

Impacts of Child Domestic Work on Informal Education: A Case Study in Analamanga

RAZAFINDRABE Tsilavo¹, ANDRIANARIMANANA Omer², RAZAFIMAHATRATRA Dieudonné³, RAKOTOSON Olivia⁴, RASOLOARIVONY Theis Lala⁵

Doctoral School in Natural Resource Management and Development- University of Antananarivo-Madagascar
Email address: razafindrabetzilavo@gmail.com

Abstract—Many studies have documented the prevalence of child domestic work in Madagascar, revealing its harmful impact on children's learning and socialization activities. The lack of supervision and poor enforcement of legislation have been found to result in excessive working hours, malnutrition, and various forms of abuse, to the detriment of informal education. This article presents the findings of semi-structured interviews conducted with 1,000 child domestic workers and 130 employing households in Analamanga. The interviews focused on working hours, nutritional status, experienced abuse, and access to rest days. The objective is to identify the mechanisms through which these working conditions hinder informal education. A descriptive analysis was carried out to quantify the frequency of responses for each item. The results show that 80% of children start their day before 6 a.m. and 65% end it after 7 p.m.; 70% report dissatisfaction with their food; 40% experience emotional abuse; and 45% have no days off. These prolonged and exhausting conditions severely limit the time and space needed for informal learning (play, interaction, observation). It is concluded that, in order to restore out-of-school educational opportunities and preserve the physical and psychological well-being of children, it is urgent to strengthen child protection policies, promote informal support structures, and raise awareness among employers and families.

Keywords— Analamanga: child domestic work: informal education: mistreatment: working hours.

I. INTRODUCTION

In line with trends observed in many sub-Saharan African countries, Madagascar experiences a high prevalence of child domestic work, in both urban and rural areas. According to the 2020 Global Report on Child Labour by the International Labour Organization and UNICEF, nearly 38% of children aged 5 to 14 in Madagascar are engaged in household tasks within families other than their own, often at the expense of their learning and socialization activities (ILO & UNICEF, 2021). In Analamanga, this practice occurs in a socio-economic context marked by poverty and limited access to structures supporting informal education.

Informal education is defined as the continuous acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values outside the formal school system, through family, community, and peer interactions (UNESCO, 2022). This mode of learning, based on observation, participation, and play, contributes not only to cognitive development but also to the child's social and emotional well-being.

However, despite paragraph 3 of Law No. 2018-023 on child protection, which prohibits all forms of domestic work

for children under the age of 15, enforcement remains weak in disadvantaged neighborhoods of Analamanga due to limited institutional resources and low levels of awareness among families.

Several studies have jointly examined the dimensions of child labour and education:

Dunne and Humphreys (2021) propose the conceptual framework of the "edu-workspace," which captures the complexity of interactions between child labour and learning in rural sub-Saharan Africa.

A study by UNGEI (2022) shows that gender norms and discrimination contribute to girls' involvement in domestic work, limiting their cognitive and emotional availability for any form of learning.

The 2020 UNESCO report emphasizes the importance of inclusion and lifelong learning, highlighting the role of non-formal and informal spaces and time in achieving SDG 4.

Despite these contributions, few studies have specifically addressed the impact of domestic work on informal modes of learning, especially in an urban context like Analamanga. Most research focuses on formal schooling or general psychosocial effects, without exploring the precise mechanisms through which domestic tasks reduce time for play, interaction, and observation—key vectors of informal education. This study is therefore guided by the following question: How does child domestic work affect informal education?

The hypothesis to be tested is that, by undermining the child's integrity and social interactions, domestic work inhibits informal education.

This study seeks to fill an empirical gap, as few qualitative investigations have been conducted in Analamanga to document the specific mechanisms through which household chores disrupt time and space for informal learning. Through semi-structured interviews with children and their families in several municipalities in the region, we will analyze these mechanisms.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1- Study Area

The survey was conducted in the Analamanga region (Madagascar): a densely populated urban and peri-urban area, representative of national socio-economic dynamics and particularly affected by child domestic labor.

Selection criteria: socio-economic representativeness (urban/peri-urban disparities, widespread poverty); high concentration of households employing children for low-cost services; presence of NGOs (UNICEF, ILO) and local structures facilitating access to data.

Target population: Child domestic workers: The survey focused on children aged 5 to 17 engaged in domestic work, identified with the help of NGOs and local authorities.

Sending households: Families that sent their children to work were interviewed to understand the underlying causes of this practice.

Employers: Households employing child domestic workers were included to analyze their perceptions, expectations, and behaviors.

Partner organizations: NGOs such as UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO), as well as local associations, provided key information and facilitated interviews.

Local authorities: Heads of *fokontany* (administrative neighborhoods) and other community leaders contributed to the survey by sharing their perspectives on the local management of this issue.

The Analamanga region thus provides a relevant framework for analyzing the interconnections between socio-economic fragility, cultural norms, and child labor. The results of this study can serve as a basis for recommendations adapted to local realities and applicable to similar contexts in Madagascar.

2.2- Sampling

The sampling for this study was designed to accurately represent the phenomenon of child labor in the Analamanga region. It aims to understand the socio-economic and cultural factors that encourage it and their effects on children.

The decision to include 1,000 children in this study was based on a structured approach in collaboration with several NGOs. These children were identified based on specific criteria, such as involvement in economic activities (including domestic labor), age (6 to 17 years), and limited or no access to education. Selection was carried out in several urban and peri-urban areas, focusing on zones where child labor is most prevalent, according to data collected by partner NGO.

The survey was conducted in collaboration with the following NGOs, active in child protection and possessing deep knowledge of local communities: UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) / ILO (International Labour Organization) / Aina, Enfance et Avenir / Enfants de Tana / Graines de Bitume / ASME (Sister Emmanuelle Association) / Grandir Dignement / ONG Avotra / Ong Zazakely / ONG Bel Avenir.

- 135 households: These families were interviewed to understand the economic motivations and constraints driving them to involve their children in economic activities.
- 20 employers: Households or businesses employing children were included to explore their practices, perceptions, and expectations regarding child labor.

- 10 NGO: The involved organizations shared key data and testimonies to contextualize the information gathered.

Selection criteria

- **Geographic criteria:** Sites were selected in various urban and peri-urban neighborhoods of Analamanga, where child labor prevalence is particularly high.
- **Socio-economic criteria:** Children from families living below the poverty line or facing specific vulnerabilities were prioritized to analyze the link between poverty and child labor.
- **Work-type criteria:** Children engaged in domestic, agricultural, or informal work were targeted, as these sectors are most affected by the phenomenon.
- **Organizational criteria:** The selected NGOs were active in the study areas and had significant experience in combating child labor.

Sampling collection methods:

Surveys: Structured questionnaires were administered to all target groups to collect quantitative data on their socio-economic conditions and perceptions.

- **Semi-structured interviews:** In-depth discussions were held with children, households, employers, and NGO representatives to gather qualitative testimonies.
- **Participant observation:** Field immersion enabled direct observation of children’s working conditions and interaction with local communities.

NGO and local authorities provided data and facilitated the identification of target populations.

III. RESULTS

3.1-Working Hours of Child Domestic Workers

These results pertain to the starting and ending working hours of child domestic workers in Madagascar, expressed as percentages for different time intervals. The method used involves categorizing the start and end times into predefined intervals and calculating the frequency of children falling within each interval.

The data were grouped into time slots for both the beginning and end of the working day. For each interval, the percentage of children with corresponding working hours was calculated. This method allows for a clear visualization of trends and differences between starting and ending work times.

TABLE 1: Start and End Times of Child Domestic Workers in Madagascar

Start Time		End Time	Percentage of Children (%)
Before 4:00 a.m.	12%	Before 6:00 p.m.	10%
4:00 – 5:00 a.m.	30%	6:00 – 7:00 p.m.	25%
5:00 – 6:00 a.m.	38%	7:00 – 8:00 p.m.	35%
6:00 – 7:00 a.m.	15%	8:00 – 9:00 p.m.	20%
After 7:00 a.m.	5%	After 9:00 p.m.	10%

(Source: Author, 2024)

The results indicate that 80% of children start working before 6:00 a.m. (12% before 4:00 a.m., 30% between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m., and 38% between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m.), revealing a strong general trend. Regarding the end of the working day, 65% of children finish after 7:00 p.m. (25% between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m., 35% between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m., and 20% between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m.). These figures reflect extremely exhausting working days.

Twelve percent of children begin working before 4:00 a.m., and 10% finish after 9:00 p.m., which demonstrates cases of extreme overexploitation. The most frequent start and end time slots are between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m. (38%) and between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. (35%), corresponding to workdays of approximately 13 to 15 hours.

There is a strong correlation between early start times and late end times, reflecting a lack of rest for the children. The analysis also shows that these prolonged hours depend on the nature and quantity of tasks to be completed, as well as the expectations of employers.

The results demonstrate an unequal distribution of working hours, with 80% of children starting their day before 6:00 a.m. and 65% ending it after 7:00 p.m.

Such long working hours harm children's physical integrity (chronic fatigue, health issues) and psychological well-being (stress, insomnia). This excess fatigue and lack of free time significantly limit their opportunities to interact, explore, and learn beyond the domestic sphere.

Thus, the exhaustion caused by these extended workdays undermines the physical and mental well-being of children and reduces their learning opportunities, thereby confirming our hypothesis.

3.2-Nutritional Status of Child Domestic Workers

The results presented are based on a survey conducted with 1,000 child domestic workers and 130 households employing children. The analysis focuses on the distribution of meal locations and the children's level of satisfaction with their food. Categorizing the children according to these criteria allows for an assessment of nutritional disparities and their potential impact on the well-being of child domestic workers.

The majority of child domestic workers (68%) eat separately from their employers, highlighting significant social exclusion within the employer's household.

In terms of food satisfaction, a large majority (70%) report dissatisfaction with their diet. This is linked to where they eat—for example, eating leftovers. Only 5% of child domestic workers report being very satisfied, representing a small minority who have the chance to work in caring or affluent families.

A significant difference is observed between children who eat at the family table (12%) and those who eat in separate spaces or rely on leftovers (88%). This nutritional inequality reflects a discriminatory practice.

The results reveal an unequal distribution of meal conditions among child domestic workers, with 68% eating separately and 20% eating leftovers, in contrast to the 12% included in family meals. The high level of dissatisfaction

(70%) reflects a significant negative impact on children's perception of food quality.

TABLE 2: Distribution of Food Satisfaction and Meal Location among Child Domestic Workers in Madagascar (N = 1000)

Criteria	Number of Children	Percentage (%)	Comments
Eat at the main table with the family	120	12%	A minority of child domestic workers are included in family meals.
Eat separately in another room	680	68%	The majority of child domestic workers eat apart from the family.
Eat family leftovers	200	20%	A significant proportion depend on leftovers, reflecting discriminatory practices.
Satisfaction par rapport à la nourriture			
Very satisfied	50	5%	Very few children consider their food adequate or satisfying.
Satisfied	250	25%	A minority consider their diet sufficient.
Dissatisfied	700	70%	The majority of children find their food insufficient or inadequate.

(Source: Author, 2024)

These findings demonstrate that the majority of child domestic workers experience unfavorable meal conditions, with predominant food dissatisfaction and a strong correlation between mealtime isolation and dissatisfaction. These nutritional and social deficits harm the physical and mental well-being of children, thereby reducing their capacity for informal learning and supporting the hypothesis that domestic work hinders informal education.

3.3-Forms of Abuse in Child Domestic Work

The following results present the prevalence, within a sample of 1,000 child domestic workers in Madagascar, of six identified forms of violence and abuse. The data were collected through a survey conducted with the children, and each reported incident was categorized into one of six types: verbal abuse and psychological violence, physical violence, denial of freedom to go out, withholding of wages, sexual violence, and other forms. The number of cases was then counted and converted into percentages to compare the frequency of each type of abuse.

Verbal abuse and psychological violence (40%) represent the most frequent form of mistreatment experienced by child domestic workers. These acts include verbal humiliation and denigration, causing serious harm to their self-esteem and mental health.

One quarter of the children report having suffered regular beatings or physical assaults (physical violence – 25%). These abuses, often resulting in visible injuries, worsen their physical health, already compromised by their working conditions. Fifteen percent of the children are denied their freedom of movement, further isolating them from their social environment.

TABLE 3: Different Forms of Violence and Abuse Experienced by Child Domestic Workers

Types of Violence / Abuse	Number of Cases	Percentage
Verbal Abuse and Psychological Violence	400	40%
Physical Violence (beatings)	250	25%
Denial of Freedom to Go Out	150	15%
Withholding of Wages	100	10%
Sexual Violence (rape)	70	7%
Other Forms of Violence	30	3%
Total	1000	100%

(Source: Author, 2024)

Regarding sexual violence (7%), these abuses particularly affect young girl domestic workers. Rape, often committed by members of the host family or third parties, leads to lasting trauma. The increasing number of police reports confirms a worrying trend in areas with high levels of insecurity.

As for other forms of violence (3%), this category includes less frequently reported but still significant abuse, such as food deprivation or inhumane living conditions.

The statistically significant prevalence of psychological (40%) and physical (25%) abuse, along with the highly unequal distribution of mistreatment, highlights the severe harm to children's integrity. These violations impair their cognitive and emotional capacities, thereby reducing their availability and motivation for informal learning—confirming the hypothesis that domestic work, by undermining the child's integrity, hinders informal education.

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1-Working Hours of Child Domestic Workers

The extreme schedules observed (80% of children starting work before 6 a.m. and 65% finishing after 7 p.m., including 12% starting before 4 a.m. and 10% finishing after 9 p.m.) reflect an almost continuous grip of domestic work over the children's daily lives. It can be concluded that these long working hours (averaging 13–15 hours per day) significantly reduce the time available for informal education (play, reading, social interaction), depriving the child of essential experiences for cognitive and socio-emotional development.

The strong correlation between early start times and late end times supports our hypothesis: the children's physical integrity (fatigue, sleep disturbances) and psychological well-being (stress, anxiety) are compromised, and their opportunities for informal learning are reduced. These cumulative effects confirm the premise that domestic work is a major barrier to the informal development of the child.

These results are consistent with the findings of Keane, Krutikova, and Neal (2020), who showed, based on longitudinal data, that children engaged in prolonged labor are significantly less likely to participate in informal educational activities. Their study, conducted in Vietnam, India, Ethiopia, and Peru, highlighted a correlation between the number of hours worked per day and lower scores in problem-solving and socio-emotional skills. Even though their study covers several countries, the observed effects are similar, showing

that long working days have negative impacts on informal education across contexts.

Moreover, our findings align with those of Edmonds & Pavcnik (2005), who demonstrated that excessive working hours lead to chronic fatigue and sleep disorders in children, affecting both their mental well-being and their capacity for formal and informal learning.

The data collection, based on fixed time slots and self-reporting, may lack precision, and the study, limited to the Analamanga region, is not representative. To address these limitations, we recommend:

Asking children to keep a small daily journal; Verifying working hours directly in the field; Expanding the survey to other regions and seasons.

4.2-Nutritional Status of Child Domestic Workers

The results reveal that 68% of child domestic workers eat separately from their employers, and 20% rely on leftovers, while only 12% are included in family meals. Moreover, 70% of children report dissatisfaction with their food, highlighting significant social exclusion and nutritional discrimination within the household.

These unfavorable meal conditions undermine children's physical integrity (energy deficiencies, stunted growth) and psychological well-being (feelings of rejection, low self-esteem), reducing their ability to engage in informal learning activities (play, cultural exchange, observation) outside of their work.

Based on this nutritional analysis, our hypothesis is confirmed: by compromising the physical and social integrity of children, domestic work hinders their informal learning.

These results are consistent with those of Gamlin et al. (2013), who, in a comparative study across six countries (including India and Togo), reported that 68% of child domestic workers are excluded from family meals and show low dietary diversity scores, which are correlated with increased psychological distress and reduced participation in informal learning.

At the global level, the report *Child Labour: Global Estimates* (ILO-UNICEF, 2020) highlights the link between prolonged child labor and malnutrition, with harmful effects on cognitive abilities and participation in learning activities.

However, our study adds a contextual dimension by explicitly linking mealtime discrimination with barriers to informal education—an approach that has received little prior attention.

The study is based on self-reported data, without objective anthropometric measurements, and is limited to the Analamanga region. It would be beneficial to combine survey-based data with anthropometric measurements (e.g., height, weight).

4.3-Forms of Abuse in Child Domestic Work

The results indicate that 40% of child domestic workers are subjected to verbal and psychological abuse, 25% to physical violence, and 15% to restrictions on their freedom of movement, while 7% report experiencing sexual violence. This distribution highlights that verbal and physical abuse are

the most common, directly affecting children's emotional and physical integrity. These repeated violations create a climate of fear, lower self-esteem, and undermine the psychological safety needed for openness and curiosity—two essential drivers of informal learning.

These findings confirm our hypothesis: by harming the psychological and social integrity of children, domestic work hinders the development of informal interactions that are vital to their non-formal education.

Our observations are consistent with those of DeGraff, Ferro, and Levison (2016), who found that in Ghana, 33% of child domestic workers experienced physical violence. Such abuse often prevented them from participating in street games or group activities, which are important for informal learning. The similarity between our results (25%) and those from Ghana, despite different contexts, suggests that this issue transcends national boundaries.

Moreover, Fassa et al. (2005) observed in Brazil that harsh working conditions negatively affected children's physical health—particularly their muscles and bones—thereby limiting their ability to play and learn. Although their research focuses mainly on physical aspects (pain, injuries), it aligns with our study, which also highlights psychological effects. This shows that abuse acts through multiple channels to hinder informal education.

However, our study offers a new contribution: it clearly distinguishes between the different types of abuse and their frequency in the Analamanga region. This allows for better adaptation of child protection measures to the real needs of children in this local context.

One major limitation of our study is that it relies mainly on self-reported data from children, without the possibility of external verification. This may lead to omissions or silence, especially regarding sensitive issues such as sexual violence. In addition, the fact that the study is limited to the Analamanga region reduces the generalizability and representativeness of the findings.

To address these limitations, we suggest:

Including interviews and direct field observations; Extending the study to other regions and time periods.

In sum, these results show that abuse seriously undermines the informal education of child domestic workers, and they offer insights for improving the quality and scope of future research.

Similarly, the ILO-UNICEF report (2023) highlights that, among the 17.2 million children in domestic work globally, more than half lose access to the community and cultural interactions that foster informal education.

In contrast, the conceptual framework of the “edu-workspace” proposed by Dunne & Humphreys (2021) in rural sub-Saharan Africa shows that, when domestic tasks are structured with regular breaks and age-appropriate responsibilities, work can sometimes coexist with rich informal learning (transmission of skills, intergenerational socialization).

V. GENERAL CONCLUSION

It must be acknowledged that, despite the existing legal and normative frameworks intended to protect children in Madagascar, child domestic work persists and stands as a major obstacle to informal education—an essential pillar of children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Our findings show that workdays often exceeding 13 hours, coupled with marked malnutrition and repeated abuse, compromise the physical and mental integrity of children. The near-total absence of breaks drastically reduces their opportunities to learn through play, observation, and social interaction.

We observed that these intense working conditions deprive children of the informal time and spaces essential for acquiring social skills and practical competencies, thus validating our hypothesis that domestic work hinders non-formal education. For now, strengthening monitoring mechanisms and effectively enforcing existing laws appear to be the only available paths to curb these practices and uphold the right to out-of-school learning.

This raises a new question: “How can child protection and the development of informal education services be sustainably integrated to ensure the overall well-being of child domestic workers?”

To address this, we propose two complementary programs:

Institutional and Legal Strengthening: Review and tighten monitoring and enforcement systems; train and equip local actors (social services, justice system, police) to ensure concrete application of child labor laws; and raise awareness among employers and families about the importance of informal education.

Development of Informal Support Structures: Create and fund childcare and informal education centers in each district, combining recreational activities, practical workshops, and psychosocial support, in order to restore opportunities for socialization and learning outside the domestic work environment.

By combining these two measures with reinforced support from the State and its partners, child domestic workers could be fully integrated into both educational and social systems—an essential condition for their success and their contribution to the country's development.

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