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Information needs of local domestic workers in the Arab Republic of Egypt

Needs of local domestic workers

643

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to provide first-hand information regarding domestic labour/labourers in Egypt. The researcher tries to investigate the information rights and needs of these vulnerable and marginalized groups in Egypt in terms of its thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, motivations, techniques, preferences, ways, tools and problems encountered towards using of and accessing information. The study, therefore, attempts to look at, as possible, the many different characteristics of local domestic workers in Egypt and affecting their use of and access to information.

Design/methodology/approach – Methodology used here was an adaptive form of snowball sampling of a heterogeneous demographic group of participants in the local domestic work in Egypt, used to select focus groups to explore a range of relevant issues.

Findings – Demographically, this study showed that local domestic labour in Egypt, to a great extent, is occupied and performed by women and children, and the average age of the total interviewed participants was around 31 years. Over half of participants were uneducated, followed by nearly a quarter of them were with no formal education and just a small number had some primary education. This study concluded that a large number of participants were described as illiterate and non-skilled labourers. Participants' income proved that it was one of barriers to use of and access to information where a large number of participants were labelled as low-income workers. The information-seeking behaviour (ISB) profile of participants indicated a preference for verbal over written, informal over formal and undocumented over documented information channels and sources to solve problems relating to everyday existence using some helping tools and devices especially cell phones. The most popular information sources mentioned and followed by participants were verbal information with friends, peers and colleagues in neighbouring households either via telephones, especially cell phones, or face-to-face meeting. TV and Radio, newspapers and magazines were, respectively, the most famous formal sources participants use. Information related to work, family affairs, security and health issues was most commonly desired and wanted by participants. Participants mentioned that their priorities of accessing information were to help in work-related activities such as cooking cleaning and decorating, to know new kitchen recipes, to assist in the education of the employer's children. Others added that they were also seeking for information for getting promoted and having some fun especially through audiovisual sources like TV and Radio. They were not commonly using libraries due to the fact that most of them were uneducated, and the education of the some others was limited. However, this study showed that there was a little and accidental use for some libraries like public and children libraries and a small number of them was using the employer's home library. In terms of using technologies related to the use of information like the Internet, the study found such access was an issue, as a very small number of participants were using it mainly for personal information. Regarding challenges, concerns and problems faced by local domestic workers in Egypt during using of and accessing information, the study found that the most important challenges participants faced in this study were the illiteracy and lack of awareness about the basic rights and perception of information rights and needs. Other challenges like the time, psychological burdens, the social image being domestic worker, lack of



accessible information channels, lack of training and skills and also lack of money needed to access information were also an issue.

Research limitations/implications – This study comes to respond strongly to the great global concern on the neglected and marginalized sector of work/workers in Egypt. It provides information on invisible forms of domestic labour/labourers, and indicates how their rights, especially towards accessing information, are violated. Any findings of this study may generate interest and create awareness on the needs and conditions of domestic labour/labourers among marginalized labour advocates, policymakers and the civil society.

Originality/value – The literature on this topic is scarce and, therefore, this paper gives important and significant insight into how to assist local domestic workers in Egypt with information needs.

Keywords User studies, Information seeking behaviour, Egypt, Information needs, Domestic work, Domestic workers

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

No one can deny that information is very important to everyone for every aspect of their daily life. People, whether literate or not, should be allowed sufficient access to information to help them to become better informed citizens. The use of and access to information is considered one of the most fundamental and important of human rights. The right of information is guaranteed by most of the international charters and constitutions. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), issued in 1948 by the United Nations, was adopted to address all the varied issues related to human rights, including work (United Nations, 2014). Almost all of the UDHR's articles cover relevant aspects of human rights challenges encountered by different workers all over the world, whether they are formal or informal workers. In fact, there are a large number of studies conducted about formal workers, but few studies have focused on informal labourers, such as domestic workers. In a serious attempt to shed light on them, some organizations, institutions and countries adopted pacts and conventions related to the organization of domestic workers, so-called "informal carers" or "care providers". New York State in the USA, for instance, adopted obligatory laws known as the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights (New York State Department of Labor, 2010). "The right of access to information", organized by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and adopted in May 2010, refers to ensuring the right to obtain access to information to assist in decision-making required to participate in democratic life and to promote equality between all individuals and groups (UNESCO, 2010). It highlighted the importance of promoting public awareness about the right to information and develops the capacity of each individual in the exercise of this right by focusing particularly on the many different disadvantaged and vulnerable categories of people and work groups.

Being one of the most vulnerable and marginalized work groups in society, domestic workers have not received, unfortunately, any significant attention, not only by officials but also by scholars and researchers, especially in developing countries, such as Egypt, though they play a very important role in the life of particular groups of people, such as the elderly, children and people with special needs by helping them to perform their daily regimen. The shortage of systematic research on the many different needs of informal carers, especially their information needs, as stated by Alzougool *et al.* (2007), often prohibits the information providers and developers from determining what types

of information informal carers need to support their roles and different tasks as care providers and to evaluate how well they are fulfilling the information needs of informal carers. This research attempts to address the information needs of such workers in Egypt, a region that has not seen this kind of research or even showed much interest in the topic.

Needs of local
domestic
workers

The purpose, objectives and significance of the study

The purpose of this study is to provide first-hand information regarding domestic work and workers in the Arab Republic of Egypt and, thus, respond vigorously to global concern over this neglected sector of workers. Significantly, this study is considered the first one of its kind in the Arab and Egyptian environment to discuss these neglected issues and topics compared to other vital issues. The researcher investigates the information needs of local domestic workers in Egypt in terms of their thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, motivations, techniques, preferences, ways, tools and challenges they may confront towards the use of and access to information. As much as possible, the study attempts to look at the many different characteristics of Egyptian domestic workers that may affect their use of and access to information. Any findings of this study may generate interest and create awareness of the conditions and needs of domestic workers among marginalized labour advocates, policymakers and civil society. Such awareness may help motivate researchers to add this neglected area to their research agenda. The key objectives of this study, therefore, are to:

- identify the information needs of Egyptian domestic workers;
- determine the demographic characteristics of Egyptian domestic workers;
- determine the reasons that may push Egyptian domestic workers to use information;
- determine information sources and channels used and followed by Egyptian domestic workers; and
- identify any barriers that may impede Egyptian domestic workers' access to information.

Statement of the problem

The main problem of this study is to reveal the information needs of Egyptian domestic workers, being one of the most vulnerable and marginalized work groups in society. Though there is growing attention to these work groups globally, there has been no research conducted on their status and characteristics in Egypt, especially regarding their information needs and ISB. Compared to other professions, the job of domestic work is sometimes regarded by people, especially in Egypt and the Arab world, as a low and despicable occupation. Domestic workers lack many basic necessities and key elements to live their lives fully. They need to feel that they have equal rights, including information rights, with other professions in society. This study, therefore, tries to attract attention to the information rights and information needs of Egyptian domestic workers.

Limitations of the study

This study focuses only on domestic workers in Egypt who have Egyptian nationality. It does not cover foreign domestic workers in Egypt, although they are a significant

portion of the Egyptian labour force. Any conclusions resulting from this study are limited in scope to only local domestic workers in Egypt. The study does not contain a significantly large enough sample of the population from across Egypt to draw meaningful widespread conclusions indicative of such a larger population.

Definition of terms

Domestic work

According to the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) \(2012\)](#) and following Convention No. 189, “domestic work” means work performed in or for a household or households.

Domestic workers

Domestic workers typically work in private homes, performing various household tasks, such as cleaning, gardening and caring for children or elderly people ([Albin and Mantouvalou, 2012](#)).

Information needs

“Information needs” refer to the demands which may be vocal or written and made to a library or to some other information system ([Brittain, 1970](#)).

Arab republic of Egypt

With a total area of about 386,662 square miles and an estimated population of 80,471,869 in 2010, Egypt is one of the oldest civilizations, with recorded history dating back to about 4,000 BC, situated in the northeast of Africa on the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt is bordered to the West by Libya, to the South by Sudan and to the East by the Red Sea and Israel ([InfoPlease, 2011](#)).

Research questions of the study

Based on the objectives of this study, the five following research questions provide the focus and direction for the research:

- RQ1.* What are the information needs of Egyptian domestic workers?
- RQ2.* What are the demographic characteristics of Egyptian domestic workers?
- RQ3.* Why are Egyptian domestic workers seeking information?
- RQ4.* What kinds of information sources are Egyptian domestic workers using?
- RQ5.* What barriers, if any, may Egyptian domestic workers encounter while seeking information?

Research design and methodology

This study involves the information needs of Egyptian domestic workers. Due to the lack of initial demographic data and the difficulty of conducting a dialogue with participants, this research is based mainly on a convenience sample and this causes the study to be exploratory in nature. In the beginning, the researcher was unable to directly make contact with people whose workplace is inside their employer’s home. To get over the difficulty of contacting these hidden workers, the researcher contacted Egyptian recruitment offices and domestic service agencies which are involved in hiring this kind of worker in Egypt.

To encourage them to participate in the study, gifts were presented to those who participated. After introducing the researcher and explaining the purpose of the study, potential participants were asked to contact the researcher through his phone number, as that seemed to be the most suitable and easiest way to communicate, as almost all of the participants have access to a phone. Using an adapted form of snowball sampling, the researcher asked all who contacted him to pass on an announcement to their associates who might be interested in participating in the study. According to Kratt (2003), snowball sampling is defined as one whereby one participant provides the researcher with the names of other qualifying individuals. Consistent with the views of Gruppetta (2005), the researcher wished to reach as many individuals as possible by the application of this method, to allow the participation of a large proportion of relevant cases, avoiding any bias, but ensuring low cost. The snowballing sample is often used in conjunction with focus groups in qualitative studies which seek to study problems in depth and, consequently, focus groups are also used. According to Morgan (1996), focus groups provide a valuable tool for exploratory research and can be used to test initial ideas concerning the research design. The focus group technique, which is a variation of the group interview, has been used extensively to ascertain the perceptions and feelings of participants around a particular area of inquiry (Chase, 2000). The advantage of this methodology is to show and reveal, through dialogue and discussion, a number of issues which are difficult to detect accurately and deeply with other methods, such as questionnaires. In this study, the main purpose of the focus group method is to allow participants to express their opinions and views freely about their use of and access to information, to provide the opportunity to hear a range of views and to agree/disagree, or expand on each other's ideas.

Despite some apparent demographic differences, this study is concerned with the impact of their demographics on the use of and access to information among the participants. Hence, the researcher did not intentionally wish to establish any balance in relation to gender, age, income or education in this study. It was a heterogeneous group, confirming absolute involvement of a variety of many Egyptians in this profession. Due to the lack of awareness among most of the participants, as well as their low level of education, some training sessions were provided to make them more conversant with the topic of the study and on how to answer the questions presented by the researcher.

Two research assistants and two interviewers were recruited to help the main researcher. Interviewees were clearly informed of the purpose of the study, as well as informed about the anonymization of data collected by them. To avoid any misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the questions, a training of interviewers was conducted. Then, three pilot interviews were carried out by the research team. Based on this test, the interviewing guide was edited according to the gaps identified.

To widen the sample of the study, a snowball referral technique was then adopted. The researcher also interviewed some employers ($n = 5$) and domestic services agencies ($n = 3$) in each area. Large numbers responded initially to the announcement of the study. However, practical constraints resulted in the need for the researcher to select a sample, with 41 being the effective size. As viewed by Krueger and Casey (2008), this size is appropriate to conduct the study. The interviews were conducted in January 2013. Sessions ranged approximately between 80 to almost 100 minutes, viewed as adequate by Gibbs (1997). During the interviews, additional questions were asked to clarify the answers and acquire more detailed explanations depending on the interviewees'

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responses. Sessions were digitally recorded. As a matter of assistance, notes were also taken by hand.

Participants' ages ranged from under 15 to above 41 years of age, and were composed of 38 females and only three males. Based on the administrative division of Egypt (three greater areas; North, Middle and Upper) and for the focus groups, respondents were divided into four equal-sized groups, as appropriate. As Table I shows, the first group ($n = 12$) represents North Egypt (mainly in the city of Alexandria), the second ($n = 12$) and third groups ($n = 9$) represent Middle Egypt (mainly in the capital city of Cairo) and, finally, the fourth group ($n = 8$) represents Upper Egypt (mainly in the city of Qena).

648

Domestic work/workers

Definitions and image

According to Cremers *et al.* (2008), domestic work is speciality work, as it is mostly informal in nature, not well defined and is frequently "black work", which means that neither the worker nor the employer make any clear declaration to the tax authorities. Quite often, employers and workers are not aware of the governing rules among either of them. That is why the rights of domestic workers are often not respected. Domestic work, nonetheless, is undervalued and poorly regulated, and many domestic workers remain overworked, underpaid and unprotected. Accounts of mistreatment and abuse, especially of live-in and migrant domestic workers, are regularly denounced in the media. The term "domestic work" covers a range of tasks and services that vary from country to country and that can be different depending on the age, gender, ethnic background and migration status of the workers concerned, as well as the cultural and economic context in which they work (ILO, 2013a).

Domestic work is isolated and rarely recognized by governments as "work". This makes it difficult to organize domestic workers and collectively progress their labour rights (Smales, 2010). Domestic workers are described as one of the most marginalized groups in the global labour market in all the ways that count: economically, socially and legally (Arriagada, 2009). They are also described as disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups, under-paid and unprotected with poor conditions, as they are rarely included in national labour laws and lack necessary legislation. They usually come from poorer areas and countries through recruitment/domestic services agencies and brokers and form a highly socially vulnerable group that is often subject to harassment and exploitation. In most countries, they are excluded from labour legislation and often denied fundamental rights, such as freedom of association and protection against discrimination. However, they are an essential link in the economic chain in every country of the world (Labour Education, 2007). The image of domestic work is usually viewed as "women's work" (Boontinand, 2010), belonging mostly to the household sphere and not to the market; domestic workers are usually viewed as

Table I.
Participant
distribution of local
domestic worker
groups

Groups	Male	Female	Total
North Egypt Group	1	11	12
Middle Egypt Group 1	2	10	12
Middle Egypt Group 2	0	9	9
Upper Egypt Group	0	8	8
Total	3	38	41

“servants” rather than as workers. According to [Kok \(2013\)](#), domestic workers are perceived as maids due to contextual factors that shape their image, such as ethnicity, being in the home and the media’s depiction of the role. In Egypt, as in most societies, domestic work is mostly described as feminized work. Some Egyptians, especially girls and women, accept work as domestic workers when they are unable to find any other job opportunities. Despite domestic workers being described as a “work group” in Egyptian labour law (Act No. 12, 2003), their rights, needs and work conditions have not been clearly or adequately addressed.

Statistics

A large number of domestic workers are undocumented and cannot be controlled, fearing accountability and tax evasion. Some consider them as a hidden category in isolated segments of society, as they conduct their work behind the walls of private homes. For that reason, there are no reliable statistics on the real number of domestic workers worldwide. In many countries, domestic workers are not regarded as workers by the national legislation and, as their work often takes place inside of private homes, they are invisible to the public and to authorities who might count them ([Labour Education, 2007](#)). Regarding the estimation of their number around the world, the [ILO \(2011\)](#) stated that there are about 53 million domestic workers in the world, but unofficial estimates claim the number to be closer to nearly 100 million. Asia alone has more than 50 million migrant workers, mainly from Indonesia and the Philippines ([Smales, 2010](#)). In Latin America, as stated by [Tokman \(2010\)](#), there are 7.6 million domestic workers constituting, on average, 5.5 per cent of total urban employment.

Rights

Everyone has the right of access to information which is considered a fair, essential, and inherent right to continue life. According to [Mantouvalou \(2012\)](#), the issue of labour rights has attracted much interest in recent years among lawyers, academic scholars and other activists of human rights. She emphasized that, in human rights law, some support the character of labour rights as human rights without any hesitation, while others view it with some suspicion. Few international, regional or local efforts were made towards establishing what is called “Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights”. Of these efforts, there is the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, which entered into force in 2003 with the participation of Egypt, and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted in 1998. The Philippine Congress passed a law, enacted on 18 January 2013, known as the “Domestic Workers Act” (“Batas Kasambahay”) for the protection of domestic workers. In the USA, we find the New York Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights, enacted in 2010, and also the California Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights, Assembly Bill 889, which was enacted in 2012. Despite these examples, such bills of rights at best only cover the most basic rights of domestic workers; however, they are considered a good sign of interest in this category of work group. As domestic workers are not covered by labour laws in most countries and are often forced to live with their employers, their exploitation seems legally sanctioned. Most domestic workers, as live-in employees, work many hours over the standard amount set for other jobs and are considered on-call 24 hours a day. They are often denied a regular free time or a day of rest ([IOM Damascus, 2003](#)).

Features and characteristics

Jarab (2010) has summarized the main characteristics of domestic workers as follows:

- *Low status*: The domestic worker's job is to a great extent perceived as low-skilled, which leads to it being poorly valued in social and economic terms.
- *Asymmetrical personalized relationship*: The highly personalized character of the relationship between the employee and his/her employer, which involves a highly asymmetric power relation.
- *Isolation*: Domestic work tends to be performed in an isolated environment away from the public eye.
- *Gender*: The work is commonly performed by women and described as a "feminized work".

Types of domestic work

According to Galotti (2009), the range of activities carried out by domestic workers is very wide. Nevertheless, there are some common factors. The domestic worker's job tends to involve a variety of tasks of a domestic nature which are perceived as low-skilled tasks. However, unlike some other low-skilled jobs, this type of job tends to be highly personalized, isolated and emotionally charged. Domestic workers are employed in private homes by the householder to carry out tasks such as cleaning, laundry, cooking, shopping, gardening, childcare or care of the elderly. Some live on the premises of their employer. In the Egyptian context, the domestic work is generally defined in terms of types of work performed and the time spent at work (i.e. in the employer's home). Live-out and live-in are two distinct categories of domestic work. Live-out work is primarily of two types: first, those who work in one house for the whole day and go back to their homes in the evening; and second, those who work in different houses, moving from one to the other, performing one or more tasks in each household. They may clean in one house, chop up vegetables in another and wash clothes in the third, while some others may only perform one task, such as cooking. Another form of part-time live-out work is in terms of piece-rate. It is often applied to washing clothes, and wages are calculated on the basis of buckets of clothes. It is worth mentioning that about two-thirds (70.7 per cent) of participants interviewed in this study were live-in domestic workers.

Literature review

This paper tries to address and analyses the information needs of Egyptian domestic workers. Information needs may be synonymous with demands, requirements, wants and desires. The concept of "information needs" refers to the demands which may be vocal or written and made to a library or to some other information system (Brittain, 1970). It could be interpreted, as viewed by Hepworth *et al.* (2002), as data; information and knowledge that helps cope with situations and can lead to more effective management of the condition and improved quality of life. According to Bystrom (1999), in professional settings, information needs could be classified according to their connection with tasks. In an attempt to define the scope of the information needs of some particular servants like civil servants, Aiyepuku (1983) defined it in a manner that will strengthen the concept of development need to resolve around activities carried out by civil servants. These activities include finding facts, assessing trends and diagnosing

problems, identifying the needs, prescribing solution programmes and projects, assessing impact of action and evaluating successes and failures.

In fact, much of information needs/ISB research and user studies have focused on many different information needs and behaviours of many popular work groups, such as teachers, students, lawyers, doctors and other professional work groups, but socially vulnerable and marginalized work groups, such as domestic workers, have not been researched, despite their importance. Little research has previously been conducted on the information needs and ISB of domestic workers in the Arab and Egyptian environment. Earlier research tended to be general and did not attempt to address or identify in a comprehensive way the real and actual information needs of this category of workers in such environments. In Egypt specifically, previous studies conducted on domestic workers were concerned mainly and only with their basic and actual needs of food, getting paid, time off, leaves and so forth, but no studies have been conducted about the issue of their “information needs” or “information seeking behaviour”.

Despite this, there are some organizations and networks, though few, involved and interested in everything related to domestic work and workers. Of these organizations, the ILO is one which deals with different issues related to labour affairs, particularly international labour standards and decent work for all. ILO was established in 1919 and became a specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946. It is highly interested in protecting and promoting opportunities for everyone without distinction to race, religion, nationality, language, colour, age or other status to attain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. One of the main concerns of ILO is to improve working conditions for domestic workers. On the 100th session of the ILO conference held in June 2011, the ILO adopted Convention No. 189, supplementing Recommendation No. 201, regulating the terms and conditions of work for domestic workers. Of these networks, the [International Domestic Workers' Network \(IDWN\) \(2013\)](#) is one such which is made up of domestic workers' unions and associations from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, North America and Europe. The IDWN represents domestic workers at the international level and serves as a clearinghouse for the exchange of information about domestic workers.

Trying to address the information dissemination needs of Indonesian migrant domestic workers, [Orange et al. \(2012\)](#) conducted a study that showed that Indonesian migrant domestic workers, all women, were not aware of their basic rights, including information rights. They were also unaware of identifying their needs for information. Due to their low level of education, their skills to make use of written or even digital information were limited. In an attempt to determine how the caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children in Namibia seek information, [Mnubi-Mchombu and Mostert \(2011\)](#) conducted a study, through focus group discussions, with selected caregivers who were working in rural and urban areas. The study found that there were differences between caregivers in both rural and urban areas in terms of their use of and access to information. While caregivers in rural areas were seeking information on educational support, psychological and counselling services, childcare and job opportunities, caregivers in urban areas were seeking information mostly for educational support and the establishment of small businesses. While radio, traditional leaders, regional councillors, friends and relatives were identified as the most popular channels of information for caregivers in rural areas follow, the information channels in urban areas were mostly friends, relatives, church leaders and regional councillors. Based on

doctoral research, [Cooper and Urquhart \(2005\)](#) conducted a study about the information needs of home-care workers and clients receiving home care in a city in the UK. The study found that information related to health, welfare, leisure and domestic concerns is perceived as most important by home-care workers in responding to their home clients. Home-care workers were aware of using formal information resources available at the agency office, such as social health-care leaflets, financial support and health conditions. Few of them used library materials, especially for course work and training. [Forbes \(1999\)](#) reported on an information needs assessment of a group of domestic workers using the critical incident approach in Clarendon, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The study indicated that most needs can be categorized into the need for coping/survival and helping information.

Overview and characteristics of Egyptian domestic workers

Due to the low income of a large number of Egyptians (gross domestic product per capita is \$3,256, according to the [World Bank, 2014](#)), high unemployment rate (40 per cent, according to [Trading Economics, 2014](#)), lower standard of living and the lack of job opportunities, some Egyptians, especially women, have been forced to work in professions that are unrelated to their qualifications or even consistent with their abilities. Domestic work is one of these occupations, which is considered one of the many phenomena and multi-dimensional factors affecting Egyptian society, especially in high class and rich areas. It is a female-dominated occupation. Domestic workers in Egypt are mainly composed of rural migrants and laid-off workers. Most of them are recruited through informal channels and, for this reason, it is difficult to enumerate them. To date, there is no systematic collection of data on the real and exact number of Egyptians employed as domestic workers, especially those working in private households, due to difficulties in collecting information from domestic services agencies/offices, doorkeepers/guards, parents, older servants and the like. While every business in Egypt has its own union or syndicate which is concerned with its affairs, such as the syndicate of doctors, lawyers or teachers, domestic workers do not have such unions or syndicates that are interested in their affairs, as well as their rights. There is not even a clear job title or description to address the possible tasks that domestic workers could perform. The Egyptian government does not provide a functional entity to domestic workers, considering that such jobs cannot be controlled or codified due to many considerations based on age, gender and so forth. The image of being a domestic worker in Egypt is not good and many people do not like or accept these kinds of jobs. If accepted, they are often forced to do it. A large number of Egyptian domestic workers try to evade the use of the name "house maid", as it brings shame to their family.

Findings of the study

The findings of this study are organized according to the order of the items listed in the interview. They are also handled in terms of the answer to the four research questions of the study.

RQ1. What are the information needs of Egyptian domestic workers?

A large number (87.8 per cent) of Egyptian domestic workers interviewed in this study indicated that they were not aware enough of their information rights and more than three-quarters (75.6 per cent) of them were not able to identify their needs for information. Almost a quarter (24.4 per cent) of them was aware of such rights as

knowing well how to address their needs of information, using suitable ways and tools to reach their goals. Egyptian domestic workers' needs for information were described as very simple and reasonable needs, reflecting their basic demands. Taking into consideration its level of importance, information related to domestic work, family affairs, security and health issues, as well as information related to searching for a better job than their current one were most commonly desired and wanted by Egyptian domestic workers.

RQ2. What are the demographic characteristics of Egyptian domestic workers?

Table II summarizes the demographic characteristics (gender, age, education level, social status and net income) of Egyptian domestic workers, cross-tabulated where possible.

As Figure 1 shows, the average age of participants was around 30. Just over half (56.1 per cent) were aged above 30 years and those who were below 20, described as young maids, constituted almost a quarter (24.4 per cent) of the total participants.

Figure 2 shows that the majority of Egyptian domestic workers were girls/women, where 93 per cent of the total participants were females. Male participants represented just 7 per cent of the total participants.

This study revealed that just over half (56.1 per cent) of the total participants were totally uneducated, as they did not know how to read and write at all, followed by nearly

Participants' age and gender crosstabulated with education, social status and income	< 15 years		16-20 years		21-25 years		26-30 years		31-35 years		36-40 years		> 41 years	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<i>Participants' education level</i>														
Uneducated		5		2		2		2		3		2	1	6
No formal education		1						2		1		3	2	1
Some primary education Primary school						1		1		1		1		2
Some elementary education High school				1										
		1												
<i>Participants' social status</i>														
Single		7		2		1								
Married				1		2		2		3		3	3	6
Divorced								2				1		1
Widow or widower								1		2		2		2
<i>Participants' net income</i>														
E.P. 501-600		1												
E.P. 601-700		2						1						
E.P. 701-800		2		1								1		2
E.P. 801-900		1		2		2		2		1		1	1	1
E.P. 901-1000		1				1		1		3		3	1	4
E.P. 1001+								1		1		1	1	2

Notes: M = male; F = female; the participants' net income is per month, and is given in Egyptian pounds (E.P.) with 1 E.P. equal to \$7.00 (estimation as of March 2014)

Table II.
Demographic
characteristics of
local domestic
workers in Egypt

a quarter (24.4 per cent) with no formal education. The remaining participants (20 per cent) had at least “some primary education” (Figure 3).

As shown in Figure 4, the study showed that most Egyptian domestic workers were labelled as low-income workers, where 85.4 per cent of them were paid monthly less than 1,000 Egyptian pounds (or the equivalent of \$142) and only 14.6 per cent were paid over 1,000 pounds. (The currency rate is based on estimation as of March 2014).

As Figure 5 shows, almost half (49 per cent) of the total participants indicated that they were married, followed by 24 per cent who indicated that they were unmarried, 10 per cent divorced and 17 per cent widows.

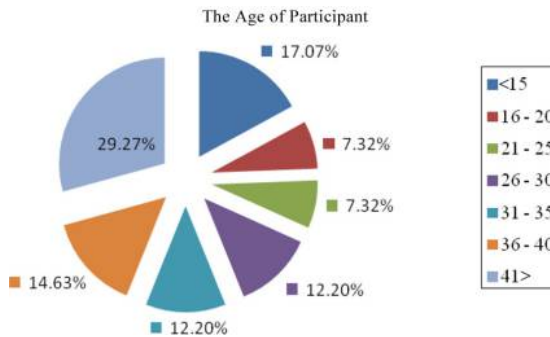


Figure 1.
Age of Egyptian domestic workers

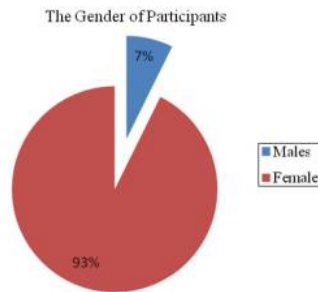


Figure 2.
Gender of Egyptian domestic workers

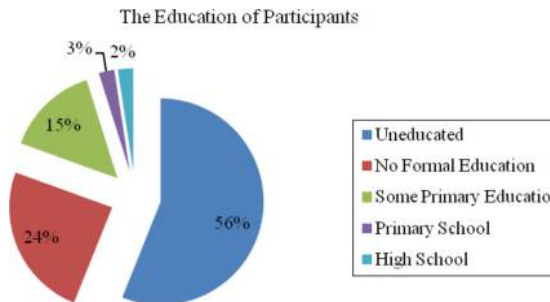


Figure 3.
Education level of Egyptian domestic workers

RQ3. Why are Egyptian domestic workers seeking information?

Data obtained from Egyptian domestic workers interviewed in this study indicated that their priorities for using information were mainly to help in activities and tasks related to their domestic work, such as cooking, cleaning, home decorating and caring for the elderly and/or children, in addition to assisting in the education of their employer's children. A few of them added that they were also seeking for information to get promoted financially by their employers. To reduce work pressure, a very small number of participants stated that they were seeking information for the purpose of having some fun through audio-visual materials (mainly TV), such as recreational programmes. Despite being a very small number, some of the participants, who we will describe as "better job seekers", stated that they were seeking information, specifically formal information, such as newspapers and magazines, to find advertisements related to getting a better job.

RQ4. What kinds of information sources are Egyptian domestic workers using?

The study revealed that information sources used by Egyptian domestic workers varied between verbal/oral sources, described as informal ones, and written sources, described as formal ones. For the purpose of exchanging information, a large number of Egyptian domestic workers prefer to use informal sources of information, which can be described also as personal/interpersonal sources, such as communication with families, relatives, friends and peers, especially those who live next door either via telephone, specifically cell phones or in face-to-face meetings. Such categories of informal sources, which are also considered information channels at the same time, were described as the most popular sources and channels of information by Egyptian domestic workers. Informal

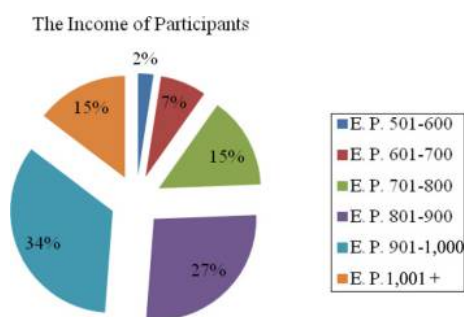


Figure 4.
Net income per
month of Egyptian
domestic workers

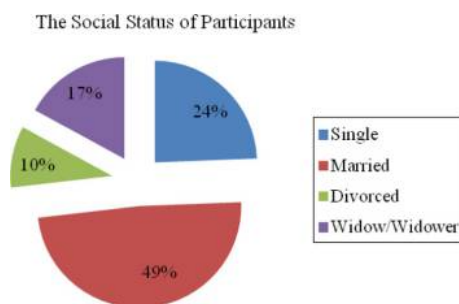


Figure 5.
Social status of
Egyptian domestic
workers

learning, as stated by Sanders *et al.* (2010), means the degree in which an individual learns from every day experience, in work or life, rather than from formal schooling or participating in formal courses and training. Participants mentioned that they learnt from each other and also shared many different experiences, particularly work-related experiences. They also mentioned that verbal communication with families, relatives and friends, as well as influential and inspirational leaders, such as spiritual and religious senior people, were identified as the most popular communication channels they followed for accessing information where almost all of them (97.6 per cent), especially those who were described as uneducated workers and involved, specifically in tasks related to cooking and caring of elderly and children, emphasized that when their work requires any information, they use verbal and oral information more than any other sources or channels of information.

Some participants, described as educated, depend largely on formal sources of information, described also as impersonal sources, such as TV/radio programmes, periodicals and books specialized mainly in the tasks they perform, especially books for cooking and home decorating. TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and books were, respectively, the most favoured formal sources of information Egyptian domestic workers were using. Slightly more than three-quarters (78.0 per cent) of the total participants used TV and radio programmes, respectively, to access information relating to their work, as well as enjoying recreational programmes and movies in their spare time. Nearly one-third (29.3 per cent) of participants, especially those who have a reasonable level of education, confirmed that they read written information from daily newspapers and weekly magazines which are available in the employer's house, either to get generally informed about current events or for specific information pertaining to their work. Two persons of this ratio stated that they were also using newspapers and magazines primarily to find out new job opportunities, hoping to improve their current status of work. A small number (26.9 per cent) of participants confirmed that they were using books that specialized mainly in cooking and home decorating.

It is worth mentioning that a large number (87.8 per cent) of participants indicated that they did not know how to save information they have. Most of them also did not have any kind of mechanisms for storing and retrieving information, and many of them also demonstrated that they did not know how to use, or even have, a storage media for information, such as a flash drive. In addition, some of participants emphasized that they did not know how to create information files on their cell phones. In this regard, the researcher asked participants to identify and determine their literacy levels of reading and writing. As shown in Table III, over half of participants (58.5 per cent) indicated that they did not know how to read and write at all. A further 21.9 per cent of them described their literacy level of reading as "poor", followed by 12.2 per cent as "fairly well", 4.9 per

Proficiency	Reading (%)	Writing (%)
Not at all	24 (58.5)	24 (58.5)
Poor	9 (21.9)	10 (24.4)
Fairly well	5 (12.2)	4 (9.8)
Well	2 (4.9)	2 (4.9)
Very well	1 (2.4)	1 (2.4)
Total	41 (100)	41 (100)

Table III. Egyptian domestic workers' perception of their literacy (reading and writing levels)

cent as “well” and just one (2.4 per cent) as “very well”. The study showed also that almost a quarter (24.4 per cent) of participants described their literacy level of writing as “poor”, followed by 9.8 per cent as “fairly well”, 4.9 per cent as “well” and just one (2.4 per cent) as “very well”.

In the same regard, the researcher also asked participants to identify their proficiency and perceptions of their use of communication devices (land/cell phones), computers and Internet applications (browsing, chatting, e-mail, etc.). As [Table IV](#) shows, the largest percentage (90.2 per cent) of participants indicated that their proficiency level of using communication devices such as land/cell phones was at least “well”. While nearly two-thirds (63.4 per cent) of participants indicated that they did not use computers and Internet applications at all, 29.3 and 31.7 per cent of them described their proficiency level of using computers and Internet applications, respectively, at least “fairly well”.

RQ5. What barriers, if any, may Egyptian domestic workers encounter in their use of and access to information?

Almost all Egyptian domestic workers interviewed in this study stated that they have a lot of concerns and problems during their seeking for information which, in turn, affected their benefit of its capabilities. Illiteracy was one of the most important concerns and problems that prevented a large number of them from using and accessing information. They confirmed that such a problem has a real meaningful and significant impact on their use of and access to information. In addition, time was also one of the most important barriers faced by them. Other barriers, such as psychological burdens suffered from the image of being home servants and the lack of awareness about their basic rights, including information rights, training and skills, were also significant to Egyptian domestic workers.

Discussion and conclusions

The information provided in this study highlights the information needs of Egyptian domestic workers being one of informal carers or care providers who do not only need information to support the people that they serve, but also need it to support themselves. Generally speaking, information is very important and required by all human beings, including domestic labourers. It is much needed, as it is linked to democracy and development, the enjoyment of life and the renaissance of society. According to [Tackie and Adams \(2007\)](#), the need for information arises when individuals find themselves in a situation requiring knowledge to deal with the situation as they deem fit. Any use of information depends mostly on the need for that information. Once the need for information exists, it should be met. In this study, the researcher tried as much as

Proficiency	Communication devices (land/cell phones, etc.) (%)	Computers (%)	Internet applications (browsing, e-mail, chat, etc.) (%)
Not at all	0	26 (63.4)	26 (63.4)
Poor	0	3 (7.3)	2 (4.9)
Fairly well	4 (9.7)	5 (12.2)	4 (9.7)
Well	9 (21.9)	4 (9.7)	5 (12.2)
Very well	28 (68.3)	3 (7.3)	4 (9.7)
Total	41 (100)	41 (100)	41 (100)

Table IV.
Egyptian domestic
workers' perception
of their use of
communication
devices, computers
and Internet
applications

possible to identify the information needs of one of the most marginalized work groups in Egypt, namely, domestic workers, focusing only on local ones. As a result of the illiteracy of many of the participants interviewed in this study and also due to the low level of education of others, the answers and comments of participants were described as spontaneous, improvisational and disorganized. This, in turn, created a problem in the extraction and formulation of the phrases and expressions of participants.

Demographically, this study showed that Egyptian domestic workers tend to be girls/women, uneducated, with an average age of around 30 years, labelled as low-income workers, and mostly married. In detail, a large number (92.7 per cent) of Egyptian domestic workers are girls/women. In many countries, especially the poorest ones, domestic work is very largely performed by women (Smales, 2010). In Egypt, like most societies in the world, it is known that household chores, such as cleaning, cooking and taking care of the well-being of family members, have long been performed by women rather than men. This caused Arriagada (2009) to describe domestic labour as a feminized profession; such careers are assigned to women more than men. In fact, as stated by Galotti (2009), domestic work is a source of employment for millions of women around the world and, as stated also by ILO (2010), it is one of the oldest and most important occupations for millions of women around the world. It is the single largest employment category for women in Asia and Africa (Smales, 2010). According also to Tokman (2010, p. 3), "The majority of domestic workers are women, but men also perform these activities although to a lesser extent". In the Egyptian context, domestic work is an important occupation, involving a significant proportion of the workforce in the Egyptian labour market. It is mostly, but not exclusively, performed by women and increasingly by migrants from rural and the poorest areas in Egypt. Consistent with this logic, female domestic workers (92.7 per cent) interviewed in this study mentioned that they were used to perform tasks that belong more to their femininity, such as cleaning, cooking and child care, while male domestic workers (7.3 per cent) were used to perform tasks belonging more to their masculinity, such as gardeners and guards.

Regarding their age, the study showed that almost a quarter (24.4 per cent) of participants was aged below 20 years, of whom 7 (17.1 per cent) females were aged as low as 15 years or less, 2 (4.9 per cent) females were aged 16 years and just 1 (2.4 per cent) female was aged 17 years. In the eyes of the Egyptian Child Law (No. 12 of 1996, amended by Law 126 of 2008), which defines a child as the person who does not exceed the age of 18, this means that all these 10 females are considered children. As is the case in many countries, some of the domestic work in Egypt is performed by child labourers. In this regard, Ahmed and Jureidini (2010) indicated that child domestic labour is a common strategy for households in Egypt's poorest rural and urban areas to reduce their costs and increase income. Egypt has adopted the child law to protect children from being exploited and exposed to any harmful actions to their health. Although the child law prohibits the employment of children below 14, it permits, in some cases, the employment of children between 12 and 14 years in seasonal work provided that such work does not affect the children's school attendance. However, there are shortcomings in the existing legal protections, as it does not cover children's work in domestic services and there is a clear weakness in the enforcement of the current law. Due to traditions and economic situations, the current labour law (Act No. 12, 2003) has explicitly excluded certain categories of working children from labour law protection. One of these excluded categories is: "Persons, including children, employed in domestic services (Article 4)".

Itani (2009) conducted a study on child labour in Egypt and she noted that Egypt has ratified both ILO Convention 138 (the Minimum Age Convention) and 182 (the Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour). It is estimated that 17.2 million children aged 5-17 years were engaged in domestic work in the world representing 6.5 per cent of all children in economic activity in this age group (ILO, 2012). At the same time, it is difficult to gather accurate statistics on the number of child workers in Egypt. Official statistics vary but, in general, the number is estimated at between 2 and 2.5 million children between the ages of 6-15 years, mainly in rural areas, working as street vendors, domestic workers, agricultural labourers, factory workers, laundry workers and helpers for mechanics (Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, 2008). According to Abdul Hai *et al.* (2010), there are factors that contribute to the child domestic labour problem, such as are poverty, education and gender inequality. Such problems push children to be subject to various kinds of abuses (i.e. verbal, physical and sexual abuse or harassment).

Regarding their education, the study proved that the use of and access to information is correlated with the participants' education level where over half (56.1 per cent) of participants were uneducated, followed by nearly a quarter (24.4 per cent) with no formal education, and just 20 per cent had at least some primary education. Regarding their income, the study proved that participants' income was one of the barriers to use of and access to information where a large number (85.4 per cent) of them were labelled as low-income workers. The study showed that almost half (49 per cent) of the total participants were married with children, followed by 24 per cent as unmarried, 10 per cent as divorced and 17 per cent as widows. As recorded by some of interviewed participants, family concerns may prevent them from using and accessing information on a regular basis.

This study showed that preferred information sources used by Egyptian domestic workers were mainly related to the type of information required for their daily lives and their needs of information reflect the information requirements of tasks they perform. The study illustrated how Egyptian domestic workers interpret and act on their information needs. Their ISB profile indicated a preference for informal sources over formal ones to solve problems relating to their everyday existence using some helping tools and devices, especially cell phones. In agreement with the view of Mnubi-Mchombu and Mostert (2011) and Momodu (2002), almost all Egyptian domestic workers (97.6 per cent), especially those who were described as uneducated workers, revealed that verbal communication, influential leaders including spiritual and religious senior people, friends, families and relatives were identified as the most popular informal sources of information they followed. These sources to them, as supported by Momodu (2002), were more reliable and authentic. According to Gouldner (1960), the user may seek information from other people, rather than from systems and this is what is described as the process of "information exchange". The use of the word "exchange" is intended to draw attention to the element of reciprocity, recognized by sociologists and social psychologists as a fundamental aspect of human interaction:

I depend mainly on some of my family, friends and peers to get suitable information related to my work tasks, especially information about recipes (A female domestic worker of 26-30 years old).

Consistent with the view of [Lim and Thomas \(2010\)](#), this study showed that most Egyptian domestic workers, especially women, employed a variety of technologies for everyday communication, specifically the mobile phone being the most crucial communication device for most of them, as it enables them to foster emotional links with their friends and families, and contributes to the growth of their social networks. Much of the information required by Egyptian domestic workers was factual information, but some were less clearly defined:

The mobile phone has helped me a lot to be in a permanent contact with others especially my family and friends. It has also helped me also in work-related activities (A female domestic worker of 41+ years old).

Consistent with the view of [Orange et al. \(2012\)](#), this study showed that a large number of Egyptian domestic workers, especially women, were not enough aware of their information rights, and they did not know well how to identify their needs of information. Studies on user needs and ISB have shown that one's level of education is an individual's context that determines one's information needs, how they confront an information system and, subsequently, use that information. In other words, there is a positive correlation between the level of education and access to information.

Due to some difficulties, such as illiteracy and limited education, slightly more than two-thirds (70.7 per cent) of Egyptian domestic workers were not using any kind of library. They indicated that they did not consider the library as a source of information. However, a very small number of them (12.2 per cent) were using some kinds of library for a little or accidental use, such as public and children's libraries, especially when they accompany their employers' children to the library. Slightly less than this percentage (9.7 per cent) indicated that they were using their employers' home library, especially those materials that may help in the formation and conscience of their children, such as general information and story books. A very small numbers of participants indicated that they were using other kinds of libraries, such as religious libraries, where very few of them (7.3 per cent) were using the Mosque library near their home for religious education:

Being a devout Muslim, I relied heavily on information taken from religious classes held in the Mosque. Complementing these sources are religious instructions taken from specialised religious books which are mostly available in the Mosque library as well as religious programmes offered by the many different television channels in the county (A male domestic worker of 41+ years old).

In terms of using technologies related to the use of information like the Internet, the study found that such access was an issue. A very small number (9.7 per cent) of participants indicated that they were using the Internet to gather information related to their domestic work and also to make connections with families, friends and peers, especially through social networking sites, such as Facebook. Two (4.9 per cent) of the above percentage indicated that when they had the chance to use the Internet within the employers' household, they were monitored by their employers. Some employers may not grant their domestic workers enough time to use the Internet outside of the home. In this regard, [Smales \(2010\)](#) indicated that the right of the worker to a regular day off is crucial in his/her access to technology. It is worth mentioning that nearly one-third (31 per cent) of participants interviewed in this study, especially those who were described as live-in workers, indicated that they have not been granted any private or independent

rooms by their employers either to use the computer or even to sleep in. Although some Egyptian domestic workers indicated that they believe in the importance and role of information, they indicated that such issues have not received enough attention by their employers:

I do not have enough time to use either the computer or the Internet. I am not even allowed to go out to use such tools outside the home (A female domestic worker of 16-20 years old).

The use of library is accompanied strongly by the employer's children. The purpose of such use is just only to take care of the children. It's very difficult to pick up a book to read at that time (A female domestic worker of 26-30 years old).

While some employers interviewed in this study indicated that they did not prefer to use educated and skilled domestic workers due to the high cost that they may have to pay to the labour agency and to the worker himself/herself, some other employers showed a significant interest for the use of educated and qualified workers holding a college/university degree not only to help their children in their school homework or in work-related activities, but also as a matter of social prestige.

Due to its close association with the use of and access to information, this study focused heavily on the issue of literacy of Egyptian domestic workers. In fact, information literacy is very important owing to the large amount of information currently available in our contemporary life. According to [Britz and Lor \(2010\)](#), p. 8, "information literacy and the right of access to information are interrelated and interconnected". Information literacy skills are helpful to everybody, including domestic workers, to accomplish his/her daily different tasks and activities, as well as to get better job opportunities. As with any other worker, domestic workers are greatly in need of information literacy skills for the purpose of accomplishing their daily work successfully. In general, information literate individuals improve a society's quality of life. The lower educated person is exposed to a lack of necessary skills, knowledge and abilities needed to extend his/her productive period in the labour force. Through their answers and comments, this study concluded that a large number of Egyptian domestic workers were described as non-skilled labourers and a large number of them also feel that their domestic work, with the comparison to other professions, such as teaching, attorney, and so forth, does not require any skills related to searching for information:

I do not think that the use of and access to information needs any special skills (A female domestic worker of 16-20 years old).

My skills to make use of written or even digital information are very limited. However, I am working to improve them (A female domestic worker of 26-30 years old).

I am very much interested in getting an educated house maid for the purpose of children's education (Interviewed employer located in Cairo).

According to the *Human Development Report 2010*, unskilled labour have greater opportunities than those who have skills to find jobs that was mostly described as low-level jobs, such as household and construction, that do not require physical effort but are more muscular than mind efforts. Consistent with [Taylor and Conradie \(1997\)](#), domestic workers in this study experienced a lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem that strongly impacts their informational orientation.

In spite of being described as low-skilled in using technology, a large number (95 per cent) of Egyptian domestic workers interviewed in this study had cell phones. Almost two-thirds (70.7 per cent) of them were provided with these devices through their employers to be in contact with them especially when they are outside the home or when they accompany their children to their schools, although 19.5 per cent of them had these phones before joining their current work, and 4.9 per cent got them during their current job. From one side, cell phones were found to be the most important means of communication between the domestic workers and their employers, and, from the other side, between them and their families, relatives and friends:

My cell phone helps me a lot to exchange some information with my family and friends as well. I succeeded in promoting my social network with friends (Two female domestic workers of less than 15 years of age and 16-20 years old).

A very small number (4.9 per cent) of domestic workers, who had a room equipped with TV and land phone, were encouraged to do searching for information using such media, and they confirmed that such availability helped in using information. As new information and communication technology (ICT) becomes more accessible, organizations and unions have begun to tap into the potential of these modern forms of communication to mobilize and educate domestic workers (Smales, 2010). Compared with younger workers, this study showed that older workers' use of ICT was largely weak. In this regard, Koning and Gelderblom (2006) confirmed that older workers make less use of ICT in their job, use less complicated applications and have more difficulties in using ICT.

Through a set of interviews conducted with some of the domestic service agencies/offices, a large number of these offices defined educated domestic workers in this study as those people who know well how to read and write having some moderate education and some of them just have a literacy certificate by a certified educational centre in Egypt. They stated also that educated and skilled workers were wanted by a large number of employers, especially wealthy ones, to help the employer's children in achieving their school assignments, especially if the employer is not educated and qualified enough to do that, and this in turn may increase the worker's wage. They added that sometimes some employers do not prefer to use local domestic workers and they prefer foreign ones instead, although this may cost them a lot of money paid to the foreign labour agency (sometimes in hard currency) based on their specialization, skills, and expertise, and also for the full dedication and time they devote to their work, unlike their Egyptian peers. They also stated that sometimes these offices/agencies organize training workshops for maids, but it is very rare that the employer, especially ones who have no financial capacity, provide training workshops:

I do not care to have an educated or uneducated domestic worker. It is not a big issue for me (Interviewed employer located in Qena).

However, though some domestic workers interviewed in this study were aware of using information, they indicated that they did not go to their domestic service agency/office asking for information or even any kind of help. Many of them mentioned that their communication has been cut with their agency/office once they moved to their employer's household. A large number (82.9 per cent) of participants, especially newly hired in service, confirmed that they needed training workshops, especially about their rights as domestic labourers and about their work-related tasks. Some of them also

indicated that they need training workshops concerning child care, computer skills, inter-personal skills and so forth. A small number of them also asked for training on the maintenance of home appliances and household management:

Sometimes, I need some training workshops related to my work, but my employer does not provide me with any of them due to the lack of interest, money, time, and the like (A female domestic worker of 21-25 years old).

Needs of local
domestic
workers

663

Regarding barriers, concerns, challenges and problems faced by Egyptian domestic workers during their usage of and accessing information, the study found that the most important challenges they faced were the high degree of illiteracy and the acute lack of awareness about their basic rights and their perception of information rights and information needs. The study showed that, although the characteristics of Egyptian domestic workers vary according to their demographic data, the most common among them is the high rate of illiteracy. According to the [Central Agency for Organization and Administration \(2009\)](#), the illiteracy in Egypt reached 30 per cent, concentrated mostly in the age group 15 and above, and the majority of this percentage is mostly located in rural and the poorer areas of Egypt. Young people's share of this percentage is 16.7 per cent. This finding is consistent with the view of [Orange et al. \(2012\)](#), [Cremers et al. \(2008\)](#) and [Momodu \(2002\)](#). Other challenges, such as time, psychological burdens, the social image of being a domestic worker, the lack of accessible information channels, the lack of training workshops, necessary skills and the lack of money needed to access information, were also an issue. However, in spite of these challenges and problems encountered by Egyptian domestic workers, some of them expressed their desire to enhance their work status, as well as to improve their image as domestic workers:

Illiteracy and time are the biggest barriers for me to use of and access to information.

I am working to improve my information search skills to be adapted with current events and also with new stuff related to my work (Two female domestic workers of 26-30 years old).

Recommendations for further research

This study addressed and investigated the information needs of Egyptian domestic workers. Although a large number of Egyptians domestic workers were unaware of their information rights and did not know well how to identify their information needs, some of them showed interest in using information, mainly for work's demands. Such needs were described as simple and complex at the same time, depending on the employers' understanding of or welcoming nature to these needs. To achieve their need for information, Egyptian domestic workers relied heavily on some informal information channels, such as personal contact with their peers, friends, relatives and families, as well as their employers and sometimes, in very rare cases, on domestic services offices/agencies. Based on the review of existing literature and also on the findings of this study, further research is needed to understand the information needs and information dissemination among local domestic workers in a country like Egypt and how they perceive, choose, use and evaluate different sources of information. Research is also needed on the impact of illiteracy on using and accessing information by these workers. Due to the absent role of libraries, further research is really needed about such roles, especially in preparing and building library collections needed to meet the needs of these workers and to provide better services to them. Consistent with the

recommendation of [Orange et al. \(2012\)](#), this study suggests that appropriate strategies should be designed towards the usage of traditional and commonly used information dissemination channels, such as cultural performances and group discussions. Consistent with the recommendations of [Lim and Thomas \(2010\)](#), this study also recommends the improvement of domestic workers' access to ICT. Domestic Workers Acts and Bill of Rights need to be developed and designed in Egypt regarding the domestic labour/labourers, as it is very important for a country like Egypt to pass a domestic workers' bill of rights to regulate this kind of work, as such an instrument will give fresh power to the protection of the rights of workers. Legislators, lawmakers and policymakers should care more about this type of labour in terms of needs, conditions, protections and different rights, including the right to use and access information. Reliable, up-to-date information and statistics about the domestic labour/labourers are much needed to deal well with such work/workers. Finally, the image of being a domestic worker in a country like Egypt needs to be improved in the eyes of other work groups as well as the domestic workers themselves.

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