



Solutions for Using Domestic Workers Effectively in Vietnam

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Abstract

In the trend of globalization and international economic integration, the proportion of women joining the labor force is increasing in order to get money for their family's need and consolidate their position in the society. This entails the need to look for a domestic worker so that the homeowner can feel secure working without having to worry about arranging a reasonable time to balance work and life. Accordingly, the domestic labor market labor is also growing, not only serving the needs of domestic families but also the tendency of exporting domestic workers to other countries in the world. However, there are many shortcomings in the employment of housekeepers, as well as the abuse of labor, or domestic workers, show behaviors, misconduct (property of theft, beatings of children, or ill-treatment of the elderly). All of these negatively affect the growth of the labor market, while the housework helps to create a stable income for many lower-skilled people who are hard-pressed to participate in higher-quality labor markets. This paper is based on surveys and surveys in Hanoi to show some aspects related to the current situation of employing domestic workers and policy implications.

Keywords: Domestic workers, efficient use / utilization of domestic workers, policies



1. Introduction

Domestic workers are people who regularly perform household chores as reflected in a contract of employment that is repeated over a specified period of time (hourly, daily, weekly or monthly) in one or more households. Housework includes housekeeping, cleaning, child care, caring for the sick, caring for the elderly, driving, gardening and other household chores but not related to commercial activities. People working for families include workers living in the employer's home and workers who do not live in the employer's home. In the early 2000s, the difficulties of domestic workers began to attract the attention of the ILO. Main issues that the ILO identified and discussed in 2007 were issues of working time, wages, workload, time of rest, social security, sexual abuse and joining Trade Union. The biggest problem is that housework is not considered as a real occupation, so it is often not regulated by labor law. The fact that domestic workers are not a part of a regulated profession is a consequence of the notion that housework is an unskilled job and part of the responsibility of the female who are wives, mothers have to do without pay and value.

In Viet Nam, the proportion of women in labor force is increasing (more than 70% of working-age women). When many women go to work, the balance between work and family can become a burden. Surveys of household living standards in Viet Nam show that women still have to shoulder their housework compared to men, and women remain unpaid family workers. Etymology is still common in society. In that context, housewives, mostly women, play an important role not only in each family, but also in the national economy. The domestic worker is also involved in the labor market; they also help other working-age women to do things they cannot handle if they still have to shoulder all of their responsibilities. Around 53 million domestic service people in the world and Vietnam are expected to have around 350,000 domestic workers by the year 2020. Not only in the country, but also many more opportunities for working overseas such as Taiwan and Macau (China), Cyprus, Malaysia or Saudi Arabia. The need to help families increase both inside and outside the country to become decent work for employees is an indispensable trend to recognize the socio-economic contribution of this kind of labor in modern society. To achieve this, it is necessary to have policies and measures to bring home-workers from "spontaneous", untrained to professional and managed. The above mentioned issues have a significant impact on the balance and sustainable development of the family-care profession in particular and the overall welfare of society. This article aims at providing some insights on the current situation of employment of domestic helpers in general and to propose solutions to the problem of utilizing domestic workers more effectively in the future.

2. Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data sources are taken from articles, studies and reports by organizations such as the Center for Gender Studies, Family and Community Development (GFCD) and the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Sources of primary data were collected through a survey of 161 domestic workers who were working and living in the owner's house on the 4 districts of Hanoi (Hai Ba Trung, Ha Dong, Cau Giay, Tu Liem). The survey was conducted over a period of 3 months (from January to March, 2018) through face-to-face interviews and sent to employment agencies. The statistics are processed and aggregated with preliminary statistics as to the number of specific criteria through descriptive statistics. Also studied in-depth interviews directly 10 domestic workers in the form of conversation sharing revolves around advice and opinions related to labor policies.

Based on these data, the authors synthesize, analyze and compare the situation of the efficient use of domestic labor from which to draw policies to use domestic labor in accordance



with labor law, consistent with the direction of the state and developing and expanding the healthy domestic labor market to meet both national and international need.

3. Research results

3.1. Domestic workers are mainly female, over 40 years old and have low educational level

Table 1 shows that 97.5% of female domestic workers are female; the number of domestic workers is very small (2.5%) focusing on jobs such as driving and caring for plants.

Table 1: Structure of domestic workers by some demographic criteria

Criterion		Number (person)	Percentage (%)
Percentage (%)	Female	157	97.5
	Male	4	2.5
Age	Under 25 years old	7	4.3
	From 25 to 40 years old	36	22.4
	From 41 to 50 years old	55	34.2
	Above 50 years old	63	39.1
Marital status	Single	18	11.2
	Married	120	74.5
	Other (Divorced / Widowed. ..)	23	14.3
Educational level	Under primary school	22	14.9
	Primary and secondary education	101	62.4
	Higher secondary school	38	22.7
Total		161	100

Source: Collected from the survey of the authors, 2018

Most of the workers are aged 40 or over (73.3%). In addition, the number of housekeepers aged 25-40 also accounts for a relatively high proportion (22.4%). This indicates that the average age of domestic worker is on the downward trend. This shows that there is a change in the perception of the role and status of the sex workers in the society, and the family careers are gradually recognized and expanded; Younger people are more likely to choose a job as a family.

At the age of 25 and over, nearly 90% of housekeepers were married, of which 14.3% were divorced or widowed. Family members as female contribution to financial source in Vietnam are becoming increasingly popular. For elder people who was difficult to find another job in the labor market, selecting housework as a temporary solution to help them get more.

In addition, domestic servants often have low education levels, mainly Primary and secondary education (62.7%), higher secondary school accounts for 22.7%; while the proportion of people under primary school is 14.9%. This is consistent with the fact that higher educated people have the opportunity to choose the more valuable jobs in the labor market. In addition, the maids in previous statistics often came from rural areas and wanted to work in the "leisure time" period, so the education level was low.



3.2 Current situation of domestic workers' job

Firstly, about working experience and job search channels

As shown in Table 2, most domestic workers have 1-3 years of working experience. Due to the fact that in the past, housework has not been considered as a valuable occupation, but in the past 10 years, doing housework has been widely recognized and appreciated in Vietnam. Workers who help their families have a certain perception of the profession and the number of people involved in the labor market in recent years has also increased, causing their working time to vary from one to three years. In addition, the number of people working 5 or more years also accounts for 24.2%. These family assistants are mainly people who have been engaged for quite a long time and have a low turnover rate.

Table 2: Experience and job search channels for domestic workers

Criterion		Number (person)	Percentage (%)
Working time	Under 1 year	32	19.9
	From 1 to less than 3 years	67	41.6
	From 3 to under 5 years	23	14.3
	From 5 years or more	39	24.2
Job search channels	Looking for work Relatives and relatives	34	21.1
	Acquaintances, friends	70	43.5
	Job center	46	28.6
	Other (Television, Newspaper, ...)	11	6.8
Total		161	100

Source: Collected from the survey of the authors, 2018

Job search channel is mainly through acquaintances, friends (43.5%); through job centers (28.6%). Next, finding a job through the help of relatives, relatives or their referrals (21.1%); The rate of job seeking through other channels such as TV, radio or luck found themselves very low (6.8%). The explanation for this may be that the maids are mostly female and have relatively low levels of education, accessing to modern job search channels is limited, so through acquaintances, referral friends are still the most preferred option. On the other hand, as the demand for housework employment in urban areas tends to increase, the emergence of more job centers in the context of the fast-growing supply and demand to bring clearer information about employers and employees fast leads to the need to find a job through a reputable, quality brokerage center.

Secondly, the maid has no contract of employment

The results of the survey (Table 3) show that 77.6% of employment agreements do not have a labor contract, only 22.4% have signed labor contracts, although the government stipulates the servant must sign a labor contract during the employment agreement. Causes come from the employer, the helper and the parties involved. They may believe that signing a contract is not necessary, even adding to the trouble of changing jobs. They could look for a new job more easily if the current job is no longer appropriate. Therefore, the change of attitude towards "contract signing" still need time to change the thinking and behavior not according to the labor law of the



parties concerned and the State should also have sanctions to treat to raise the sense of responsibility of the concerned parties legally.

Table 3: Contract form is used

Agreement form	Number (person)	Percentage (%)
Signed contract (document)	36	22.4
No contracted	125	77.6
Total	161	100

Source: Collected from the survey of the authors, 2018

Thirdly, workers mainly do not refer to the Labor Code when negotiating with the employer

Table 4: Establishment of employment agreement between domestic workers and their employer

Agreement criterion	Number (person)	Percentage (%)
Refer to the information in the labor market	74	45.96
Refer to Labor Code	9	5.59
Refer to friend, relatives	66	40.99
No reference	12	7.45
Total	161	100

Source: Collected from the survey of the authors, 2018

Table 4 shows that only a small number of laborers refer to the Labor Code when they enter into an employment agreement (5.59%), they agree to work mainly through labor market consultation (45.96%) and relative referrals (40.99%). In addition, 7.45% of the agreement is not based on references, which indicates that potential risks may occur in the duration of work if the employee is not knowledgeable about legal aspects.

Fourthly, the income of workers is low, the number of days off is less

The average monthly income of the maids (Table 5) is from VND 3.5 to less than 5 million (67.7%). Some jobs require higher, more complex or employers have better treatment regime, the average income they receive is VND 5 million or more (only 19.3%) of the total surveyed. In addition, there are still 13% of people earning less than VND 3.5 million (this is legally enforceable because they are entitled to at least the regional minimum wage).

Table 5: Monthly average income and average number of vacation days per domestic worker

Criterion		Number (person)	Percentage (%)
Average monthly income	Below VND 2 million	2	1.2
	From VND 2 to under 3.5 million	19	11.8



	From VND 3.5 - under 5 million	109	67.7
	From VND 5 million or more	31	19.3
Average number of days off	No rest period	96	59.6
	From 1 - 2 days	47	29.2
	From 3 - 4 days	12	7.5
	From 5 days or more	6	3.7
Total		161	100

Source: Collected from the survey of the authors, 2018

In addition, the average number of days off for a maid in a month (excluding time to return home or have a job) was 59.6%; 29.2% were off for 1-2 days and only 11.2% for 3 days or more. This data shows that maids having days off are on average less than 1 day/week. This is contrary to the provisions of the Labor Code of Vietnam (2012), working time not exceeding 48 hours/week and 8 hours/day. In other words, domestic workers are not really interested in homeownership. The state should have more appropriate policies to ensure the interests of workers.

Fifthly, about the type of work that the maid undertakes

Table 6: Types of work for domestic workers

Type of work	Number (person)	Percentage (%)
Housework	79	49.3
Child care	71	44.6
Caring for the sick	3	1.8
Caring for the elderly	4	2.5
Driving	2	1.1
Gardening	1	0.7
Total	161	100

Source: Collected from the survey of the authors, 2018

Type of job (Table 6) was mainly housework (49.3%) and child care (44.6%). Helpers taking care of children are often accompanied by housework, house cleaning, etc. The reason is that most of the women in urban areas still participate in social work to earn a living and affirming the position themselves should tend to hire maids to look after children and house care. The others employed for caring for the sick (1.8%); caring for the elderly (2.5%), drivers and gardeners (1.8%).

The need to employ domestic workers increases the demand for employment and participation in the home-help market. Statistics show that the number of assistants has increased significantly over the past eight years. In Viet Nam, the number of domestic workers has increased by nearly 100,000 from 157,000 in the year 2008 to 246 thousand in the year 2016.

The demand for long-term helps (3-5 years) is high, and 73% of them want to help their cohabitation with their families. In addition, the demand for childcare and homecare employment also accounts for the majority and tends to increase in the next years.

With the increase in both the need to employ workers as well as to find and participate in the domestic help market, the need for training and the formation of training institutions to



provide high quality labor force. According to a survey conducted by the Center for Gender, Family and Community Development Research, more than 90% of house workers in Vietnam have not completed the training program. At the same time, 86.7% of households are using domestic workers thought that providing knowledge and skills for domestic workers are necessary; and 87.6% of that are willing to pay more than the market pay level for trained maids. Therefore, the formation and improvement of the system of training and development of domestic workers is extremely urgent to meet and improve the capacity of domestic workers in Vietnam.

Most of the surveyed workers have the desire to train basic knowledge and skills in the use of home appliances, child care skills, food processing, knowledge of safety and food hygiene. However, in Vietnam, the number of training centers and centers for servants is not much and does not meet the current training needs. This raises the need for labor management agencies, private organizations to develop and provide a more systematic training for domestic workers.

Due to the increasing demand for both quantity and quality of domestic labor, the State management agencies should pay attention to the development of human resources for labor. In recent years, practical programs and activities aiming at the development of domestic workers have been continuously implemented and achieved certain achievements. The projects for housewives have been operating in Hanoi as well as other provinces in Vietnam for many years in order to aim at the sustainable development of the labor force assisting family. At the project review meeting in the year 2017 and development of the work plan in the year 2018, the Hanoi Women's Union has pointed out many difficulties and challenges encountered in addition to the achievements in the process toward a sustainable development of household resources and towards the development of next year's action plan and the premise for development in the coming time.

Sixthly, workers are primarily concerned with wages when working on a contract

Table 7: Concerns of housemaid when agreeing to work

Criterion	Rate (%)
Wages/salaries	84.5
Insurance	10.6
Living, working and working conditions	66.5
Working time, rest time	41.0
Trust, concern of the host	75.8
The importance of homeownership	33.5
Other	5.6

*(Note: Each person can select more than one option)
Source: Collected from the survey of the authors, 2018*