demands of work and family life (Hochschild, 2012; Masterson & Hoobler, 2019). The gendered anxieties revealed in P6's account are part of this enduring narrative, where patriarchal fears manifest through female employers' surveillance and control over their employees. Further illustrating this dynamic, Mpilo shared, "*My brother-in-law cheated with their young domestic worker...so we [employers] are scared sometimes...you know how men are*" (Mpilo - DWE - B - 1). The phrase "you know how men are" invokes a common gender stereotype that normalises male infidelity, suggesting that men's actions are beyond control, while the responsibility falls on women (both the wife and the female DW) to manage these risks. Salmenniemi (2016) challenges the view of fixed power in DWE-DW relationships, arguing that power is fluid and context-dependent. The fear of male infidelity, and the resulting attempts by female DWEs to control younger female workers, reflects a patriarchal framing that expects women to protect the household's sanctity. This dynamic creates a hierarchy where younger women are perceived not only as employees but also as potential rivals, complicating their social positioning and limiting their employment opportunities.

The surveillance and control over female DWs' bodies, as seen in Phindile's account, "*She [DWE] shouted saying that I am showing her husband my behind... She showed me the cameras... told me to wear a tracksuit or a jean because she did not like my skirts or my dresses*" (Phindile - DW - I - 1), illustrate how female employers' insecurities lead to invasive practices. While security cameras are commonplace for safety reasons, their use here extends beyond security, revealing deeper gendered anxieties. Literature on the domestic work environment (Boris, 2016, 2017; Marchetti, 2022) suggests that such invasive oversight exemplifies the intimate and private authority exerted within households, where the line

between work and personal space is often blurred. This oversight can be understood through Moras (2017), who posits that women hiring DWs may maintain control over household tasks and their execution, reinforcing existing gendered divisions of labour rather than challenging them.

The study's findings also reveal a preference among employers for hiring older DWs, with employers citing two primary reasons: older DWs are seen as more reliable and experienced, and younger DWs are perceived as potential threats to marital stability. This age preference demonstrates how gendered power dynamics and insecurities shape hiring practices. Literature on domestic work (Cock, 1980b; Romero, 1988) supports this observation, suggesting that such dynamics not only reinforce stereotypes about Black women but also limit the social and economic mobility of younger DWs. As Zinzi's narrative illustrates, the interplay of power and gender roles within the domestic sphere is often enforced through language. Her employer's declaration, "*I am the madam of this house and not you*" (**Zinzi - DW - W - 1**), invokes traditional perceptions of female authority, where the term "madam" signifies control over domestic responsibilities. This title has historically been used to assert dominance in the home, reflecting an enforcement of gendered hierarchy deeply rooted in patriarchal structures. Post-structural feminist theory suggests that power within the household is influenced by socio-cultural norms that reinforce gender roles. As Dickey (2000) as well as Boris and Coles (2021) have discussed, this authority is not only a matter of personal control but is embedded in broader social constructs that define gendered spaces. By asserting herself as the "madam," the employer performs an act of gendered dominance, reinforcing her identity and status.

The complexities of race, class, and gender further complicate these dynamics. Lulama's comment, "*the husbands are not usually the problem, but the wife, the wives weh mayeh, they will fight you*" (**Lulama - DW - B - 1**), highlights how female employers may assert control to navigate their own constrained agency. Ally (2010) and Chen (2011) have noted that domestic work does not disrupt the gendered division of labour; instead, it redistributes it along class lines, where more privileged women assert authority over less privileged women. This reinforces what Fraser (2017) describes as the commodification of care within capitalist frameworks, where domestic work becomes a site of social reproduction but also of control and surveillance.

What is highlighted in these narratives illustrate how deeply embedded power dynamics are within domestic work. It shows how systemic inequalities are perpetuated through everyday interactions. The gendered perception of threat within domestic work relationships also highlights the complex interplay of power, insecurity, and competition among women, reflecting deeply ingrained patriarchal norms. The competition and mistrust between women in these settings underscore how patriarchal norms pit women against each other, with female employers asserting dominance over less privileged women to maintain control over the domestic work sector. Such actions reflect not just a reinforcement of traditional gender roles but also internalised patriarchal attitudes that perpetuate a cycle of woman-to-woman competition and control, often undermining solidarity.

7.4 Praxis-Oriented Research: Shifts in Entrenched Norms and Discourses in Domestic Work

The section on praxis-oriented research explores the potential for shifting entrenched norms and discourses within the context of domestic work, particularly focusing on the relationships between DWs and DWEs. These relationships are heavily influenced by historical, cultural, racial, and class-based narratives that reinforce power imbalances. DWs often find themselves in positions of subordination, shaped by long-standing generational norms and socio-economic structures that are difficult to challenge or break. Employers, on the other hand, may consciously or unconsciously perpetuate these inequalities through their actions, reflecting a complex interplay of privilege and power. However, praxis-oriented research offers a pathway for transformation by encouraging critical reflection and dialogue. Both DWEs and DWs, when engaged in reflective practices, begin to recognise the roles they play in sustaining or challenging these inequalities. Employers who engage in reflective praxis may start to encourage more equitable relationships, acknowledging the value of DWs beyond their labour. Similarly, DWs, through small acts of resistance and growing awareness of their rights, can begin to challenge the systemic forces that have long maintained their marginalisation.

7.4.1 Possibilities and Constraints for Transformative Shifts among Employers

Sewpaul's (2024) insights into emancipatory praxis significantly bolster the understanding of transformative shifts within the DW-DWE relationship by addressing the need to overcome entrenched ideological barriers. According to Sewpaul (2024) in line with Freire (1973), dismantling barriers to equality requires moving beyond individualising and depoliticising

social problems, creating spaces for genuine dialogue informed by a “transitive consciousness” that recognises privilege and oppression. In this study, reflective practices among DWEs reveal potential for shifts in entrenched power dynamics as employers begin to recognise their roles in sustaining inequality. However, as Sewpaul (2024) notes, moving from awareness to transformation requires recognising systemic forces that shape individual consciousness and behaviours. This aligns seamlessly with Wa Sekake's (2022, p. 19) call to action: “...not to see things in isolation; fragmentary consciousness inhibits authentic and far-reaching political action.” Together, these insights highlight the importance of a holistic perspective in driving genuine and transformative change.

Reflective practices among DWEs in this study reveal the potential for shifts in entrenched power dynamics. As employers critically engaged with the historical, cultural, and structural inequalities that shape their relationships with DWs, they began to recognise the roles they play in sustaining these inequalities. The employers’ growing awareness of the inequalities they perpetuate in the domestic worker-employer relationship is an important step towards praxis, but praxis requires moving from self-awareness to active change in behaviours, systems, and power dynamics (Hsia, 2006). Some employers in the study acknowledged how class, race, and gender stereotypes shaped their perceptions and actions. This self-awareness, as noted by Saanvi, who observed, “*It’s dominant narratives and assumptions that contribute to perpetuating inequalities*” (Saanvi - DWE - I - 3), allows DWEs to begin to view themselves as agents capable of enacting change, rather than passive beneficiaries of existing power structures. Butler’s (1990) theory of performativity illustrates how employers can challenge societal expectations by recognising how their behaviours reinforce these dynamics.

While self-awareness is a critical step, praxis requires DWEs to take active steps to challenge these narratives in their daily interactions (Sewpaul, 2024). Hall (1997) and Freire (1997) emphasise that reflection must be paired with transformative action to disrupt power imbalances. Yet, as employers like Sbonga acknowledge that implementing change requires sustained effort, particularly when facing deeply ingrained norms of emotional distance and authority. She reflects on this challenge, noting, “*I am always in that thinking...am I making her uncomfortable? How would I feel in a certain situation?...It’s challenging...but I question even the littlest of things now*” (Sbonga - DWE - B - 3). This ongoing commitment

illustrates her conscious effort to move beyond conventional employer-employee boundaries and nurture a more considerate and equitable relationship with her DW.

A core element of emancipatory praxis, as Sewpaul (2024) suggests, is encouraging mutual respect through dialogue. Freire's (1970) framework of liberating education, which encourages critical reflection and dialogical engagement, resonates with findings from employers like Sheela, who remarked, *"I like that you [DW] tell me and teach me as well... I want to hear your [DW] opinion"* (Sheela - DWE - W - 1). This shift towards a more collaborative relationship highlights a break from rigid hierarchies, reflecting Sewpaul's emphasis on "open and respectful dialogue" as an antidote to oppressive ideologies (2024, np.). Yet, Gramsci's (1971) perception of cultural hegemony contextualises how societal expectations of authority often compel DWEs to maintain professional distance, as expressed by Sheela, who stated, *"There is a boundary... you [DW] can't just walk into Vodacom and tell your boss 'I'm not coming in today'"* (Sheela - DWE - W - 1). Here, social norms around control and hierarchy persist, reinforcing the difficulties employers face in fully realising these shifts towards equality.

Reflective praxis also allowed some DWEs to reconsider the emotional dynamics in their relationships, questioning the colonial legacy of servitude that underpins feelings of guilt. As Sheela observed, *"I am paying you for your service, so it's nothing crazy, it's just what it is"* (Sheela - DWE - W - 1), employers who embrace a transactional perspective may find relief from emotional discomfort and open the way for straightforward, respectful interactions with DWs. Although this detachment may reduce employers' guilt, without a deeper understanding of systemic inequalities, it risks becoming a superficial response rather than a way to meaningful change. Employers' discomfort over the unequal dynamics, as noted by Sbonga, who expressed, *"I felt so awkward... like, I'm so sorry you have to clean behind me"* (Sbonga - DWE - B - 2), may hinder lasting transformations if it is not paired with an understanding of the historical context that perpetuates DWs' exploitation.

As DWEs begin to question the hegemonic norms surrounding domestic work, they may take steps towards establishing fairer conditions. Sbonga's reflection on improving wages and setting clearer working hours in the third interview exemplifies Gramsci's (1971) concept of challenging dominant ideologies. She states, *"In terms of pay...I have increased it from my other helpers...even in terms of the working hours...there's a start and there's an ending, you*

know...before that, I feel like I was...going overboard and not actually considering...that this person also needs rest” (Sbonga - DWE - B - 3). This shift represents her movement away from traditionally exploitative practices, aligning with Gramsci’s counter-hegemony as she actively questions and transforms established norms around domestic work. However, the socio-economic divide remains a formidable barrier. Employers like Saanvi reflect on how domestic workers are seen as “*other*” or “*lesser,*” and these perceptions are difficult to unlearn, even after active reflection. Fanon’s (1967) analysis of colonialism illuminates how class and race hierarchies shape employers’ perceptions, suggesting that surface-level changes may falter if underlying biases are left unchallenged.

Butler (1990) claims that social roles, like those of employers, are not fixed identities, rather, they are shaped through consistent actions that adhere to social and cultural expectations. In this case, employers like Sbonga began to reflect on how their behaviours such as maintaining emotional distance from their domestic workers have reinforced their authority and perpetuated inequality. Praxis encourages Sbonga to go beyond recognition and actively create new forms of engagement with her domestic worker that resist traditional performances of dominance. Sbonga’s reflection that she is now “*...more conscious...not only of myself as an employer, but also of my employee*” signals a shift towards challenging the traditional power imbalance in her role as an employer. This heightened awareness can lead to new performative acts that develop a relationship grounded in mutual respect and open communication, ultimately transforming the dynamic with her domestic worker.

These findings highlight that true transformation in the DW-DWE relationship occurs when employers see their power and privilege not as inherent or unchangeable but as tools for creating more equitable relationships (Pithouse, 2016). This could lead to material changes such as fair wages, better working conditions and formal contracts, or symbolic changes such as treating domestic workers as integral members of the household. Incorporating a praxis-oriented lens into the discussion deepens the analysis of the DWE-DW relationship. While reflection on dominant narratives and performativity is crucial, praxis pushes this reflection towards transformative action. Employers must not only recognise the power dynamics at play but also take deliberate steps to disrupt these dynamics through their daily interactions and behaviours. Through engaging in emancipatory praxis, employers begin to challenge and change the deeply ingrained norms that perpetuate inequality, moving towards more equitable and humane relationships with their DWs.

7.4.2 Possibilities and Constraints for Transformative Shifts among Domestic Workers

Reflective praxis highlights opportunities for DWs to redefine their roles within the domestic sphere, promoting a more empowered stance despite entrenched barriers. However, each possibility for transformation is closely juxtaposed with significant challenges rooted in socio-economic, racial, and gendered structures that inhibit sustained change. A growing recognition among DWs of their essential role within households underscores a powerful opportunity to challenge the devaluation of their labour. For instance, Sihle's realisation, "*They [DWEs] benefit. They [DWEs] find their [DWEs] home clean. They [DWEs] get everything*" (Sihle - DW - I - 3) reflects an emerging self-awareness that domestic work holds intrinsic value. Butler's (1990) theory of performativity suggests that by asserting the importance of their roles, DWs can begin to shift the societal perception of their work, encouraging a view of domestic work as essential and dignified.

Despite this emerging awareness, DWs face systemic economic dependencies that limit their ability to assert this newfound self-worth effectively. Economic necessity, as expressed by Sihle, who noted, "*The most important thing is the money that we need*" (Sihle - DW - I - 3), traps many DWs in exploitative situations, making it challenging to demand fairer treatment. Sewpaul's (2024) critique of ideological barriers, including neoliberalism and positivism, is particularly relevant in understanding the structural constraints DWs face. Economic necessity, fuelled by neoliberal economic structures, often compels DWs to accept exploitative conditions, limiting their ability to push for systemic recognition. Gramsci's (1971) cultural hegemony, as discussed by Sewpaul (2024), reinforces the way these economic dependencies uphold the status quo, normalising DWs' subordinate roles and impeding transformative action. However, recognising their shared struggles and taking small collective actions, such as negotiating pay or setting boundaries, positions DWs as active agents, challenging what Sewpaul (2024, np.) describes as "common-sense assumptions." Yet again, as many DWs lack formal contracts and legal protections, even minor acts of resistance could lead to dismissal or worsening work conditions

Engaging in reflective praxis offers DWs an avenue to interrogate the socio-political structures that define their subordination, promoting a shift in self-perception from inferiority

to self-worth. Freire's (1970) concept of conscientisation demonstrates how DWs who reflect critically on their experiences may begin to challenge their imposed identity as subservient, opening pathways for a redefined sense of dignity. However, internalised narratives of inferiority, as Celiwe illustrates, "*I do what is asked because I cannot refuse*" (**Celiwe - DW - I - 2**) reinforce a performative compliance of cultural hegemony. Social expectations compel DWs to re-enact roles of obedience, inhibiting transformative change and making it difficult for individuals to break from these hierarchies.

Freirean praxis, where respectful dialogue promotes mutual recognition, presents an opportunity for DWs to redefine their relationships with employers. Positive interactions, as some DWs experienced, "*They [DWEs] know what a human being is... they treat me well*" (**P1 - DW - FGD1**) indicate that respectful employer relationships can create a foundation for equitable dynamics. Despite these instances of positive employer-employee interactions, socio-cultural divides, as Celiwe describes, "*A Black employer pays better than an Indian employer. Indian employers are stingy*" (**Celiwe - DW - I - 1**) continue to influence perceptions, reinforcing racialised views within domestic work. Hall's (1997) exploration of cultural representation highlights how entrenched racial biases shape employer expectations and behaviour, posing challenges to establishing consistently respectful relationships.

In praxis-oriented interviewing, critical reflection on racial assumptions, as demonstrated by Ntombi's evolving perspective on different racial groups, further shows how guided questioning can encourage nuanced reflection. The prompt by me, "*But don't you think some [DWEs] are different because you have said that there are White people who have abused you?*" challenged Ntombi's rigid racial stereotypes, encouraging an openness to view employers individually rather than as representatives of their race. However, her biases, deeply rooted in South Africa's apartheid history, remain difficult to shift. Ntombi's perception of White employers as more humane stems from socio-economic disparities where White employers generally hold more resources, reinforcing her preference based on financial security and reinforcing her views despite the questioning.

Instances of DWs negotiating pay and setting boundaries, as illustrated by P3 who stated, "*I told her if I'm coming tomorrow, you'll have to pay me again... and she agreed*" (**P3 - DW - FGD1**) demonstrate an emerging assertiveness among workers. This exchange was particularly notable in the FGD, where P1 initially recounted a situation in which an

employer expected her to return the following day to finish a large task without additional pay, rationalising it as an extension of the previous day's work. Accepting the situation, P1 complied, feeling powerless to challenge the request. However, before I, as the interviewer, could interject, P3 stepped in to encourage a different perspective, defending P1's right to fair treatment and recounting her own experience in negotiating additional pay. These small acts reflect a shift towards greater assertiveness, as DWs begin to recognise their worth and push back against exploitative practices.

Challenging hegemonic norms through counter-hegemonic actions is reflected in these small but significant shifts in DW behaviour. Through engaging in discussions about their experiences and reflecting on the dynamics at play, they begin to articulate a new understanding of their role, one that is not rooted in inferiority or resignation, but in dignity and rights (Kemmis & Smith, 2008). This shift in perspective is key to challenging the employer-worker power imbalance. However, DWs' bargaining power remains precarious, often limited by the looming threat of replacement by others willing to accept less favourable conditions. Giroux's (1983) concept of critical pedagogy highlights how the lack of education and socio-economic security further compounds this vulnerability, restricting DWs' capacity to advocate for sustained improvements in their working conditions. This dynamic underscores the need for structural support to enhance DWs' agency within the employment relationship.

The findings show that DWs were actively involved in the process of identifying solutions and promoting collective action, though in small ways, rather than simply documenting their experiences. This praxis-oriented approach, as seen in the FGDs, empowered DWs to support one another and collectively challenge exploitative practices. For example, casual DWs who participated in the FGDs reported that they share information about employers with whom they have had poor experiences, collectively refusing to work for them in the future. Casual DWs also set their rates independently, at the time of the study was at ZAR 200, thus exercising control over negotiations and limiting employer influence. Such actions mark a transition from passivity to empowerment, highlighting the potential for transforming the DW-DWE relationship and aligning with Marais and Van Wyk's (2015) view of collective agency as a means of advocacy.

Despite encouraging shifts in perspective, deeply ingrained socio-economic and racial hierarchies continue to shape beliefs and relationships between DWs and DWEs. Through this study, DWs have actively engaged in advocating for small change and voicing collective concerns, shifting from passive acceptance towards a more empowered stance. The research thus reveals both the possibilities and the significant challenges DWs face in transforming their roles and asserting agency in the face of systemic barriers.

7.5 Summary

The chapter explores how entrenched norms surrounding race, class, gender and social position impact the DWE-DW relationship in South Africa. Drawing on historical legacies of slavery and colonialism, domestic work remains influenced by intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender, revealing a complex interplay that goes beyond the triple jeopardy framework. The narratives of DWs show internalised racial hierarchies that affect their self-perception and reinforce stereotypes. Praxis-oriented research provides opportunities for transformative shifts through critical reflection and small acts of resistance. Reflective practices among DWEs demonstrate potential for change, with employers recognising their complicity in perpetuating inequality and taking incremental steps towards fairer treatment. However, entrenched biases and gender and socio-economic hierarchies pose significant challenges to engendering and sustaining transformation (Mushunje and Sewpaul, 2021). Emancipatory praxis, as discussed by Sewpaul (2024), suggests that dismantling ideological barriers requires active dialogue, critical reflection, and deliberate action. The study's findings highlight possibilities for collective agency among DWs, as they engage in dialogue, advocate for better conditions, and exercise control over negotiations, marking a shift from passivity to empowerment. Despite these shifts, systemic constraints such as economic vulnerability, racial biases, and patriarchal structures continue to limit the capacity for comprehensive and transformative change in the sector.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

As with much existing research, this study confirms that domestic work is highly stigmatised and marginalised, and individuals engaged in this occupation often face numerous challenges that impact their well-being, human rights, and social inclusion. However, this study uniquely employed a praxis-oriented research approach rooted in post-structural feminism, offering a participatory and dialogical platform for both DWs and DWEs to critically examine and disrupt entrenched norms and power dynamics. The study challenges the traditional view of DWs as passive victims by revealing the subtle interplay of resistance, individual agency, and structural oppression showcasing the opportunity for negotiation for fairer practices and treatment. Conducting a research study on the lived experiences of DWs and DWEs provides valuable insights into the unique dynamics, vulnerabilities, and needs of DWs and DWEs, within South Africa's post-apartheid landscape, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal.

This study sought to engage with a twofold problem in the domestic work sector in post-apartheid South Africa. First, it is framed as binary notions of power, where DWs are often viewed as powerless and vulnerable, reinforcing a stereotype of invisibility and perpetual exploitation (Barrett, 1985; Cock, 1980b; Lawson, 1985). However, maintaining this trope risks normalising DWs' subjugation to such an extent that it can become internalised as inevitable (Collins, 2002). On the other side, DWEs are typically depicted as immune to the power dynamics in these relationships, despite the nuanced complexity of power beyond the traditional view of forcing others to act against their will (Weber, 1978).

The second aspect of the issue arose from previous studies that focused predominantly on Black African-White racial dynamics, overlooking the fact that domestic work is no longer exclusive to White employers (Maqubela, 2016; Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2010; Tolla, 2013). This study addressed this gap by examining power relations and tensions between DWs and DWEs across diverse racial groups, highlighting emerging patterns in employer-employee interactions that did not align with the traditional racial binaries. Historically, social work literature paid scant attention to labour issues, with only a few mentions of social work's involvement in labour matters, where the power dynamics within labour remained underexplored. Despite the global shift towards critical social work and a commitment to

social justice and human rights, South African social work literature remains limited on the intersectional issues affecting DWs. Given social work's core values of empowerment, advocacy, and social justice (IASSW, 2018), it was essential to study domestic work at both philosophical and pragmatic levels.

The historical complicity of social work in perpetuating hegemonic state ideologies (Harms Smith, 2013) raised questions about its role in addressing the systemic inequalities and power imbalances in the domestic work sector. This study aimed to initiate dialogue on social work's responsibility in advancing social justice within labour contexts aligning with the sustainable development goals, particularly in advocating for fair treatment (SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities), gender equality (SDG 5: Gender Equality), and decent work for marginalised groups (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth). At the outset, this research study was based on several assumptions: DWs, despite overwhelming narratives of victimhood, possess agency; DWs have internalised feelings of powerlessness that obscure their agency; DWEs often internalise their privilege without acknowledging its sources; and the power dynamics in domestic work are complex, with DWEs often overlooking the broader implications of their dominant role.

Based on the findings and critical discussions from the study, these assumptions were largely confirmed but enriched with nuanced perspectives that revealed the multi-layered and bidirectional nature of power, agency, internalised oppression and internalised privilege within the domestic work sector. In examining power, oppression, privilege, and agency, the study contributed to a critical understanding of the socio-political implications of domestic work and the transformative potential of praxis-oriented research in rethinking and deconstructing power. Most importantly the study highlights the dire need for actively challenging neoliberalism that underlie the structural injustices that influence the social positioning of DWs and DWEs.

A non-probability sampling method was employed, selecting a total of 38 adult participants. These included 26 Black African female DWs and 12 female employers representing Black African, Indian, and White racial groups. Data were collected through in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the study. The data were examined through critical discourse and thematic

analysis. The study's methodological limitations included the short data collection period of one year, which, while yielding valuable immediate insights, restricted the ability to observe long-term changes and patterns in power dynamics. Additionally, power imbalances in the researcher-participant relationship and the exclusion of male DWs and Coloured people limited the diversity and generalisability of the findings; however, the study's focus on female Black African DWs provided nuanced, in-depth insights into this subgroup's experiences.

The findings reveals intricate patterns of power relations, including surveillance, narratives of power and powerlessness, agency and acts of resistance, gendered performative acts, and mutual dependency between DWs and employers. I explored the definitions of self-worth and self-determination among these groups, contributing to a deeper understanding of the socio-political implications of domestic work. The findings highlight the ways in which DWs navigate power structures, negotiate their identities, and resist oppressive conditions.

With serialised interviewing and FGDs, I engaged participants in dialogue aimed at heightening critical consciousness, which has potential intrinsic value and that could inform policies and practices towards more equitable and respectful employment conditions in the domestic work sector. In this chapter I draw major conclusions of the study aligned to the study's objectives, theoretical framework and findings, and I make recommendations directed to DWs, DWEs, social work practice, training and curriculum, policy development, methodology and future research.

8.2 Conclusions

8.2.1 Conclusions related to objective A

To examine the complex interaction between the manifold structures of oppression and privilege that overlap in the relationship between female DWs and DWEs.

In examining the complex interplay of oppression and privilege within the domestic work sector, it became evident that entrenched systems of neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy perpetuate inequalities affecting both DWs and DWEs. The findings demonstrate how DWs and DWEs internalise structural norms and hierarchies, even across diverse racial backgrounds, reflecting entrenched power dynamics beyond the realms of race, gender, and

class to include social positioning as a powerful criterion in domestic work. The concept of “common sense” in Gramsci’s (1971, 1977) terms resonate in these narratives, as DWs navigate their positions of constrained agency within the domestic work sector. They often view domestic work as their only viable option, illustrating how neoliberalism confines workers to precarious roles under the guise of economic necessity. Neoliberal policies frequently place the burdens of care labour within households, especially on women (Gelmez, 2016). This burdens DWs with not only physical labour but emotional caregiving, positioning them within a patriarchal-capitalist framework that expects their unpaid or underpaid labour as a norm.

Radhakrishnan and Solari (2015) illustrate how neoliberal capitalism has globally reshaped gender roles, presenting women’s “empowerment” through employment as progress while positioning them in precarious, low-paid roles that sustain patriarchal expectations. However, this paradox of empowerment did not negate DWs’ agency to resist or challenge these conditions. As Butler (1990) would argue, the performance of gender within these roles is not static but enacted and open to resistance. Many DWs in this study, while dissatisfied with a number of conditions, exercise their power by leaving for better opportunities or by setting boundaries within their roles, and they subtly resisted the control imposed by employers.

8.2.2 Conclusions related to objective B

To identify patterns of power relations and embedded tensions between DWs and DWEs in contemporary SA.

This study’s analysis of power relations and tensions between DWs and DWEs in South Africa reveal a complex interplay of dependency, agency, and power within the domestic work setting. Drawing from Foucault’s (1991, 1998) concept of power as diffuse and ever-present, the study identified mutual dependency as a key feature of the DW-DWE relationship. Both DWs and DWEs contribute to and rely on each other within the household, with DWs performing essential labour and DWEs providing the income necessary for survival, resulting in a shared and negotiated dynamic. This interdependence supports reciprocal power dynamics, with authority and dependence flowing between the parties and often materialising as legitimate assertions of power marked by respect, open communication, and adherence to mutually agreed roles. However, as Foucault (1991) and

Butler (1990) suggested in their frameworks, this balance proved fragile, susceptible to illegitimate power assertions by DWEs that frequently took the form of control, exclusion, and surveillance.

Such practices echo Foucault's (1980, 1995) analysis of surveillance and societal control mechanisms, which reinforce hierarchies and instill compliance, while Butler's (1990) performativity highlights how DWs might challenge these impositions, disrupting normative expectations of their role. These insights underscore that power within the DW-DWE relationship is a fluid and multifaceted construct shaped by historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. Recognising power as such creates opportunities for fostering respectful, fair, and humane practices that acknowledge and address structural inequalities, as emphasised in Freire's call for conscientisation and collective action. This theoretical framing aligns with post-structuralist feminism's goals of disrupting dominant discourses that legitimise oppression, suggesting that both awareness and critical engagement are essential steps toward more equitable engagements in domestic work.

8.2.3 Conclusions related to objective C

To describe sources of resistance and retaliation from the DWs and DWEs when the relation is threatened.

Findings reveal that resistance and retaliation from DWs and DWEs are intrinsic to the complex dynamics of their relationship, particularly when tensions arise. On the one hand, the narratives of DWs indicate a range of resistance strategies aimed at asserting boundaries and challenging the often hierarchical power structures within their roles. Acts of resistance include setting limits on working hours, refusing additional tasks beyond agreed responsibilities, and ignoring calls outside of work hours. Such acts reflect Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, as DWs subvert expectations of passive compliance. Employers, on the other hand, also display retaliatory strategies aimed at maintaining authority and reinforcing established boundaries within their households. Instances of termination due to perceived overstepping by DWs highlights employers' use of strict boundaries to assert control and prevent shifts in the power dynamic. Employers' readiness to replace DWs demonstrate a tendency toward transactional relationships and reflects a deeper systemic

issue of commodifying domestic work, where DWs are seen as replaceable rather than valued employees.

Additionally, the findings show that retaliation by DWs against perceived injustices is not always overt but includes subtle, passive forms of resistance. These acts, such as working at a slower pace or selectively ignoring tasks, serve as indirect assertions of agency and dignity, challenging the taken-for-granted assumption of complete submission. These strategies align with Gramsci's concept of a "war of position," where resistance occurs gradually and subtly rather than through direct confrontation (Gramsci, 1971). Instances of overt retaliation, such as leaving without notice or confronting employers, highlight the depth of frustration and the psychological toll of continued subordination. When DWs resort to these measures, they assert a sense of dignity and self-worth, actively resisting the exploitative elements of their work conditions. Some employers, in contrast, react to these perceived transgressions with dismissive actions, reiterating control but also reinforcing the underlying inequalities within the domestic work sector.

8.2.4 Conclusions related to objective D

To explore the definitions and relations of self-worth and self-determination among DWs and DWEs.

The findings reveal complex definitions of self-worth and self-determination among participants, influenced by societal stigma, structural inequality, and the unique dynamics of domestic work. Many DWs connect their self-worth to the emotional bonds and familial roles they assume within employer households, providing them with a sense of purpose and fulfilment aligned with the ILO's view of work's role in dignity and development (ILO, 2019). While Bosmans et al. (2016) indicated the DW trope often harms self-esteem, most DWs in this study took pride in their caregiving roles, reinforcing their perceived value within the family structure. However, these roles blur lines between duty and attachment, as DWs take on surrogate maternal roles without adequate space to fulfil their own familial responsibilities. Although some DWEs acknowledge these bonds, viewing DWs as "family" to build loyalty and dedication, this approach risks reinforcing paternalistic dynamics and often overlook the importance of fair compensation and clear role boundaries (Coetzee, 2020).

DWs displayed self-determination through pride in their contributions, economic stability, and autonomy, illustrating resilience in navigating domestic work's challenges, as supported by studies like Mayes-Buckley (2011) and Windle (2011). Adaptive strategies, such as asserting boundaries and negotiating conditions (Siruno & Siegel, 2023; Garcini et al., 2022), reflect DWs' agency amidst adversity, even as societal stigma labels their work as "dirty work" (Bentein et al., 2017). Conversely, many employers expressed appreciation for their DWs' contributions to household stability, and easing work-family conflicts (Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020), yet the systemic undervaluation of domestic work often leads to a gap between this personal respect and wider societal attitudes. Intersectionality compounds this marginalisation, with DWs frequently facing stereotypes that diminish their self-worth and restrict them to an undervalued sector.

8.2.5 Conclusions related to objective E

To explore the potential influence of praxis-oriented research on DWs' and DWEs' self-conceptualisation and their deconstruction of power in the DW-DWE relationship.

The findings illustrate the potential of a praxis-oriented research approach to shift entrenched norms and discourses within the DW-DWE relationship, influencing how DWs and DWEs perceive and enact power. This approach encouraged both DWs and DWEs to engage in critical reflection on their roles, promoting an awareness of the systemic forces underpinning their interactions. Through reflective practices, DWEs began to acknowledge the privilege and power they held, recognising how their actions and societal expectations perpetuated inequality. As some employers reflected on their roles, they developed a growing consciousness of the need to question traditional norms and consider fairer, more equitable working conditions, moving from passive beneficiaries of power to active agents of change. This process exemplified praxis by linking reflection with action, as DWEs started to view themselves as agents capable of enacting change (Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009). For DWs, these reflective dialogues provided a means to articulate and challenge the power structures constraining them, thereby shifting their perception of self-worth and agency.

Following a praxis-oriented research design, the study uncovered hidden forms of agency among DWs, challenging the trope of powerlessness by highlighting their strategies for

resilience and resistance (Asghar, 2013). The findings suggest that even small acts, such as negotiating pay or setting boundaries, represent significant counter-hegemonic actions within the DW-DWE relationship. Such actions align with Gramsci's (1971) notion of cultural hegemony, where DWs engage in practices disrupting dominant ideologies, albeit within the constraints of socio-economic dependencies. The study illuminates these acts, offering a counter-narrative that emphasises DWs' agency and ability to navigate systemic power imbalances, aligning with Fanon's (1963) exploration of colonial oppression's psychological effects on self-perception. The participatory nature of the study fostered mutual learning and growth, as DWs reflected on their essential roles and the value they brought to employers' households. This awareness, encouraged by Freire's (1970) concept of critical pedagogy, frames education and dialogue as tools for social change. By positioning participants as co-constructors of knowledge, the study not only documented lived experiences but also cultivated a space for critical awareness to inform future policy changes and advocate for DWs' labour rights. The reciprocal nature of these dialogues was expressed by a participant who remarked, "*You got us thinking about things we had never really thought about before.*" demonstrating praxis-oriented research's potential to shift perceptions and encourage empowerment through inclusive conversations.

8.3 Conclusions' relevance to the social work discipline

The conclusions from this study offer significant insights into the social work discipline and practice. The findings associate with the Ubuntu philosophy discussed by (Chigangaidze et al., 2023; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020), which emphasises interdependence, collective responsibility, and human dignity. This study echoes Ubuntu principle of dignity and interconnectedness by highlighting how systemic structures, such as neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy, contribute to inequality. This understanding encourages social workers to address broader socio-economic injustices that shape individual lives, reinforcing their role as catalysts for systemic change.

The identification of mutual dependency and power dynamics parallels Banks' idea of "ethics work," which places ethical decision-making within relational and systemic contexts (Banks, 2016, p. 36). The study's emphasis on balancing respect, communication, and boundary-setting within relationships resonates with the Ubuntu principle of encouraging respectful,

harmonious interactions and social cohesion. Social workers can apply these insights to mediate conflicts and advocate for fair practices in employer-worker relationships.

The study highlights strategies of resistance, such as subtle acts of agency, which reflect Ubuntu's emphasis on empowerment through collective resilience (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020). These dynamics encourage social workers to recognise and support acts of resistance as forms of self-determination, promoting policies and interventions that validate and enhance the dignity of vulnerable groups like DWs. Also, the study's exploration of how DWs derive self-worth from their roles, despite societal stigma, aligns with Ubuntu's focus on dignity and community validation as advocated by Mugumbate and Chereni (2020). For social workers, this highlights the importance of facilitating environments where individuals can derive a sense of purpose and pride. It also supports the advocacy for fair compensation and role clarity as part of ethical practice.

The participatory approach adopted in the study reflects Freire's critical pedagogy (Chigangaidze et al., 2023; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020; Sewpaul, 2006; Sewpaul et al., 2015; Sewpaul & Osthus, 2009), a cornerstone of social work education and practice. Encouraging reflexivity among both DWEs and DWs facilitates transformative dialogue and empowers participants to challenge inequitable norms. This method aligns with Ubuntu's emphasis on collective learning and shared growth, reinforcing social work's commitment to emancipation and social justice.

Furthermore, Butler's ideas on language and discourse complement the qualitative research methods employed in the study. Through the analysis of interviews, narratives, and interactions, the study uncovered how language constructs and perpetuates power dynamics. Also, the use of language as a tool for both compliance and resistance reflects the participatory and dialogical elements central to praxis-oriented research. By foregrounding DWs and DWEs' voices and enabling critical dialogue, the study embodies praxis's commitment to engaging participants as co-constructors of knowledge, promoting awareness and agency (Hutton & Heath, 2020; Kaukko et al., 2020). Overall, the study situates narratives within wider power frameworks, resonating with the emancipatory praxis approach that strives to expose hidden contradictions and direct attention to possibilities for social transformation.

8.4 Recommendations

In considering recommendations to address the entrenched power inequalities within domestic work relationships, we must critically engage with the broader structural forces shaping these dynamics. The intersecting forces of neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy form the structural roots of gendered-racism as advocated for by Sewpaul (2013, 2024a) and Wa Sekake (2022), which is a quintessential feature of domestic work. Addressing these deep-seated issues requires more than individual interventions; it demands a broader approach that challenges and disrupts the systems sustaining them. Drawing from indigenous knowledge systems and the Afrocentric philosophy of Ubuntu, as articulated by numerous African scholars (see Makhanya, 2022; Makhanya & Mzinyane, 2023; Makhanya & Zibane, 2020; Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020; Sewpaul, 2023; Sewpaul & Kreitzer, 2021; Van Breda, 2019) presents a strong case for adopting Ubuntu as a guiding framework in addressing systemic inequalities. Chigangaidze (2022) advocates for Ubuntu as a liberating approach within social work and other social sciences, highlighting its emphasis on community, dignity, and interdependence which is a dire need for the domestic work sector. This perspective calls for a shift from individualistic, profit-driven goals toward collective well-being. Therefore, these recommendations reflect Ubuntu's core principles, promoting relationships that prioritise mutual care, shared responsibility, and the inherent value of every individual, rather than perpetuating exploitative and competitive systems.

8.4.1 Recommendations for challenging the dominant discourse on power imbalances between DWs and DWEs

Addressing systemic issues requires a shift not only in policy but also in societal norms, to fully recognise the value of domestic work and dismantle internalised hierarchies that perpetuate inequality for both DWs and DWEs. Thus, raising awareness about the issues facing DWs becomes crucial. However, awareness must be framed within a broader understanding that neoliberal structures frequently isolate DWs by emphasising individual success over collective welfare. Indigenous knowledge systems, as Masoga (2005) and Shokane and Masoga (2018) highlight, offer a valuable alternative by emphasising community-oriented frameworks where challenges are viewed as collective, not individual, issues. Public education efforts that incorporate these principles can dismantle the isolating effects of neoliberal ideology by highlighting the societal responsibilities that all members of a community hold towards DWs. Reframing awareness in this way not only acknowledges

the systemic roots of DWs' exploitation but also challenges the neoliberal emphasis on individualism, encouraging society to take a communal approach to addressing the well-being of domestic workers.

Encouraging DWs to come together and form labour unions or join existing workers' organisations is another important step. The collective approach inherent in Ubuntu provides an empowering framework for domestic workers to organise themselves in ways that resonate with their cultural values. Labour unions and collective worker organisations serve as powerful tools for amplifying worker voices and enabling better negotiation for fair treatment. However, neoliberal frameworks often undermine such collectivism by promoting a culture of individual achievement and competition. In contrast, Ubuntu's emphasis on interdependence, solidarity, and community alignment can empower domestic workers to view unionisation as a culturally resonant form of resistance. Makhanya (2022) supports this perspective by noting that organising through Ubuntu values challenges the isolating effects of neoliberalism. Through this framing, DWs can find strength in cultural solidarity, thereby enhancing their collective bargaining power and challenging both neoliberal and patriarchal structures.

Cultural narratives that perpetuate the subservience of domestic work must be actively challenged to disrupt the power imbalances inherent in DWE-DW relationships. Ubuntu, with its emphasis on valuing all forms of work and recognising the interconnectedness of community members, provides an effective counter-narrative to these entrenched hierarchies. According to Bawa (2024) Ubuntu and duty are central to solidarity consciousness, which aligns with the need to disrupt narratives that perpetuate injustices. This perspective compels us to historicise the knowledge hierarchies that have normalised the subjugation of domestic work, situating it within a global accountability framework for gender and economic equality. Challenging these historical inequities, the right to self-determination, embedded within the right to solidarity, enables democratic knowledge production that respects and values the lived experiences of domestic workers.

Ubuntu-based guidelines for employment practices can encourage a standard of ethical treatment that goes beyond legal compliance, promoting dignity, respect, and fair compensation. Shokane and Masoga (2018) suggest that adopting social justice frameworks grounded in indigenous knowledge can counteract the exploitative tendencies of neoliberal

capitalism by centring human dignity. This has potential to challenge the prevailing neoliberal and patriarchal norms in domestic work by encouraging DWEs to implement ethical practices such as fair wages, reasonable hours, and written contracts.

8.4.2 Recommendations for social work practice and scholarship

Social workers play a vital role in empowering marginalised groups including DWs by promoting their rights, agency, and self-advocacy skills. It is essential for social workers to support DWs in understanding their rights, effectively communicating their needs, recognising their inherent worth and dignity, and accessing available resources and support services. Therefore social work interventions should aim to nurture collective problem-solving and community-driven solutions, reflecting Ubuntu's core ethos.

Given the systemic nature of challenges such as neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy, social work must advocate for policies that disrupt these structures. This aligns with Ubuntu's focus on justice and equity, encouraging social workers to challenge exploitative labour practices and promote legislative reforms that safeguard the rights and well-being of DWs.

Social work education should integrate decolonial frameworks, including the philosophy of Ubuntu, to contextualise practice within local realities. This approach challenges Western-centric paradigms and aligns with the global movement to decolonise social work as eloquently articulated in *The Ubuntu practitioner: Social work perspectives*, a collection of chapters edited by Mayaka, Uwihangana and van Breda (2023). Educational institutions should prioritise training that equips future practitioners to critically engage with systemic oppression and develop culturally relevant interventions.

8.4.3 Recommendations for stakeholders, policymakers and broader community

Policy reform is a critical avenue for challenging systemic inequities in domestic work, yet meaningful policy change must go beyond conventional frameworks that often fail to address the roots of inequality. Makhanya and Mzinyane (2023) argue that the adoption of Ubuntu as a guiding framework in policy could profoundly shift the way we address inequalities, this could be through focusing on the well-being of all individuals within a community, including marginalised DWs. Thus anchoring policy in indigenous values, reforms can challenge both neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy. This would lead to labour protections that not only

ensure fair pay and reasonable working hours but also respect the dignity and humanity of DWs.

Encouraging open dialogue among DWEs, DWs, policymakers, and the broader community is essential for shifting the current dynamics of power in domestic work. Dialogue that is framed within the principles of Ubuntu can facilitate a more empathetic and respectful understanding of power dynamics, as Ubuntu prioritises shared humanity and respect for all individuals. Shokane and Masoga (2018) advocate for this Afro-sensed approach, suggesting that it can facilitate meaningful discussions that do not reinforce hierarchical relationships. Grounding these discussions in mutual respect and understanding allows stakeholders to redefine DWE-DW relationships as partnerships based on equality and collective well-being, rather than domination. This shift challenges the patriarchal and capitalist ideals that often influence these relationships.

Community-driven organisations play an important role in advocating for the rights of DWs and DWEs, and indigenous knowledge systems provide a framework that supports participatory involvement from those most affected. Integrating the experiences of DWs and DWEs themselves into advocacy efforts to ensure that reforms are genuinely reflective of their needs and realities. Supporting these organisations aligns with Ubuntu's communal focus and can serve as a powerful counterforce to neoliberal individualism, which often sidelines the voices of the marginalised. Furthermore, providing resources and visibility to these organisations enables the development of grassroots solutions that respect DWs' agency, thereby challenging both neoliberalism and patriarchy at a structural level.

8.4.4 Recommendations linked to theoretical framework

Deconstructing gendered power structures that underpin domestic worker-employer relations is fundamental to addressing power imbalances. It is important to highlight how societal norms and expectations perpetuate gender inequalities and affect power dynamics in domestic work. Applying an intersectional lens allows for a comprehensive analysis of multiple power relations at play in these relationships, considering how race, class, and other intersecting identities, particularly social position, shape the experiences of DWs.

Language and discourse used in DW-DWE relationships should be critically analysed to uncover power imbalances. Encouraging reflection on how language reinforces and perpetuates power differentials, while promoting alternative discourses that challenge these imbalances, is essential.

Exploring acts of resistance and subversion by DWs within power structures provides insights into how they navigate and negotiate power dynamics. Developing strategies to amplify their voices and agency is crucial. Incorporating care ethics into the analysis of domestic worker-employer relationships allows for a critical examination of the gendered nature of care work, emphasising the ethical responsibilities of employers to create supportive, equitable, and respectful work environments.

Promoting reflexivity among social workers, employers, and policymakers is important for critically examining their own positions of power and privilege within DW-DWE relationships. Encouraging self-reflection can promote more equitable interactions and understanding of power dynamics.

Promoting transformative justice approaches that address power imbalances, hold employers accountable for abusive or exploitative behaviour, and provide avenues for healing and restoration for DWs is necessary.

8.4.5 Recommendations for future research

Future research should include longitudinal studies to examine changes and shifts in power dynamics over time in domestic worker-employer relationships. It should be an iterative process that includes ongoing feedback from participants. Regularly checking in with DWs and DWEs to assess the relevance and impact of the research findings and recommendations helps to refine and adapt the research approach. The research should include opportunities for reflexivity, where both researchers and participants engage in critical self-reflection about their roles, biases, and experiences in the research process. Reflective practice helps uncover how power dynamics influence interactions and interpretations within the study, promoting a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

There is a need for more qualitative research, disarticulated from neoliberal and positivist constraints, with a strengths-based focus which can help identify and amplify positive experiences and successful practices within domestic worker-employer relationships, moving away from a deficit-based perspective that often portrays DWs as passive victims or employers as inherently exploitative. Exploring and highlighting the strengths, skills, and agency of DWs can empower them, recognising and valuing their contributions. This can lead to increased self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of dignity, promoting more equitable relationships.

Conventional research approaches hold the potential to engender epistemic exploitation, which is not uncommon within institutions of higher education as researchers, in positions of power and privilege, use information extractive strategies, and expect “marginalized persons to produce an education or explanation about the nature of the oppression they face” (Berenstain, 2016, p. 570). This is often accompanied by un-remunerated emotional labour on the part of the marginalised for the benefit of the privileged, thus reinforcing the oppressive structures that researchers seek to oppose.

Participatory, appreciative and praxis-oriented research, on the other hand, has the potential to contribute to broader societal change by challenging stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory practices that perpetuate power imbalances. Highlighting positive experiences and successful interactions can influence public perceptions and promote a more inclusive and equitable society. These approaches increase ownership and commitment to implementing positive changes, leading to more sustainable and effective solutions.

Research must be designed to transcend the research-practice divide. Practice research can include raising employer’ awareness of power dynamics and inequalities within DW-DWE relationships can encourage them to reassess their practices, challenge biases, and adopt more equitable behaviours. Evaluation research can be used to monitor and document the processes and outcomes of such programmes.

As this study was limited in scope, further research is needed to understand the perspectives, attitudes, and behaviours of employers in domestic worker relationships. Research should examine their understanding of power dynamics, their role in perpetuating or challenging inequalities, and the factors that influence their treatment of DWs. Evaluating the impact of

existing policies and interventions aimed at addressing power imbalances in domestic worker-employer relationships is necessary. Assessing the effectiveness of legal frameworks, training programmes, and support services can help improve working conditions, reduce abuse, and promote equitable relationships.

Comparative studies examining power dynamics in DWE-DW relationships across different regions, contexts, or countries can provide valuable insights. Comparing experiences in South Africa with those in other countries can help identify common challenges, innovative practices, and potential lessons that inform policy and practice. Investigating the influence of digital technologies, such as mobile phones and social media, on power dynamics in DW-DWE relationships is also relevant. Research should explore how technology impacts communication, surveillance, and the negotiation of boundaries between DWs and employers.

Exploring the role of intermediary agencies, employment agencies, and other organisations involved in facilitating DW-DWE relationships is important. Identifying gaps in existing policies, emerging issues, and providing evidence-based recommendations for policy reforms are essential for promoting fair and equitable working conditions.

Praxis-oriented research should aim to develop strategies that are tailored to the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts of the participants. Through focusing on local knowledge and practices, researchers can co-create interventions that are more likely to be effective and sustainable. Context-specific strategies also increase the relevance of research findings and recommendations to the communities involved. Drawing on principles of critical pedagogy, praxis-oriented research must emphasise education and consciousness-raising. This involves educating both DWs and DWEs about power dynamics, rights, and justice, as well as encouraging critical thinking about their roles in perpetuating or challenging these dynamics. Education can empower participants to recognise and question power imbalances, leading to transformative action.

Combining practice and research, researchers can encourage collective action and solidarity among DWs and DWEs. By identifying common goals and fostering collaboration, praxis-oriented research can help build networks and alliances that work towards challenging unjust neoliberal and patriarchal power structures that reproduce a range of prejudices and

discriminations based on intersectional social criteria such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language and nationality. Collective action can amplify voices, increase bargaining power, and lead to more substantial and sustainable changes.

8.5 Final Reflection

This thesis marks the culmination of a journey that has been both humbling and transformative. Embarking on this PhD study, I anticipated completing it within three years, driven by the confidence of completing two master's degrees in record time and with distinction. But this journey defied my expectations. Six years later, I stand not only with a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy but with a deeper understanding of what it means to embrace grace, patience, and the enduring complexity of both knowledge and life itself.

This process was unlike anything I have ever undertaken, undeniably challenging yet profoundly rewarding. It demanded more of me than I could have imagined. It forced me to confront and unlearn deeply embedded “truths,” to grapple with discomfort, and to question the very structures that shape our world. In turn, I saw my participants face their own discomforts and moments of awakening. Unlearning, I discovered, is messy, unsettling, and at times painful. Yet it is through this messiness that learning and relearning emerge, a process that is as liberating as it is necessary.

Freire (1973) contends that the “unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education is an ongoing activity and we are always unfinished in an unfinished reality” (p. 84). This insight resonates deeply as I finally reflect on this journey and the near future. I have come to understand that this thesis is not an endpoint but part of an ongoing process of growth, reflection, and action. I acknowledge that this work only scratches the surface of the world's injustices. It does not claim to solve the problems it confronts but offers a beginning, a beginning steeped in social justice and grounded in the principles of Ubuntu. It is a contribution that I hope will inspire more action, deeper reflection, and sustained commitment to dismantling inequities and building a more just and compassionate world. This is not the end of the work but the beginning of what I am sure will be a lifelong endeavour.

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Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Domestic Works (English)

Note: the interviews were conversational style to allow participants to be relaxed and to participate as fully as they possibly can. The guide was used with flexibility. Also note that these questions will be used for interviews and focus group discussions with domestic works.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I look forward to learning more about you and what you think about certain issues that concern domestic works like you. For this interview I am interested in your thoughts and experiences as a domestic work working in South Africa. Please feel free to talk openly about your experiences and thoughts, and you are welcomed to ask me questions.

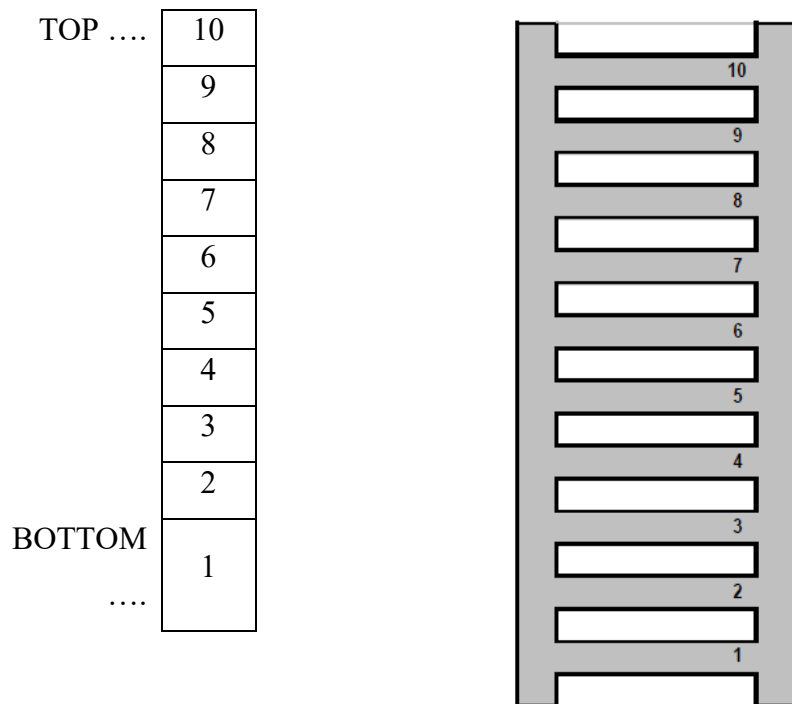
Demographical Data

| | |
|--|--|
| Pseudonym | |
| Age | |
| Gender | |
| Race | |
| Nationality | |
| Marital Status | |
| Level of Education | |
| *Number of years living in SA | |
| Number of years working as a DW in SA | |
| Type of employment (babysitter/cleaner/other) | |
| Registered with DoL (Y/N) | |
| Registered with a workers' union (Y/N) | |
| Live-in/Live-out | |

| | |
|---|--|
| (Only live-in) Occupy outside room/Main house bedroom | |
| Type of family household you work for (nuclear/extended/single parent/ other) | |
| Race of family household you currently work for (Black African/White) | |
| Income | |

Power dynamics between DWs and DWEs in SA

- Please tell me on how you became a DW?
 - How did you find out about the job?
 - Would you say it was a choice for you to be a DW? Why/why not?
 - If not, what did you want to be? Why did you not pursue that path of work?
- What does it mean being a DW to you?
 - Looking at this ladder, where one is at the bottom and ten is at its highest, at which step of the ladder would you say you are at when you think about your job? Why do you feel that way?



- Please tell me more about your experiences as a DW?
 - What don't you like about your job? (Probe on the stressors, disadvantages, challenges etc.)
 - What do you like about your job? (Probe on benefits, privileges, any other aspects that strike as potential for positive in the conversation etc.)
 - When you are looking for a job, what are some of the things you consider?
 - Probe whether race is something they would consider: e.g. If a Black African, Indian, White offered you a job, which would you be more likely to work for? Why
 - If participant worked during the apartheid: – How many years or for how long have you been working as a DW? If you think about the way your DWE or working situation use to be [insert time period]?
 - Having said that, how do you think your current DWE treats you now?
 - How would you say the ways in which each DWE treated you then and now is different/ or how different do you think their treatment of you is/was?
 - What do you think influenced these differences/similarities?

- If you were to think about how you and your DWE interact in the mornings when you come in to start work, or when you have to clean certain areas in the house etc. Would you say there is a relationship between you and your DWE/s?
 - Do you think that an employee should have a relationship with their DWE/s?
 - If yes, what type of relationship do you think they should have?
 - How would you describe your relationship with your DWE/s?
 - How does your DWE/s treat you?
 - How do you think living-in/living-out influences your relationship?
 - When thinking about the treatment that you receive, why do you think you get treated the way you do? (*probe on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, culture or any other intersectional lines*)
 - Do you think opening up about things that an employee is not happy with to the DWE is important?
 - If yes/no, why do you think that way?
 - Are there any boundaries (things you feel should not be shared) in the things that an employee should share with their DWE? If so, what are some of these things?
 - Do you feel like opening up to your DWE is easy or difficult?
 - Why is it easy/ difficult?
 - Probe on whether being a *woman/Black African/Christian/Shona/foreign etc.* would make it easier or more difficult for to open up about things they don't like in the household you work at? Why is that?
 - Describe to me what is your communication like with your DWE/s?
 - So when you speak to your DWE, how do you address each other? (Madam, baas, maid, girly, employee's name [vernacular name or English name] etc.)
 - How did this come about? (probe if it's something they agreed on/discussed [can be interpreted as a level of respect/ flexibility in that dynamic] or was it a prescribed thing [no discussion involved, clear boundaries set indicating clear power dynamics])
 - Do you have leave days? What are they?
 - How are decisions made about how your leave days?

- What about the decision of the time of coming to work and leaving work?
- Do you have a relationship with other family members?
- How is the relationship with any other members in the household?
- Do you see yourself as part of the family or not?
- What does being part of the family mean to you?
- Do you ever get upset with your DWE? If yes, what do you do or how do you deal with being upset with them?
-

Narratives of self-worth and self-determination

- How would you describe domestic work as a job? (probe on who deserves this job etc.)
 - Do you think it is an important job? Why/why not?
 - Thinking of the homes and families that you previously worked for and the ones you are currently working for, what do you think your contribution has been? (E.g. is the mother able to go work without worrying because there is someone to look after her children? Are they able to celebrate events that they could have struggled to celebrate before you worked for them? Other ways?)
 -
- How would you define power?
 - What kind of person would you describe as a person that has power?
 - Would you describe yourself as someone that has power? Why/why not?
 - Based on your description of power, and thinking about what you do, do you think you have power? If not, why not? / If so, what is that power?
 - Where do you think you exercise your power where you are employed?
 - How do you exercise your power at work?

10.2 Appendix 2: Interview Guide for DWs (IsiZulu)

Siyabonga kakhulu ngokuthi uvume ukuba ingxenye yalolu cwaningo. Ngikulangazelele ukuthi ngifunde kabanzi ngawe nangokuthi ucabangani ngezimo ezithile eziphathelene nabasenza ezindlini njenganawe. Kulengxoxo, ngikulangazelele ukwazi ngemicabango yakho nangezimo odlule kuzo nalezi osabhekene nazo njengomusebenzi wasendlini ohlala eningizimu Afrika. Ngicela uzizwe wamukelekile ukuphefumula konke ngezimo odlule kuzona nokungicacisela kabanzi ngemicabanga yakho. Yazi ukuthi wamukelekile ukungimisa, ungibuze imibuzo nawe.

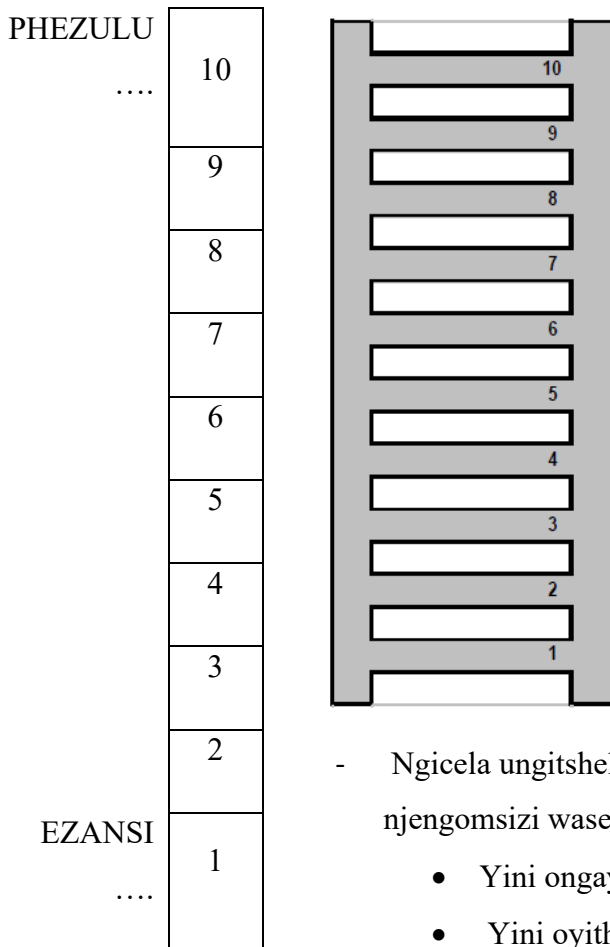
Imininingwane

| | |
|---|--|
| Igama oliphiwayo | |
| Iminyaka | |
| Ubulili | |
| Ubuhlanga | |
| Ubuzwe | |
| Ushadile/Awushadanga/Uhlukanisile | |
| Ibanga lemfundo | |
| Inani leminyaka uhlala eNingizimu Afrika | |
| Inani leminyaka usebenza njengomsizi wasendlini | |
| Uhlobo lomsebenzi owenzayo ngabe, uwumgadi wabantwana noma uyaklina | |
| Ngabe ubhalisiwe kuMnyango Wezabasebenzi (Yebo/Qha) | |
| Ngabe ubhalisiwe kwinyunyana | |

| | |
|---|--|
| yabasebenzi | |
| Uhlala ngaphakathi/Uhlala ngaphandle | |
| (<i>Olala emusebenzini kuphela</i>) Ngabe uhlala endlini yangaphandle/ngabe uhlala endlini phakathi nalaba obasebenzelayo | |
| Uhlobo lomndeni owusebenzelayo (kukhona ubaba nomama endlini/kukhona abazala kanye no-anti/ umzali ozikhulisela umntwana yedwa/olunye uhlobo lomndeni) | |
| Ubuhlanga bomndeni owusebenzelayo(abantu abamnyama/abantu abamhlophe) | |
| Inani lomuholo | |

Power dynamics between DWs and DW DWEs in SA

- Ngicela ungazise kabanzi ukuthi waqala kanjani ukuba umsebenzi wasendlini?
 - Wawuthola kanjani umsebenzi?
 - Ungasho ukuthi ukuba umsebenzi wasendlini kwakuyisinqumo sakho? Yingobani kunjalo/Yingobani kungekho Njalo
 - Uma kungekho njalo, wawufisa ukuba yini? Yingobani ungakwazanga ukuhamba kwizinyathelo zomsebenzi owufisayo?
- Ngabe kusho ukuthini ukuba umsebenzi wasendlini?
 - Uma sibheka leziladi, lapho inamba u-one iphansi bese inamba uten ibe phezulu, uma ubheka leziladi wena ngokwakho ukucabanga uzibona ukephi ngokomsebenzi wakho? Kutheni uzizwa ngaleo ndlela?



- Ngicela ungitshele kabanzi ngezimo ohlangabezana njengomsizi wasendlini?
 - Yini ongayithandi ngomsebenzi wakho?
 - Yini oyithandayo ngomsebenzi wakho?
- Uma ubheka umsebenzi, ngabe eziphi izinto ozibhekayo?

- Isibonelo, uma umuntu omnyama, indiya, noma abamhlophe, omuphi kulaba ongathanda ukumsebenzela. Yingobani?
- If participant worked during the apartheid: – Ngabe mingaphi iminyaka usebenza njengomsebenzi wasendlini? Uma ucabanga indlela noma isimo ebesiyiso phambilini?
 - Ngengoba sesikushilo lokho, ucabanga ukuthi umphathi wakho ukuphatha kanjani manje?
 - Uma ubheka indlela umqashi wakudala owayekuphethe ngayo kusaphethe uhulumeni wengcindezelo, ungathi kuhluke kanjani manje indlela abakuphethe ngayo?
 - Uma ucabanga ngabe yini imbangela eyenze umehluko/ukufana?

Structures of oppression and inequality in the relationship between DWs and DW DWEs

- Uma engase ucabange indlela enikhuluma ngayo ekuseni nomqashi wakho usuzoqala ukusebenza, noma uma kukhona izindawo okumele uzikiline. Ungasho ukuthi kukhona ubudlelwano phakathi kwakho Kanye nomqashi/abaqashi?
 - Ucabanga ukuthi umqashi kanye nomqashwa kumele babe nobudlelwane yini?
 - Uma uvuma, ubudlelwane obunjani okumele babe nabo?
 - Ungabuchaza kanjani ubudlelwane bakho kanye nomqashi wakho?
 - Ngabe ukuphatha kanjani umqashi wakho?
 - Ukuhlala ngaphakathi noma ngaphandle ngabe kunomthelela onjani ebudlelwaneni benu?
 - Uma ucabanga ngendlela abakuphatha ngayo,ucabanga ukuthi yingobani bekuphatha kanjalo?
 - Ucabanga ukuthi kubalulekile yini ukuthi umqashwa avule isifuba asho izimvo zakhe kumqashi wakhe?
 - Uma uvuma/uphika, yingobani ucabanga kanjalo?
 - Ngabe ikhona imingcele ekumele ingeqiwa phakathi komqashi Kanye nomqashwa? Uma ngabe kunjalo ngabe emiphi?
 - Ucabanga ukuthi ukuvulela umqashi wakho isifuba kulula noma kunzima?
 - Kutheni kulula/kunzima

- Ucabanga ukuthi kungalula ukuvuleleka ukukhuluma ngezinto abangazithandi noma kungaba nzima okanye kubelula. Kwenziwa yini lokho?
- Akesikhulume kabanzi ngobudlelwane onabo nomqashi wakho. Uma ukhuluma nomqashi wakho, ngabe ukubiza /nibizana kanjani? (madam,basi,anti,igeli,noma usebenzisa igama lomqashwa,elesizulu noma elesingisi)
 - Nafika kanjani lana?
- Unazo izinsuku zokuphumula? Uma unazo ngabe eziphi?
- Izinqumo ezihambisana nezinsuku zakho zokuphumula ngabe zikhishwa kanjani?
- Ubani futhi othatha izinqumo mayelana nokungena Kanye nokuphuma kwakho emsebenzini?
- Ngabe unabo ubudlelwane nabanye bomndeni bomqashi wakho?
- Ngabe bunjani ubudlelwane namanye amalunga omndeni?
- Uzibona uyingxenye yomndeni noma cha?
- Kusho ukuthi ukuba ilunga lomndeni?
- Uke uzithole udinelwe umqashi wakho? Uma uvuma, ngabe wenzani noma wenze njani ukulungisa lesi simo?

Narratives of self-worth and self-determination

- Ungawuchaza kanjani umsebenzi wokusiza endlini?
 - Ucabanga ukuthi umsebenzi obalulekile? Ingobani ucabanga kanjalo/ungacabangi kanjalo?
 - Uma ucabanga amakhaya Kanye nemindeni osuke wayisebenzela phambilini Kanye nalena oyisebenzelayo manje, ngabe ucabanga ukuthi kwaba yini umthelela wakho? (Isibonelo,ngabe umama uyakwazi ukuya emsebenzini ngaphandle kokuthi akhathazeke ngoba kukhona umuntu ozonakekela umntwana wakhe? Bayakwazi ukubungaza imicimbi ababengahluleka phambilini ungakosebenzi nabo? Ikhona enye indlela?
- Ungakuchaza kanjani ukuba namandla (asisho umfutho kodwa indlela yokuphatha)
 - Ungathi umuntu onjani umuntu unamandla?

- Ungazichaza njengomuntu onawo amandla? Yingobani usho njalo/yingobani uphika?
- Uma sibheka incazelo yakho yamandla, uma ucabanga okwenzayo, ucabanga ukuthi unawo Amandla? Uma kungekho njalo,kwenziwa yini lokho? Uma kunjalo,amaphi lawo mandla?
- Ucabanga ukuthi Amandla akho ukwazi ukuwasebenzisa kuphi lapho uqashwe khona?
- Uwasebenzisa kanjani amandla akho emsebenzini?

10.3 Appendix 3: Interview Guide for DWEs (English)

Note: *the interviews were conversational style to allow participants to be relaxed and to participate as fully as they possibly can. The guide was used with flexibility. Also note that these questions will be used for interviews with the DWEs.*

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I look forward to learning more about you and what you think about certain issues that concern DWs' DWEs like you. For this interview I am interested in your thoughts and experiences as an DWE to DW/s working in South Africa. Please feel free to talk openly about your experiences and thoughts.

Demographical Data

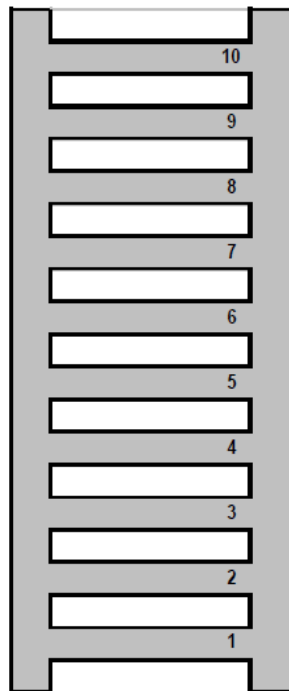
| | |
|--|--|
| Pseudonym | |
| Age | |
| Gender | |
| Race | |
| Nationality | |
| Marital Status | |
| Level of Education | |
| *Number of years living in SA | |
| Occupation | |
| Is your DW registered with DoL (Y/N) | |
| Is your DW registered with a workers' union (Y/N) | |
| Is your DW Live-in/Live-out (Y/N) | |
| (Only live-in) (Y/N) Does your DW occupy an outside room/main house bedroom | |
| Your family type (nuclear/extended/single parent/ other) / the number of members | |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Race of family (Black African/White) | |
| Income paid to DW | |

Power dynamics between DWs and DW DWEs in SA

- Please tell me on how you became an DWE of a DW?
 - How did you find your DW?
- What does it mean being a DW DWE to you?
 - Looking at this ladder, where one is at the bottom and ten is at its highest, at which step of the ladder would you say you are at when you think about the role of your DW in your home and in your life? Why do you feel that way?

| | |
|----------|----|
| TOP | 10 |
| | 9 |
| | 8 |
| | 7 |
| | 6 |
| | 5 |
| | 4 |
| | 3 |
| | 2 |
| BOTTOM | 1 |
| | |



- Please tell me more about your experiences as an DWE of DW/s?
 - What do don't you like about it? (Probe on the stressors, disadvantages, challenges etc.)
 - What do you like about it? (Probe on benefits, privileges, any other aspects that strike as potential for positive in the conversation etc.)

- When you are looking for a DW, what are some of the things you consider before hiring?
 - Probe whether race is something they would consider - e.g. If a Black African, Indian, White applied for a job, which would you be more likely hire? Why?
 - Probe on whether nationality/ethnicity is something they consider important and why?
 - Probe on whether age is something they consider important and why?
 - Probe on the kind of personality they prefer (bubbly, shy etc.) and why?
 - Probe on the DW having children?
 - Probe on whether religion is something they consider important and why?
- If the participant has hired a DW during the apartheid: – How long did you have a DW for during that time? If you think about the way your relationship was with your DW [say the period], would you say it is any different now?
 - If different, please elaborate on how different is it?
 - What do you think influenced these differences/similarities?

Structures of oppression and inequality in the relationship between DWs and DW DWEs

- If you were to think about how you and your DW interact in the mornings when she comes in to start work, or when you want her to clean certain areas in the house etc. Would you say there is a relationship between you and your DW?
 - Do you think that you should have a relationship with your DW?
 - If yes, what type of relationship do you think you have with your DW?
 - How would you describe your relationship with your DW?
 - How does your DW treat you?
 - How do you think living-in/living-out influences your relationship?
 - When thinking about the treatment that you receive from your DW, why do you think you get treated the way you do? (*probe on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, culture or any other intersectional lines*)

- Do you think opening up about things that an employee is not happy with to the DWE is important?
- If yes/no, why do you think that way?
- Are there any boundaries (things you feel should not be shared) in the things that an employee should share with their DW? If so, what are some of these things?
- Do you feel like your DW finds it easy to open up to you?
 - Why is it easy/ difficult?
 - What kind of things does our DW share with you?
 - Do you find it easy or difficult to open up about the things that you don't like or how you want things to be done in your home? What are the reasons for this?
 - Probe on whether being a *woman/Black African/Christian/Shona/foreign etc.* would make it easier or more difficult for DWs to open up about things they don't like at work (DWE's home)? Why is that?
 - Probe on whether being a *woman/Black African/Christian/Shona/foreign etc.* would make it easier or more difficult for DWEs to open up about things they don't like that the DW does? Why is that?
- Describe to me what is your communication like with your DW/s?
 - So when you speak to your DW, how do you address each other? (Madam, baas, maid, girly, employee's name [vernacular name or English name] etc.)
 - How did this come about? (probe if it's something they agreed on/discussed [can be interpreted as a level of respect/ flexibility in that dynamic] or was it a prescribed thing [no discussion involved, clear boundaries set indicating clear power dynamics])
- Does your DW have leave days? How many and how are they structured?
- How are decisions made about her leave days?
- What about the decision of the time of coming to work and leaving work?

- Would you say that your DW has a relationship with your other family members?
- How is the relationship with any other members in the household?
- Would you say you have a relationship with your DW's family members?
- Do you see your DW as part of your family or not?
- What does being part of the family mean to you?
- Do you ever get upset with your DW? If yes, what do you do or how do you deal with being upset with them?

Narratives of self-worth and self-determination

- How would you describe domestic work as a job? (Probe on who deserves this job etc.)
 - Do you think it is an important job? Why/why not?
 - Thinking of the time you have had a DW/s and the one that currently works for you, what do you think their contribution has been? (E.g. flexibility at work, productivity, focus etc.? Are you able to celebrate events that you could have struggled to celebrate before you hired a DW? Other ways?)

- How would you define power?
 - What kind of person would you describe as a person that has power?
 - Would you describe yourself as someone that has power? Why/why not?
 - Based on your description of power, and thinking about your position as an DWE, do you think you have power? If not, why not? / If so, please describe that power to me?
 - Where do you think you exercise your power in the context of your home? (You as the DWE and the DWs as the employee?)
 - How do you exercise your power in your house?

10.4 Appendix 4: Interview Guide for DWEs (IsiZulu)

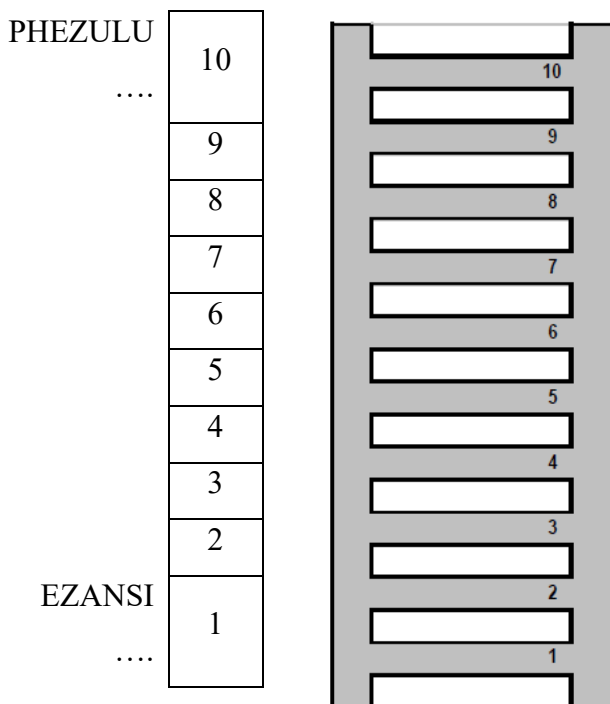
Siyabonga kakhulu ngokuthi uvume ukuba ingxenye yalolu cwaningo. Ngikulangazelele ukuthi ngifunde kabanzi ngawe nangokuthi ucabangani ngezimo ezithile eziphathelene nabasenzi basezindlini njenganawe. Kulengxoxo, ngikulangazelele ukwazi ngemicabango yakho nangezimo odlule kuzo nalezi osabhekene nazo njengomusebenzi wasendlini ohlala eningizimu Afrika. Ngicela uzizwe wamukelekile ukuphefumula konke ngezimo odlule kuzona nokungicacisela kabanzi ngemicabanga yakho. Yazi ukuthi wamukelekile ukungimisa, ungibuze imibuzo nawe.

Imininingwane

| | |
|---|--|
| Igama oliphiwayo | |
| Iminyaka | |
| Ubulili | |
| Ubuhlanga | |
| Ubuzwe | |
| Ushadile/Awushadanga/Uhlukanisile | |
| Ibanga lemfundo | |
| Inani leminyaka uhlala eNingizimu Afrika (uma ungasiye wase Ningizimu ngokokuzalwa) | |
| Umusebenzi wakho umubhalisiwe emnyango wezokusebenza (Yebo/Cha) | |
| Umusebenzi wakho uyingxenye yenyunyane (Yebo/Cha) | |
| Umusebenzi wakho uyalala noma ugoduka njalo ngosuku (Yebo/Cha) | |
| (Olala emusebenzini) Umusebenzi wakho uhlala ngaphakathi nani endlini/unegumbi lakhe ngaphandle | |
| Niwuhlobo luni lomndeni (kukhona ubaba | |

| | |
|---|--|
| nomama endlini/kukhona abazala kanye no-anti/ umzali ozikhulisela umntwana yedwa/enye inhlobo yomndeni) | |
| Ubuhlanga lomundeni wakho (abantu abamnyama/abantu abamhlophe) | |
| Iholo oliholayo kowakho umusebenzi | |
| Oyiholela umusebenzi wakho | |

- Ngicela ungazise kabanzi ukuthi waqala kanjani ukuba umqashi womumsebenzi wasendlini?
 - Wamuthola kanjani umuntu okusebenzelayo?
- Ngabe kusho ukuthini ukuba umsebenzi wasendlini?
 - Uma sibheka leziladi, lapho inamba u-one iphansi bese inamba uten ibe phezulu, uma ubheka leziladi wena ngokwakho ukucabanga uzibona ukephi uma ucabanga ngomuntu okusebenzelayo nangomusebenzi awenzayo? Kutheni uzizwa ngaleyo ndlela?



- Ngicela ungitshele kabanzi ngezimo ohlangabezana njengomqashi womsebenzi wasendlini?
 - Yini ongayithandi ngesikhundla sakho?

- Yini oyithandayo ngesikhundla sakho?
- Uma ubheka umuntu ozomqasha, ngabe eziphi izinto ozibhekayo?
 - Isibonelo, uma umuntu omnyama, indiya, noma abamhlophe, omuphi kulaba ongathanda ukuthi akusebenzele. Yingobani? Probe whether race is something they would consider: e.g. If a Black African, Indian, White applied for a job, which would you be more likely hire? Why
 - Kungenzeka yini ukuthi ubuzwe noma uhlanga kuyinto oyibona ibalulekile? Kungani?
 - Iminyaka yona ibalulekile? Kungani?
 - Uyaye uthande umuntu othulayo noma oyiqhalaqhala? Kungani?
 - Inkolo yona kungabe yinto oyibhekayo? Kungani?
- **If the participant has hired a DW during the apartheid:* Yabamingaki iminyaka umuqashile umuntu wasendlini? Uma ucabanga indlela noma isimo subudlelwane benu, ungasho yini uthi kukhona into ehluke manje kunesikhathi saphambilini?
 - Uma kuhlukile, ngicela uchaze kuhluke ngani?
 - Uma ucabanga ngabe yini imbangela eyenze umehluko/ukufana?

Structures of oppression and inequality in the relationship between DWs and DW DWEs

- Uma ucabanga indlela enikhuluma ngayo nomsebenzi wakho uma ezoqala ukusebenza, noma uma kukhona izindawo okumele azikiline. Ungasho ukuthi kukhona ubudlelwano phakathi kwakho naye?
 - Ucabanga ukuthi umqashi kanye nomqashwa kumele babe nobudlelwane yini?
 - Uma uvuma, ubudlelwane obunjani okumele babe nabo?
 - Ungabuchaza kanjani ubudlelwane bakho kanye nomsebenzi wakho?
 - Ukuphatha kanjani yena lo okusebenzelayo?
 - Ucabanga ukuthi kunomthelela muphi ebudlelwaneni benu ukuhlala komsebenzi kwakho /ukugoduka zonke izinsuku?
 - Uma ucabanga indlela akuphatha ngayo umsebenzi wakho, kungani ekuphatha ngalendlela akuphatha ngayo? (**probe on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, culture or any other intersectional lines*)

- Ucabanga ukuthi kubalulekile yini ukuthi umqashwa avule isifuba asho izimvo zakhe kumqashi wakhe?
- Uma uvuma/uphika, yingobani ucabanga kanjalo?
- Ngabe ikhona imingcele ekumele ingeqiwa phakathi komqashi Kanye nomqashwa? Uma ngabe kunjalo ngabe emiphi?
- Ucabanga ukuthi kulula kangakanani kumsebenzi wakho ukuvula isifuba?
 - Kungani kulula/kunzima?
 - Makwenzekile wavula isifuba umusebenzi wakho, iziphi izinto ake akhulume ngazo?
 - Ukuthola kulula kangakanani ukuthi ukhulume ngezinto ezingakuthokozisi eziphathelene nomsebenzi wakho? Kungani ucabange ngalendlela.
 - **Probe on whether being a woman/Black African/Christian/Shona/foreign etc. would make it easier or more difficult for DWs to open up about things they don't like at work (DWE's home)? Why is that?*
 - **Probe on whether being a woman/Black African/Christian/Shona/foreign etc. would make it easier or more difficult for DWEs to open up about things they don't like that the DW does? Why is that?*
- Akesikhulume kabanzi ngobudlelwane onabo nomqashi wakho. Uma ukhuluma nomqashi wakho, ngabe ukubiza /nibizana kanjani? (madam,basi,anti,igeli,noma usebenzisa igama lomqashwa,elesizulu noma elesingisi)
- Describe to me what is your communication like with your DW/s?
 - Nanquma kanjani ukubizana ngalendlela? (**probe if it's something they agreed on/discussed [can be interpreted as a level of respect/flexibility in that dynamic] or was it a prescribed thing [no discussion involved, clear boundaries set indicating clear power dynamics]*)
- Unazo izinsuku zokuphumula umusebenzi wakho? Uma enazo, ngabe zingaki/eziphi?

- Izinqumo ezihambisana nezinsuku zakhe zokuphumula ngabe nifika kanjani kuzo?
- Ubani futhi othatha izinqumo mayelana nokungena kanye nokuphuma kwakhe emsebenzini?
- Ngabe umsebenzi wakho unabo ubudlelwane nabanye bomndeni wakho?
- Ngabe kunjani ubudlelwane anabo namanye amalunga omndeni?
- Uma uthatha ukubheka, umubona umsebenzi wakho eyingxenye yomndeni wakho noma cha?
- Uma ethe yebo, kusho ukuthi ukuba ilunga lomndeni ngesingawe?
- Uke uzithole udinelwe umsebenzi wakho? Uma uvuma, ngabe wenzani noma wenze njani ukulungisa lesi simo? Kuyaye kukusize kanjani?
-

Narratives of self-worth and self-determination

- Ungawuchaza kanjani umsebenzi wokusiza endlini? (*Probe on who deserves this job etc.*)
 - Ucabanga ukuthi umsebenzi obalulekile? Ingobani ucabanga kunjalo/ungacabangi kunjalo?
 - Uma ucabanga isikhathi esidlule ubenabasizi basendlini noma yena lo okusiza manje, ucabanga ukuthi kwaba/kuba yini umthelela wakhe/wabo? (Isibonelo, ngabe umama/ubaba uyakwazi ukuya emsebenzini ngaphandle kokuthi akhathazeke ngoba kukhona umuntu ozonakekela umntwana wakhe/ abantwana bakhe? Bayakwazi ukubungaza imicimbi ababengahluleka phambilini engakobi nomsizi wasendlini? ngezine izindlela?
- Ungakuchaza kanjani ukuba namandla (asisho umfutho kodwa indlela yokuphatha)
 - Ungathi umuntu onjani umuntu unamandla?
 - Ungazichaza njengomuntu onawo amandla? Yingobani usho njalo/yingobani uphika?
 - Uma sibheka incazelo yakho yamandla, uma ucabanga isikhundla sakho njengomqashi, ucabanga ukuthi unawo amandla? Uma kungekho njalo, kwenziwa yini lokho? Uma kunjalo, amaphi lawo mandla?
 - Ucabanga ukuthi amandla akho njengomqashi womsebenzi wasendlini ukwazi ukuwasebenzisa kweziphi izinto/izimo ekhaya lakho?

- Uwasebenzisa kanjani amandla akho ekhaya (ikhaya lakho liwumusebenzi kumqashi wakho)?

10.5 Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion Guide for DWs (English)

Note: the FGDs were conversational style to allow participants to be relaxed and to participate as fully as they possibly can. The guide was used with flexibility. Also note that these questions will be used for interviews and focus group discussions with DWs.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I look forward to learning more about you and what you think about certain issues that concern DWs like you. For this interview I am interested in your thoughts and experiences as a DW working in South Africa. Please feel free to talk openly about your experiences and thoughts, and you are welcomed to ask me questions.

Demographical Data

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Age | |
| Marital Status | |
| Level of Education | |
| Number of years working as a DW in SA | |
| Income | |

Becoming a DW

1. Please tell me how you became a DW.

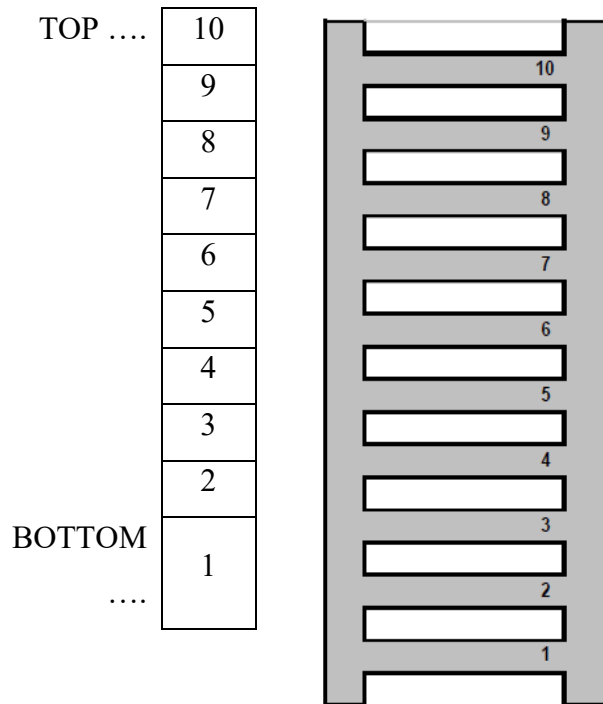
- How did you find out about the job?
- Was it a choice for you to be a DW? Why or why not?

- If not, what did you want to be? Why did you not pursue that path of work?

Experiences as a DW

2. What does being a DW mean to you?

- Using this ladder, where one is at the bottom and ten is at its highest, at which step of the ladder would you say you are when you think about your job? Why do you feel that way?



3. Please tell me more about your experiences as a DW.

- What don't you like about your job? (Probe on stressors, disadvantages, challenges, etc.)
- What do you like about your job? (Probe on benefits, privileges, positive aspects, etc.)
- When you are looking for a job, what are some of the things you consider?
- Would you consider the race of your DWE? For example, if a Black African, Indian, or White person offered you a job, which would you be more likely to work for? Why?

Structures of Oppression and Inequality

4. Interaction with DWEs:

- How do you and your DWE interact in the mornings or when you have to clean certain areas in the house? Would you say there is a relationship between you and your DWE?

- Do you think an employee should have a relationship with their DWE? What type of relationship should it be?

- How would you describe your relationship with your DWE? How do they treat you?

- How does living in or living out influence your relationship with your DWE?

5. Treatment and Communication:

- Why do you think you get treated the way you do? (Probe on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, culture, etc.)

- Do you think opening up to your DWE about things you're unhappy with is important? Why or why not?

- Are there any boundaries in what an employee should share with their DWE? If so, what are they?

- Do you find it easy or difficult to open up to your DWE? Why is that? Does being a woman, Black African, Christian, Shona, foreign, etc., influence this?

6. Describe your communication with your DWE:

- How do you address each other? (Madam, baas, maid, girly, employee's name, etc.)

- How did this come about? Was it discussed or prescribed?

- Do you have leave days? What are they?

- How are decisions about your leave days made?

- How is the decision about your work hours made?

7. Relationship with Other Household Members:

- Do you have a relationship with other family members?

- How is the relationship with other members in the household?

- Do you see yourself as part of the family? What does being part of the family mean to you?

- Do you ever get upset with your DWE? If yes, what do you do or how do you deal with it?

Narratives of Self-Worth and Self-Determination

8. How would you describe domestic work as a job? (Probe on who deserves this job, etc.)

- Do you think it is an important job? Why or why not?

- Thinking of the homes and families you have worked for, what do you think your contribution has been? (E.g., enabling the mother to work, celebrating events, etc.)

9. Defining Power:

- How would you define power?
- What kind of person would you describe as someone that has power?
- Would you describe yourself as someone that has power? Why or why not?
- Based on your description of power, do you think you have power in your job? If not, why not? If so, what is that power?
- Where and how do you exercise your power at work?

10.6 Appendix 6: Focus Group Discussion Guide for DWs (IsiZulu)

Note: the FGDs were conversational style to allow participants to be relaxed and to participate as fully as they possibly can. The guide was used with flexibility. Also note that these questions will be used for interviews and focus group discussions with DWs.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I look forward to learning more about you and what you think about certain issues that concern DWs like you. For this interview I am interested in your thoughts and experiences as a DW working in South Africa. Please feel free to talk openly about your experiences and thoughts, and you are welcomed to ask me questions.

Demographical Data

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Age | |
| Marital Status | |
| Level of Education | |
| Number of years working as a DW in SA | |
| Income | |

Becoming a DW

1. Please tell me how you became a DW.

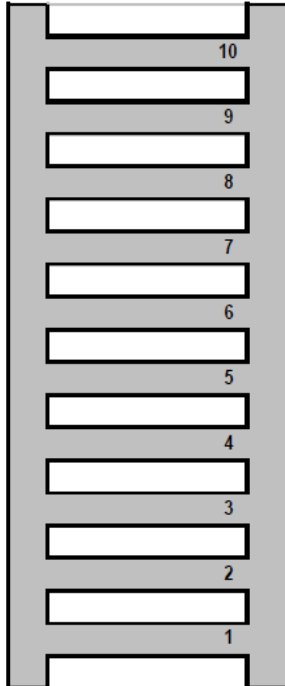
- How did you find out about the job?
- Was it a choice for you to be a DW? Why or why not?
- If not, what did you want to be? Why did you not pursue that path of work?

Experiences as a DW

2. What does being a DW mean to you?

- Using this ladder, where one is at the bottom and ten is at its highest, at which step of the ladder would you say you are when you think about your job? Why do you feel that way?

| | |
|----------|----|
| TOP | 10 |
| | 9 |
| | 8 |
| | 7 |
| | 6 |
| | 5 |
| | 4 |
| | 3 |
| | 2 |
| BOTTOM | 1 |
| | |



3. Please tell me more about your experiences as a DW.

- What don't you like about your job? (Probe on stressors, disadvantages, challenges, etc.)
- What do you like about your job? (Probe on benefits, privileges, positive aspects, etc.)
- When you are looking for a job, what are some of the things you consider?
- Would you consider the race of your DWE? For example, if a Black African, Indian, or White person offered you a job, which would you be more likely to work for? Why?

Structures of Oppression and Inequality

4. Interaction with DWEs:

- How do you and your DWE interact in the mornings or when you have to clean certain areas in the house? Would you say there is a relationship between you and your DWE?
- Do you think an employee should have a relationship with their DWE? What type of relationship should it be?
- How would you describe your relationship with your DWE? How do they treat you?
- How does living in or living out influence your relationship with your DWE?

5. Treatment and Communication:

- Why do you think you get treated the way you do? (Probe on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, culture, etc.)

- Do you think opening up to your DWE about things you're unhappy with is important? Why or why not?

- Are there any boundaries in what an employee should share with their DWE? If so, what are they?

- Do you find it easy or difficult to open up to your DWE? Why is that? Does being a woman, Black African, Christian, Shona, foreign, etc., influence this?

6. Describe your communication with your DWE:

- How do you address each other? (Madam, baas, maid, girly, employee's name, etc.)

- How did this come about? Was it discussed or prescribed?

- Do you have leave days? What are they?

- How are decisions about your leave days made?

- How is the decision about your work hours made?

7. Relationship with Other Household Members:

- Do you have a relationship with other family members?

- How is the relationship with other members in the household?

- Do you see yourself as part of the family? What does being part of the family mean to you?

- Do you ever get upset with your DWE? If yes, what do you do or how do you deal with it?

Narratives of Self-Worth and Self-Determination

8. How would you describe domestic work as a job? (Probe on who deserves this job, etc.)

- Do you think it is an important job? Why or why not?

- Thinking of the homes and families you have worked for, what do you think your contribution has been? (E.g., enabling the mother to work, celebrating events, etc.)

9. Defining Power:

- How would you define power?

- What kind of person would you describe as someone that has power?
- Would you describe yourself as someone that has power? Why or why not?
- Based on your description of power, do you think you have power in your job? If not, why not? If so, what is that power?
- Where and how do you exercise your power at work?

10.7 Appendix 7: Information sheet and consent form for Interviews with DWs (English)

Unravelling the dynamics of power in the DWE-DW relations in contemporary South Africa, Kwa-Zulu Natal: Praxis-oriented research.

Who am I?

Hello, I am Thobeka Ntini. I am a PhD student registered with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My student number is 2115 01327, and this research project is purely for academic reasons as a social work PhD student.

What am I doing?

My intention is to understand your views and experiences as a DW in the new South Africa. I would like to learn from you about your own understanding of the work that you do and its importance. I would also appreciate it if you could share with me your positive and negative experiences as a DW. It would be nice if you can also talk more about the kind of relationship you have with your DWE/s. If there are any challenges that you have experienced or currently experiencing, I would also like to know more about the things that help you get through them.

Your Participation

I am asking you whether you would participate in a 1-2 minimum series of individual interviews taking place at a location chosen and time for your convenience. These interviews will be about an hour each, in which we will have a conversation together that will be guided by a number of questions I have prepared. The type of conversation we will have will need you to think deeply about your life (both in the past and present) as a DW. During the interview you are allowed to ask me as many questions as you like related to the study.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate,

you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to continue. If you do this, there will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

Confidentiality

All identifying information will be stored on my personal computer in a password protected folder. It would be destroyed within five years upon completion of my study. Though your participation in this study would be strictly confidential and anonymous by all possible means, it may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the ethics committee at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and my research supervisor (all of these people are required to keep your identity confidential). Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

I am asking you to give me permission to audio record the interviews so that I can accurately record what is said. Data from the interviews will be stored electronically in a password-protected folder on my computer and used for research or academic purposes now or at a later date, in ways that will not reveal who you are. All future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Committee review and approval.

Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your responses will be linked to a pseudonym (another name) and we will refer to you in this way in the transcripts, any publication, report or other study output.

Risks/discomforts

At the present time, I do not see any risk of harm from your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those we face in daily life. However please feel free to share any discomfort with me anytime (before, during and after the interview). Should you experience any emotional distress or discomfort during the interview, you are welcome to stop me immediately. I will be willing to assist you by being there for you at that time, and by referring you for further assistance if necessary.

Benefits

While there are no guaranteed benefits to you from participating in this study, you have an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences on a number of things related to domestic

work and your personal experience as a DW. Your participation will also help me and policy makers understand what kind of interventions are effective for DWs in South Africa. Though there will be no monetary compensation for your participation, if you had to travel to meet with me at your chosen location, you will be reimbursed to a maximum of R100 for each interview attended for transportation costs.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the UKZN Research Ethics Committee (REC). If you have concerns or questions about the research before, during or after the interview/s, you could contact me (Thobeka Ntini) via a mobile call/WhatsApp/send a ‘please call me’ at (██████████) or send me an email to 211501327@stu.ukzn.ac.za. If you would like to talk to someone other than me about; (1) concerns regarding this study, (2) your rights, or (3) other human subjects’ issues, please contact: The Chair of the UKZN REC, Dr Shenuka Singh at (031) 260 8591 or via E-mail at singhshen@ukzn.ac.za.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

CONSENT

I have read the above information and each aspect of the information has been explained to me. I have received answers to any questions I asked. I hereby agree to participate in research on understanding the dynamics of power in the DWE-DW relations in contemporary South Africa. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue, and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a PhD research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

Your Name (printed) _____ Date _____

Your Signature _____

AUDIO-RECORDING

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

DATA CURATION

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study. Records related to this study will also be kept as per university policy for a period of five years after which these shall be destroyed.

10.8 Appendix 8: Information sheet and consent form for Interviews with DWs (IsiZulu)

Ukucubungula igalelo lesikhundla namandla ebudlelwaneni phakathi komqashi nomusebenzi wasendlini esikhathini samanje esiphila kuso eningizimu Afrika, KwaZulu Natali: Ucwaningo oluhlosa ukuguqula ulwazi oluvelele.

Ngingubani?

Sawubona, igama ngingu Thobeka Ntini. Ngingumfundi obhalise eNyuvesi yakwaZulu Natali, eThekwini. Inombolo yami yokubhalisa ithi 2115 01327, lolucwaningo lwenziwelwa izizathu zokuphothula iziqu zami zobudokotela ezifundweni zezehlalakahle.

Ngenza ini?

Inhloso yami ukuqonda imibono yakho kanye nezimo odlula/le kuzona njengomusebenzi wasezindlini. Ngingathanda ukufunda kuwe ngendlela oqonda ngayo umusebenzi owenziwa abasebenza ezindlini nokubaluleka kwawo noma nabo. Ngingathanda ke futhi uma ungase ungixoxele ngezinto ezinhle nezimbi okewabhekana nazo njengomusebenzi wasendlini. Ngingajabula uma ungase ukhulume ngokuphilisana kwakho nalo okuqashile. Uma kukhona izingqinamba odlule kuzona noma obhekene nazo njengamanje, ngingathokoza uma ungangixoxela ngazo nangezindlela odlula kuzona.

Ukuba yingxenye yaloluphenyo

Ngikucela ukuthi ubeyingxenye yengxoxo phakathi kwami nabanye ozakwenu abasebenza ezindlini. Lezizingxoxo zizokwenzelwa eNyuvesi yakwaZulu Natali, eHoward College ngesikhathi esizovumelana ngaso. Lengxoxo izoba namalunga ayisishiyaga lombili kuyela kwishumi. Wonke lamalungunga, ngibala nawe, ngizobe ngixoxisene nawo ngaphambilini. Lengxoxo ibaliselwa ehoreni elilodwa nemizuzu eimashumi amathathu. Ingxoxo izoholwa imibuzo engiyilungisile kanye nemibuzo eniqhamuka nayo. Lengxoxo izodinga ukuthi ukhiphe uvo lwakho ngezimo eziphathelene nobudlelwane babaqashi kanye nabasebenza ezindlini. Ungakhuluma ngeyakho impilo futhi wamukelekile ukuthi ukhulume nangokubone kwenzeka. Ngesikhathi sengxoxo noma ingakaqali futhi, wamukelekile ukungibuza imibuzo emayelana nalolucwaningo.

Ngicela uqonde ukuthi **ukuba yingxenye yaloluphenyo uzinikela ngokwakho** futhi awuphoqiwe ukuthi ubeyingxenye. Uma ukhetha ukungabi yingxenye yaloluphenyo, ngeke kubenomthelela omubi ngenxa yesinqumo osithathile. Uma uvuma ukubayingxenye, uvumelekile ukuhoxa ekubeni ingxenye yalolucwaningo nanoma ingasiphi isikhathi. Ngeke kubekhona ukuhlukumezeka noma umuthelala omubi ngesinqumo sokuhoxa ekubeni yingxenye yalolucwaningo.

Imfihlo

Yonke imininingwane izobekwa kwikhompuyutha yami kwifayela elivalwe ngezinombolo ezaziwa yimi kuphela. Emuva kwesikhathi esingange minyaka emihlanu sekuphele uphenyo, izoshiswa noma idilithwe. Noma ngabe ukuba kwakho yingxenye yalolu cwaningo kuyimfihlo futhi sifihla ngisho igama lakho ngazona zonke izindlela esingakwazi ngazo, kungenzeka ibhekwe ngabantu ababhekelela ukuthi ucwaningo lenziwa ngendlela ecophelele nesezingeni eliphezulu, laba abathu abangamalunga ekomidi lemithethosisekelo

yezocwaningo eNyuvesi yakwa Zulu Natali kanye nongumbhekeleli walolucwaningo (bonke labantu kumele bagcine igama lakho liyimfihlo). Ngaphandle kwemvume yakho yokunikeza abanye abantu imininingwane yakho yangempela, izohlala ikubantu abasebenza ngalolucwaningo kuphela.

Ngiyakucela ukuthi unginike imvume yokuqopha izwi lakho ngesikhathi sezingxoxo zethu ukuze ngikwazi ukubhala into oyishilo injengoba injalo. Imininingwane ezobe iphuma kulengxoxo nayo izofihlwa kwifayela elidinga inamba eyaziwa yimi kuphela.

Lemininingwane igcinelwa izinhloso zezemfundo okwamanje noma esikhathini esizayo. Izogcinwa ngendlela engeke ikhombise ubuwena. Konke ukusetshenziswa kwemininingwane esikhathini esizayo izobhekwa futhi ithole imvume ekomidini lemithethosisekelo yezocwaningo.

Khumbula ukuthi igama lakho langampela ngeke libhalwe futhi akekho oyokwazi ukuthi uwena obukhuluma ezingxoxweni. Izimpendulo zakho zizoxhunyaniswa negama lakho engizokuqamba lona. Uma ngikhuluma ezinkomfeni, noma ngibhala amaphepha wezemfundo noma ukubhala imibiko ngizosebenzisa igama lakho engizokupha lona. Kubalulekile ukuthi ngicacise ukuthi ingxoxo esizoba nayo izobe iseqenjini, ngakhoke anginaso isiqiniseko sokuthi esizokuxoxa namanye amalunga ngeke kuphumele ngaphandle. Kodwa-ke, nginxusa lonke ilunga leqembu ukuthi esikukhuluma kuleligumbi kuphelele la. Ngenxa yalesisimo esingaphezulu kwamandla ami, ngicela ungakhulumi ngento ebucayi ethinta wena uqobo kuleliqembu.

Ubungozi/ukungakhululeki

Okwamanje angiyiboni into ewubungozi ngokuba yingxenye yalolucwaningo.

Ukuba kulolucwaningo alinabungozi obudlula izimo eziyingozi esibhekana nazo zonke izinsuku zokuphila kwethu. Noma kunjalo, ngicela ukhululeke ukungitshela uma ungakhululekile ngokubayingxenye yalolucwaningo (ungasho ngaphambi kokuqala ingxoxo, phakathi nayo noma isiphelile). Uma uzizwa ungaphathekile kahle emoyeni phakathi nengxoxo, ungangimisa ngalesoskhathi. Ngizobengizimisele ngokukusiza nokuthi ngibekhona ukukulalela, nanokuthi ngikudlulisele kwabangakusiza uma sikhona isidingo.

Izinzuzo

Azikho izinzuzo ezisheshayo eziza kuwe ngokubamba iqhaza kulolu cwaningo. Kodwa ke, lolu cwaningo luyoba usizo kakhulu kimina ngokuthi ngithemba ukuthi ngizokhuthaza ukuqonda izindlela ezingalungela abaqashi babasebenzi basezindlini kanye nabasebenza ezindlini. Uma ungathanda ukuthola ukuthi ucwaningo luhambe kanjani, sizobhala inombolo yakho yocingo ephepheni eliseceleni futhi singakuthumela imiphumela yocwaningo uma seluqedliwe emva kwesikhashana ubambe iqhaza. Noma kungeke kube nesinxephezelo ngokubayingxenye yalolucwaningo, uma bekumele ugibele ukuze sihlngane endaweni ekhethwe nguwe, uzonikezwa imali engadlulile enanini elingango R100 kuzona zonke izingxoxo ozophumelela kuzo.

Ubani ongathintana naye uma ungaphathekanga kahle noma unokukukhathazayo

Lolu cwaningo lugunyazwe yiKomidi elibhekelele ubulungiswa lase-UKZN Research Ethics Committee (REC). Uma unezikhalazo mayelana nobulungiswa bocwaningo noma uzizwa ukuthi awuphathekanga kahle nganoma iyiphi indlela ngokubamba kwakho iqhaza kulolu cwaningo, sicela ushayele inombolo yomlawuli wase- UKZN REC, uDokotela Shenuka Singh ku (031) 260 8591 noma ngemeyili ku-singhshen@ukzn.ac.za.

Uma unokukukhathazayo noma imibuzo mayelana nocwaningo ungashayela umholi wocwaningo uNkosazana Thobeka Ntini ku [REDACTED], 211501327@ukzn.ac.za. Ngiyatholakala futhi naku WhatsApp noma ungithumelele u-‘please call me’ ngizobe sengiyakufonela ngokushesha.

Uzonikezwa ikhophi yaleli fomu ukuze uzigcinele ngokwakho.

Imvume

Ngifundile yonke imininingwane esemakhasini adlule, futhi konke kuchaziwe kabanzi kimina ngolwimi engilizwayo. Ngizitholile izimpendulo zemibuzo engiyibuzile. Ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza ocwaningweni lokuqoqa ulwazi ngobudlelwano phakathi komqashi nomusebenzi wasendlini esikhathini samanje esiphila kuso eningizimu Afrika. Ngiyaqonda

ukuthi ngibamba iqhaza ngokukhululekile futhi ngingaphoqelekile nganoma iyiphi indlela yokwenza kanjalo. Ngiphinde ngiqonde ukuthi ngiyakwazi ukuyeka ukubamba iqhaza nanoma inini uma ngingasathandi ukuqhubeka nokuthi lesi sinqumo ngeke singithinte kabi ngandlela-thile. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi lolu ucwaningo olungenhloso yalo ukuzuzisa mina uqobo ngesikhathi esifuSheela. Ngiyazi ukuthi lolucwaningo lwenziwelwa izizathu zokuphuthula iziqu zobudokotela ezifundweni zezenhlalakahle. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukubamba kwami iqhaza kuzohlala kuyimfihlo.

Igama lakho _____ Usuku _____

Iseginisha _____

IMVUME YOKUQOPHA

Ngiyavuma ukuthi kuqoshwe ukubamba kwami iqhaza ocwaningweni

Iseginisha _____ Usuku _____

UKUGCINA UCWANINGO

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi imininingwane engininike yona izobekwa kwikhompuyutha isetshenziselwe inhloso yocwaningo manje noma esikhathini esizayo.

Iseginisha _____ Usuku _____

Leliphepha lesivumelwano lizogcinwa umucwaningi iminyaka emihlanu emuva kokuthi ucwaningo luphele. Imininingwane kanye nokuqoshiwe okuthinta lolucwaningo lizogcinwa iminyaka emihlanu, ekuyiminyaka egunyazwe inyuvesi ngaphambi kokuthi ichithwe.

10.9 Appendix 9: Information sheet and consent form for Interviews with DWEs (English)

Unravelling the dynamics of power in the employer-domestic work relations in contemporary South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal: Praxis-oriented research.

Who am I?

Hello, I am Thobeka Ntini. I am a PhD student registered with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My student number is 2115 01327, and this research project is purely for academic reasons as a social work PhD student.

What am I doing?

My intention is to understand your views and experiences as a domestic work employer in the new South Africa. I would like to learn from you about your own understanding of the work that domestic workers do and its importance. I would also appreciate it if you could share with me your positive and negative experiences as a domestic work employer. It would be nice if you can also talk more about the kind of relationship you have with your domestic worker. If there are any challenges that you have experienced or currently experiencing, I would also like to know more about them and how you get through them.

Your Participation

I am asking you whether you would participate in a 1-2 minimum series of individual interviews taking place at a location chosen and time for your convenience. These interviews will be about an hour each, in which we will have a conversation together that will be guided by a number of questions I have prepared. The type of conversation we will have will need you to think deeply about your life (both in the past and present) as a domestic work employer. During the interview you are allowed to ask me as many questions as you like related to the study.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to continue. If you do this, there will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

Confidentiality

All identifying information will be stored on my personal computer in a password protected folder. It would be destroyed within five years upon completion of my study. Though your participation in this study would be strictly confidential and anonymous by all possible means, it may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the ethics committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my research supervisor (all of these people are required to keep your identity confidential). Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

I am asking you to give me permission to audio record the interviews so that I can accurately record what is said. Data from the interviews will be stored electronically in a password-protected folder on my computer and used for research or academic purposes now or at a later date, in ways that will not reveal who you are. All future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Committee review and approval.

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the conversation we will have. Your responses will be linked to a pseudonym (a false name) and I will refer to you in this way in the transcripts, any publication, report or other study output.

Risks/discomforts

At the present time, I do not see any risk of harm from your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those we face in daily life. However please feel free to share any discomfort with me anytime (before, during and after the interview). Should you experience any emotional distress or discomfort during the interview, you are welcome to stop me immediately. I will be willing to assist you by being there for you at that time, and by referring you for further assistance if necessary.

Benefits

While there are no guaranteed benefits to you from participating in this study, you have an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences on a number of things related to domestic work and your personal experience as an employer. Your participation will also help me, and policy makers understand what kinds of interventions are effective for domestic works and their employers in South Africa. Though there will be no monetary compensation for your participation, if you had to travel to meet with me at your chosen location, you will be

reimbursed to a maximum of R100 for each interview attended for transportation costs. If you choose an online interview, you will receive R100 in data bundles for your preferred mobile network as compensation.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the UKZN Research Ethics Committee (REC). If you have concerns or questions about the research before, during or after the interview/s, you could contact me (Thobeka Ntini) via a mobile call/WhatsApp/send a ‘please call me’ at ([REDACTED] or send me an email to 211501327@stu.ukzn.ac.za. If you would like to talk to someone other than me about; (1) concerns regarding this study, (2) your rights, or (3) other human subjects’ issues, please contact: The Chair of the UKZN REC, Dr Shenuka Singh at (031) 260 8591 or via E-mail at singhshen@ukzn.ac.za.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

CONSENT

I have read the above information and each aspect of the information has been explained to me. I have received answers to any questions I asked. I hereby agree to participate in research on understanding the dynamics of power in the employer-domestic work relations in contemporary South Africa. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a PhD research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

Your Name (printed) _____ Date _____

Your Signature _____

AUDIO-RECORDING

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

DATA CURATION

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study. Records related to this study will also be kept as per university policy for a period of five years after which these shall be destroyed.

10.10 Appendix 10: Information sheet and consent form for Interviews with DWEs (IsiZulu)

Ukucubungula igalelo lesikhundla namandla kubudlelwano phakathi komqashi nomusebenzi wasendlini esikhathini samanje esiphila kuso eningizimu Afrika, KwaZulu Natali: Ucwangingo oluhlosa ukuguqula ulwazi oluvelele.

Ngingubani?

Sawubona, igama ngingu Thobeka Ntini. Ngingumfundi obhalise eNyuvesi yakwaZulu Natali, eThekwini. Inombolo yami yokubhalisa ithi 2115 01327, lolucwangingo lwenziwelwa izizathu zokuphuthula iziqu zami zobudokotela ezifundweni zezenhlalakahle.

Ngenza ini?

Inhloso yami ukuqonda imibono yakho kanye nezimo odlula/le kuzona njengomuqashi wabasebenza ezindlini. Ngingathanda ukufunda kuwe ngendlela oqonda ngayo umusebenzi owenziwa abasebenza ezindlini nokubaluleka kwawo noma nabo. Ngingathanda ke futhi uma ungase ungixoxele ngezinto ezinhle nezimbi okewabhekana nazo njengomuqashi wabasebenzi

basendlini. Ngingajabula uma ungase ukhulume ngokuphilisana kwakho nalo omuqashile. Uma kukhona izingqinamba odlule kuzona noma obhekene nazo njengamanje, ngingathokoza uma ungangixoxela ngazo nangezindlela odlula kuzona.

Ukuba yingxenye yaloluphenyo

Ngikucela ukuthi ubeyingxenye yezingxoxo phakathi kwami nawe, ekungenzeka zenzeka kanye noma kabili uma unginika imvume yakho. Lezingxoxo zizokwenzelwa endaweni oyikhethe wena nangesikhathi esilungele wena. Lezingxoxo zizoba ihora elilodwa, lapho ke sizoxoxa sobabili ngikubuzo imibuzo engiyilungisile. Ingxoxo esizoba nayo izodinga ukuthi ucabange kabanzi ngempilo yakho (ngokwenzeka manje nosekwadlula) njengomqashi wabasenza ezindlini. Ngesikhathi sengxoxo noma ingakaqali futhi, wamukelekile ukungibuza imibuzo emayelana nalolucwaningo.

Ngicela uqonde ukuthi **ukuba yingxenye yaloluphenyo uzinikela ngokwakho** futhi awuphoqiwe ukuthi ubeyingxenye. Uma ukhetha ukungabi yingxenye yaloluphenyo, ngeke kubenomthelela omubi ngenxa yesinqumo osithathile. Uma uvuma ukubayingxenye, uvumelekile ukuhoxa ekubeni ingxenye yalolucwaningo nanoma ingasiphi isikhathi. Ngeke kubekhona ukuhlukumezeka noma umuthelela omubi ngesinqumo sokuhoxa ekubeni yingxenye yalolucwaningo.

Imfihlo

Yonke imininingwane izobekwa kwikhompuyutha yami kwifayela elivalwe ngezinombolo ezaziwa yimi kuphela. Emuva kwesikhathi esingange minyaka emihlanu sekuphele uphenyo, izoshiswa noma idilithwe. Noma ngabe ukuba kwakho yingxenye yalolu cwaningo kuyimfihlo futhi sifihla ngisho igama lakho ngazona zonke izindlela esingakwazi ngazo, kungenzeka ibhekwe ngabantu ababhekelela ukuthi ucwaningo lenziwa ngendlela ecophelele nesezingeni eliphezulu, laba abathu abangamalunga ekomidi lemithethosisekelo yezocwaningo eNyuvesi yakwa Zulu Natali kanye nongumbhekeleli walolucwaningo (bonke labantu kumele bagcine igama lakho liyimfihlo). Ngaphandle kwemvume yakho yokunikeza abanye abantu imininingwane yakho yangempela, izohlala ikubantu abasebenza ngalolucwaningo kuphela.

Ngiyakucela ukuthi unginike imvume yokuqopha izwi lakho ngesikhathi sezingxoxo zethu ukuze ngikwazi ukubhala into oyishilo injengoba injalo. Imininingwane ezobe iphuma

kulengxoxo nayo izofihlwa kwifayela elidinga inamba eyaziwa yimi kuphela. Leminingwane igcinelwa izinhloso zezemfundo okwamanje noma esikhathini esizayo. Izogcinwa ngendlela engeke ikhombise ubuwena. Konke ukusetshenziswa kweminingwane esikhathini esizayo izobhekwa futhi ithole imvume ekomidini lemithethosisekelo yezocwaningo.

Khumbula ukuthi igama lakho langampela ngeke libhalwe futhi akekho oyokwazi ukuthi uwena obukhuluma ezingxoxweni. Izimpendulo zakho zizoxhunyaniswa negama lakho engizokuqamba lona. Uma ngikhuluma ezinkomfeni, noma ngibhala amaphepha wezemfundo noma ukubhala imibiko ngizosebenzisa igama lakho engizokupha lona.

Ubungozi/ukungakhululeki

Okwamanje angiyiboni into ewungozi ngokuba yingxenywe yalolucwaningo. Ukuba kulolucwaningo alinabungozi obudlula izimo eziyingozi esibhekana nazo zonke izinsuku zokuphila kwethu. Noma kunjalo, ngicela ukhululeke ukungitshela uma ungakhululekile ngokubayingxenywe yalolucwaningo (ungasho ngaphambi kokuqala ingxoxo, phakathi nayo noma isiphelile). Uma uzizwa ungapathekile kahle emoyeni phakathi nengxoxo, ungangimisa ngalesoskhathi. Ngizobengizimisele ngokukusiza nokuthi ngibekhona ukukulalela, nanokuthi ngikudlulisele kwabangakusiza uma sikhona isidingo.

Izinzuzo

Azikho izinzuzo ezisheshayo eziza kuwe ngokubamba iqhaza kulolu cwaningo. Kodwa ke, lolu cwaningo luyoba usizo kakhulu kimina ngokuthi ngithemba ukuthi ngizokhuthaza ukuqonda izindlela ezingalungela abaqashi babasebenzi basezindlini kanye nabasebenza ezindlini. Uma ungathanda ukuthola ukuthi ucwaningo luhambe kanjani, sizobhala inombolo yakho yocingo ephepheni eliseceleni futhi singakuthumela imiphumela yocwaningo uma seluqedliwe emva kwesikhashana ubambe iqhaza. Noma kungeke kube nesinxephezelo ngokubayingxenywe yalolucwaningo, uma bekumele ugibele ukuze sihlangeane endaweni ekhethwe nguwe, uzonikezwa imali engadlulile enanini elingango R100 kuzona zonke izingxoxo ozophumelela kuzo.

Ubani ongathintana naye uma ungapathekanga kahle noma unokukhathazayo

Lolu cwaningo lugunyazwe yiKomidi elibhekelele ubulungiswa lase-UKZN Research Ethics Committee (REC). Uma unezikhalazo mayelana nobulungiswa bocwaningo noma uzizwa ukuthi awupathekanga kahle nganoma iyiphi indlela ngokubamba kwakho iqhaza

kulolu cwaningo, sicela ushayele inombolo yomlawuli wase- UKZN REC, uDokotela Shenuka Singh ku (031) 260 8591 noma ngemeyili ku-singhshen@ukzn.ac.za.

Uma unokukukhathazayo noma imibuzo mayelana nocwaningo ungashayela umholi wocwaningo uNkosazana Thobeka Ntini ku ([REDACTED] , 211501327@ukzn.ac.za). Ngiyatholakala futhi naku WhatsApp noma ungithumelele u-‘please call me’ ngizobe sengiyakufonela ngokushesha.

Uzonikezwa ikhophi yaleli fomu ukuze uzigcinele ngokwakho.

Imvume

Ngifundile yonke imininingwane esemakhasini adlule, futhi konke kuchaziwe kabanzi kimina ngolwimi engilizwayo. Ngizitholile izimpendulo zemibuzo engiyibuzile. Ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza ocwaningweni lokuqoqa ulwazi ngobudlelwano phakathi komqashi nomusebenzi wasendlini esikhathini samanje esiphila kuso eningizimu Afrika. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngibamba iqhaza ngokukhululekile futhi ngingaphoqelekile nganoma iyiphi indlela yokwenza kanjalo. Ngiphinde ngiqonde ukuthi ngiyakwazi ukuyeka ukubamba iqhaza nanoma inini uma ngingasathandi ukuqhubeka nokuthi lesi sinqumo ngeke singithinte kabi ngandlela-thile. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi lolu ucwaningo olungenhloso yalo ukuzuzisa mina uqobo ngesikhathi esifuSheela. Ngiyazi ukuthi lolucwaningo lwenziwelwa izizathu zokuphuthula iziqu zobudokotela ezifundweni zezehlalakahle. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukubamba kwami iqhaza kuzohlala kuyimfihlo.

Igama lakho _____ Usuku _____

Iseginisha _____

IMVUME YOKUQOPHA

Ngiyavuma ukuthi kuqoshwe ukubamba kwami iqhaza ocwaningweni

Iseginisha _____ Usuku _____

UKUGCINA UCWANINGO

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi imininingwane engininike yona izobekwa kwikhompuyutha isetshenziselwe inhloso yocwaningo manje noma esikhathini esizayo.

Iseginisha _____ Usuku _____

Leliphepha lesivumelwano lizogcinwa umucwaningi iminyaka emihlanu emuva kokuthi ucwaningo luphele. Imininingwane kanye nokuqoshiwe okuthinta lolucwaningo lizogcinwa iminyaka emihlanu, ekuyiminyaka egunyazwe inyuvesi ngaphambi kokuthi ichithwe.

10.11 Appendix 11: Information sheet and consent form for Focus Group

Discussions with DWs (English)

Unravelling the dynamics of power in the DWE-DW relations in contemporary South Africa, Kwa-Zulu Natal: Praxis-oriented research.

Who am I?

Hello, I am Thobeka Ntini. I am a PhD student registered with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My student number is 2115 01327, and this research project is purely for academic reasons as a social work PhD student.

What am I doing?

My intention is to understand your views and experiences as a DW in the new South Africa. I would like to learn from you about your own understanding of the work that you do and its importance. I would also appreciate it if you could share with me your positive and negative experiences as a DW. It would be nice if you can also talk more about the kind of relationship you have with your DWE/s. If there are any challenges that you have experienced or currently experiencing, I would also like to know more about the things that help you get through them.

Your Participation

I am asking you whether you would participate in a focus group discussion taking place in one of the classes at the Howard College, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. This group

discussion will consist a total of about 8-10 DWs that I have individually interviewed before this focus group. The group discussion will be about an hour to an hour and 30 minutes each. The discussion will be guided by a number of questions I have prepared. During the interview you are allowed to ask me any questions related to the study.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to continue. If you do this, there will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

Confidentiality

All identifying information will be stored on my personal computer in a password protected folder. It would be destroyed within five years upon completion of my study. Though your participation in this study would be strictly confidential and anonymous by all possible means, it may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the ethics committee at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and my research supervisor (all of these people are required to keep your identity confidential). Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

I am asking you to give me permission to audio record the interviews so that I can accurately record what is said. Data from the interviews will be stored electronically in a password-protected folder on my computer and used for research or academic purposes now or at a later date, in ways that will not reveal who you are. All future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Committee review and approval.

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your responses will be linked to a pseudonym (another name) and we will refer to you in this way in the transcripts, any publication, report or other study output. While I will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your information, I must make explicit that the focus group discussions are taking place in a group setting therefore I do not have the guarantee that other members of the group will not share information outside of the group. I am asking each member of the group not to discuss what will be said here, outside of

the group. For that reason, I am advising you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the group.

Risks/discomforts

At the present time, I do not see any risk of harm from your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those we face in daily life. However please feel free to share any discomfort with me anytime (before, during and after the interview). Should you experience any emotional distress or discomfort during the interview, you are welcome to stop me immediately. I will be willing to assist you by being there for you at that time, and by referring you for further assistance if necessary.

Benefits

While there are no guaranteed benefits to you from participating in this study, you have an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences on a number of things related to domestic work and your personal experience as a DW. Your participation will also help me and policy makers understand what kind of interventions are effective for DWs in South Africa. Though there will be no monetary compensation for your participation, if you had to travel to meet with me at your chosen location, you will be reimbursed to a maximum of R100 for each interview attended for transportation costs.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the UKZN Research Ethics Committee (REC). If you have concerns or questions about the research before, during or after the interview/s, you could contact me (Thobeka Ntini) via a mobile call/WhatsApp/send a 'please call me' at [REDACTED] or send me an email to 211501327@stu.ukzn.ac.za. If you would like to talk to someone other than me about; (1) concerns regarding this study, (2) your rights, or (3) other human subjects' issues, please contact: The Chair of the UKZN REC, Dr Shenuka Singh at (031) 260 8591 or via E-mail at singhshen@ukzn.ac.za.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

CONSENT

I have read the above information and each aspect of the information has been explained to me. I have received answers to any questions I asked. I hereby agree to participate in research on understanding the dynamics of power in the DWE-DW relations in contemporary South Africa. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue, and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a PhD research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

Your Name (printed) _____ Date _____

Your Signature _____

AUDIO-RECORDING

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

DATA CURATION

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study. Records related to this study will also be kept as per university policy for a period of five years after which these shall be destroyed.

10.12 Appendix 12: Information sheet and consent form for Focus Group Discussions with DWs (IsiZulu)

Ukucubungula igalelo lesikhundla namandla ebudlelwaneni phakathi komqashi nomusebenzi wasendlini esikhathini samanje esiphila kuso eningizimu Afrika, KwaZulu Natali: Ucwangingo oluhlosa ukuguqula ulwazi oluvelele.

Ngingubani?

Sawubona, igama ngingu Thobeka Ntini. Ngingumfundi obhalise eNyuvesi yakwaZulu Natali, eThekwini. Inombolo yami yokubhalisa ithi 2115 01327, lolucwangingo lwenziwelwa izizathu zokuphuthula iziqu zami zobudokotela ezifundweni zezenhlalakahle.

Ngenza ini?

Inhloso yami ukuqonda imibono yakho kanye nezimo odlula/le kuzona njengomusebenzi wasezindlini. Ngingathanda ukufunda kuwe ngendlela oqonda ngayo umusebenzi owenziwa abasebenza ezindlini nokubaluleka kwawo noma nabo. Ngingathanda ke futhi uma ungase ungixoxele ngezinto ezinhle nezimbi okewabhekana nazo njengomusebenzi wasendlini. Ngingajabula uma ungase ukhulume ngokuphilisana kwakho nalo okuqashile. Uma kukhona izingqinamba odlule kuzona noma obhekene nazo njengamanje, ngingathokoza uma ungangixoxela ngazo nangezindlela odlula kuzona.

Ukuba yingxenywe yaloluphenyo

Ngikucela ukuthi ubeyingxenywe yengxoxo phakathi kwami nabane ozakwenu abasebenza ezindlini. Lezizingxoxo zizokwenzelwa eNyuvesi yakwaZulu Natali, eHoward College ngesikhathi esizovumelana ngaso. Lengxoxo izoba namalunga ayisishiyaga lombili kuyela kwishumi. Wonke lamalunguna, ngibala nawe, ngizobe ngixoxisene nawo ngaphambilini. Lengxoxo ibaliselwa ehoreni elilodwa nemizuzu eimashumi amathathu. Ingxoxo izoholwa imibuzo engiyilungisile kanye nemibuzo eniqhamuka nayo. Lengxoxo izodinga ukuthi ukhiphe uvo lwakho ngezimo eziphathelene nobudlelwane babaqashi kanye nabasebenza ezindlini. Ungakhuluma ngeyakho impilo futhi wamukelekile ukuthi ukhulume nangokubone kwenzeka. Ngesikhathi sengxoxo noma ingakaqali futhi, wamukelekile ukungibuza imibuzo emayelana nalolucwangingo.

Ngicela uqonde ukuthi **ukuba yingxeny yaloluphenyo uzinikela ngokwakho** futhi awuphoqiwe ukuthi ubeyingxeny. Uma ukhetha ukungabi yingxeny yaloluphenyo, ngeke kubenomthelela omubi ngenxa yesinqumo osithathile. Uma uvuma ukubayingxeny, uvumelekile ukuhoxa ekubeni ingxeny yalolucwaningo nanoma ingasiphi isikhathi. Ngeke kubekhona ukuhlukumezeka noma umuthlela omubi ngesinqumo sokuhoxa ekubeni yingxeny yalolucwaningo.

Imfihlo

Yonke imininingwane izobekwa kwikhompuyutha yami kwifayela elivalwe ngezinombolo ezaziwa yimi kuphela. Emuva kwesikhathi esingange minyaka emihlanu sekuphele uphenyo, izoshiswa noma idilithwe. Noma ngabe ukuba kwakho yingxeny yalolu cwaningo kuyimfihlo futhi sifihla ngisho igama lakho ngazona zonke izindlela esingakwazi ngazo, kungenzeka ibhekwe ngabantu ababhekelela ukuthi ucwaningo lenziwa ngendlela ecophelele nesezingeni eliphezulu, laba abathu abangamalunga ekomidi lemithethosisekelo yezocwaningo eNyuvesi yakwa Zulu Natali kanye nongumbhekeleli walolucwaningo (bonke labantu kumele bagcine igama lakho liyimfihlo). Ngaphandle kwemvume yakho yokunikeza abanye abantu imininingwane yakho yangempela, izohlala ikubantu abasebenza ngalolucwaningo kuphela.

Ngiyakucela ukuthi unginike imvume yokuqopha izwi lakho ngesikhathi sezingxoxo zethu ukuze ngikwazi ukubhala into oyishilo injengoba injalo. Imininingwane ezobe iphuma kulengxoxo nayo izofihlwa kwifayela elidinga inamba eyaziwa yimi kuphela. Leminingwane igcinelwa izinhloso zezemfundo okwamanje noma esikhathini esizayo. Izogcinwa ngendlela engeke ikhombise ubuwena. Konke ukusetshenziswa kwemininingwane esikhathini esizayo izobhekwa futhi ithole imvume ekomidini lemithethosisekelo yezocwaningo.

Khumbula ukuthi igama lakho langampela ngeke libhalwe futhi akekho oyokwazi ukuthi uweni obukhuluma ezingxoxweni. Izimpendulo zakho zizoxhunyaniswa negama lakho engizokuqamba lona. Uma ngikhuluma ezinkomfeni, noma ngibhala amaphepha wezemfundo noma ukubhala imibiko ngizosebenzisa igama lakho engizokupha lona. Kubalulekile ukuthi ngicacise ukuthi ingxoxo esizoba nayo izobe iseqenjini, ngakhoke anginaso isiqiniseko sokuthi esizokuxoxa namanye amalunga ngeke kuphumele ngaphandle.

Kodwa-ke, nginxusa lonke ilunga leqembu ukuthi esikukhuluma kuleligumbi kuphelele la. Ngenxa yalesisimo esingaphezulu kwamandla ami, ngicela ungakhulumi ngento ebucayi ethinta wena uqobo kuleliqembu.

Ubungozi/ukungakhululeki

Okwamanje angiyiboni into ewubungozi ngokuba yingxenye yalolucwaningo. Ukuba kulolucwaningo alinabungozi obudlula izimo eziyingozi esibhekana nazo zonke izinsuku zokuphila kwethu. Noma kunjalo, ngicela ukhululeke ukungitshela uma ungakhululekile ngokubayingxenye yalolucwaningo (ungasho ngaphambi kokuqala ingxoxo, phakathi nayo noma isiphelile). Uma uzizwa ungaphathekile kahle emoyeni phakathi nengxoxo, ungangimisa ngalesoskhathi. Ngizobengizimisele ngokukusiza nokuthi ngibekhona ukukulalela, nanokuthi ngikudlulisele kwabangakusiza uma sikhona isidingo.

Izinzuzo

Azikho izinzuzo ezisheshayo eziza kuwe ngokubamba iqhaza kulolu cwaningo. Kodwa ke, lolu cwaningo luyoba usizo kakhulu kimina ngokuthi ngithemba ukuthi ngizokhuthaza ukuqonda izindlela ezingalungela abaqashi babasebenzi basezindlini kanye nabasebenza ezindlini. Uma ungathanda ukuthola ukuthi ucwaningo luhambe kanjani, sizobhala inombolo yakho yocingo ephepheni eliseceleni futhi singakuthumela imiphumela yocwaningo uma seluqedliwe emva kwesikhashana ubambe iqhaza. Noma kungeke kube nesinxephezelo ngokubayingxenye yalolucwaningo, uma bekumele ugibele ukuze sihlangane endaweni ekhethwe nguwe, azonikezwa imali engadlulile enanini elingango R100 kuzona zonke izingxoxo ozophumelela kuzo.

Ubani ongathintana naye uma ungaphathekanga kahle noma unokukukhathazayo

Lolu cwaningo lugunyazwe yiKomidi elibhekelele ubulungiswa lase-UKZN Research Ethics Committee (REC). Uma unezikhalazo mayelana nobulungiswa bocwaningo noma uzizwa ukuthi awuphathekanga kahle nganoma iyiphi indlela ngokubamba kwakho iqhaza kulolu cwaningo, sicela ushayele inombolo yomlawuli wase- UKZN REC, uDokotela Shenuka Singh ku (031) 260 8591 noma ngemeyili ku-singhshen@ukzn.ac.za.

Uma unokukukhathazayo noma imibuzo mayelana nocwaningo ungashayela umholi wocwaningo uNkosazana Thobeka Ntini ku ([REDACTED]), 211501327@ukzn.ac.za. Ngiyatholakala futhi naku WhatsApp noma ungithumelele u-‘please call me’ ngizobe sengiyakufonela ngokushesha.

Uzonikezwa ikhophi yaleli fomu ukuze uzigcinele ngokwakho.

Imvume

Ngifundile yonke imininingwane esemakhasini adlule, futhi konke kuchaziwe kabanzi kimina ngolwimi engilizwayo. Ngizitholile izimpendulo zemibuzo engiyibuzile. Ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza ocwaningweni lokuqoqa ulwazi ngobudlelwano phakathi komqashi nomusebenzi wasendlini esikhathini samanje esiphila kuso eningizimu Afrika. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngibamba iqhaza ngokukhululekile futhi ngingaphoqelekile nganoma iyiphi indlela yokwenza kanjalo. Ngiphinde ngiqonde ukuthi ngiyakwazi ukuyeka ukubamba iqhaza nanoma inini uma ngingasathandi ukuqhubeka nokuthi lesi sinqumo ngeke singithinte kabi ngandlela-thile. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi lolu ucwaningo olungenhloso yalo ukuzuzisa mina uqobo ngesikhathi esifuSheela. Ngiyazi ukuthi lolucwaningo lwenziwelwa izizathu zokuphuthula iziqu zobudokotela ezifundweni zezehlalakahle. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukubamba kwami iqhaza kuzohlala kuyimfihlo.

Igama lakho _____ Usuku _____

Iseginisha _____

IMVUME YOKUQOPHA

Ngiyavuma ukuthi kuqoshwe ukubamba kwami iqhaza ocwaningweni

Iseginisha _____ Usuku _____

UKUGCINA UCWANINGO

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi imininingwane engininike yona izobekwa kwikhompuyutha isetshenziselwe inhloso yocwaningo manje noma esikhathini esizayo.

Iseginisha _____ Usuku _____

Leliphepha lesivumelwano lizogcinwa umucwaningi iminyaka emihlanu emuva kokuthi ucwaningo luphele. Imininingwane kanye nokuqoshiwe okuthinta lolucwaningo lizogcinwa iminyaka emihlanu, ekuyiminyaka egunyazwe inyuvesi ngaphambi kokuthi ichithwe.

10.13 Appendix 13: Ethical Clearance



23 November 2020

Miss Thobeka Ntini (211501327)
School Of Applied Human Sc
Howard College

Dear Miss Ntini,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001697/2020

Project title: Unravelling the dynamics of power in the employer-domestic worker relations in contemporary South Africa, Kwa-Zulu Natal: Praxis-oriented research.

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 18 November 2020 to our letter of 15 September 2020 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 for one year until 23 November 2021

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 faithfully



.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

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