

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

This chapter introduces the whole study and the study area. It gives the background to the study, the research problem, objectives, economic and social significance of the study, the study design and methodology, the theoretical and conceptional framework, and the operational definitions.

It also outlines the presentation of the whole study.

1.1 The Setting (Area of the Study)

The study locale is Owino Market. Owino market is located on the southern fringes of Kampala City. A mere swamp in the 1970's Owino has become Uganda's biggest market in both size and business volume. It was established in 1972 by Kampala City Council as a municipal market to cater for the over growing vendors who could not be accommodated in Nakasero Market, which was then the only city market located in the city centre.

Overtime Owino market has continued to expand with vendors constructing makeshift stalls. There were 250 stalls in 1972, but the market now has an estimated total of about 5,000 (five thousand) stalls including butcheries, eating stalls and a variety of merchandise stalls, ranging from fresh and dry vegetables, cereals, foods and hardware, new and old clothes, herbs and electronic goods like TVs, radios and telephone sets.

According to the management of the market, an estimated 20,000 people earn their living from the market either as vendors or porters and the government earns an estimated Uganda Shillings 7 million (\$7,000) in taxes per month from this market.

A big number of customers flock to the market in search of low priced items leading to overcrowding which in turn provides a cover for criminals like pick-pockets, swindlers, drug busers etc.

Sanitation in the market is very poor; garbage heaps are a common sight and the water canals are usually clogged with garbage. There is only one block of toilet (one side for ladies and another for gentlemen) which the users have to pay for per visit.

In the middle of this sprawling market, the catering stalls are located. The stalls were very small 6' x 6' (six by six feet), open on the sides with leaking roofs made of papyrus and polythene papers. The stalls are very close together that at times it was difficult to see and discern the demarcation between two neighbouring stalls. Meals were prepared under similar conditions in the stalls and in the open alleys between the stalls. The stalls were furnished with a bench and a small table on which the utensils were kept.

Customers were not usually expected to eat from the stalls but from their duty stations since the catering activity normally served the vendors in the market.

1.2 Background to the Study

The important role played by women in the economic and social development of their countries and communities; and the plight of low-income women in Third World economies has been widely recognised thanks to researchers and lobbyists.

Since 1975 (beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women) there has been a considerable shift in approach on the part of both academic research and policy makers. Researchers have moved away from a preoccupation with the role of women within the family towards an understanding of the complexities of women's employment.

Thus a number of studies on women in employment have been carried out yet most of these studies have concentrated on waged workers in factories and industries and in the formal sectors.

A number of studies have recognised the centrality of women in the informal sector (Maldonado, 1989, Tokman, 1989), see papers presented on: Group meeting of "Women Researchers in the Informal Sector and Agro-industries ATRCW/UNECA Nov. 1991 Nairobi Kenya, and AAWORD Seminar on "The Crisis in Africa and Women's Vision of the Way Out" August 1988 Dakar Senegal".)

These studies concentrated on women entrepreneurs i.e. owners of the business activities they are operating.

Only a passing, glancing, superficial study was done on the women who are employed in the informal sector.

By concentrating on women entrepreneurs, these studies have yielded few insights into the working conditions of the women who are employed in the lower sector of the informal sector.

This information will assist the government and other policy planners in formulating policies for the betterment of the women in the informal sector in particular and the informal sector in general.

1.3 Statement of the Problems

The central issue in this study is the critical assessment of the working conditions of the women employees in the informal sector.

The study specifically investigates how such factors as age, kinship relations, education levels, marital status, position in household and family size affect the working conditions of the women employees in the catering economic activity in Owino market.

The study intends to examine the relationship between the employees and their employer at the work place and also seeks valid explanations for the nature of the relationship.

The study investigates how the women employees balance their household responsibilities and their obligations at the work place.

The study further examines the role of the government policies towards the informal sector and the existing social system in influencing the conditions of work of the women employees.

1.4 Research Objectives

The general purpose of the study is to assess the working conditions of the women employees in the informal sector.

Specific:

1. To explore the nature of the employee-employer relationship and identify factors responsible for the various relationships.
2. To examine how women employees balance their household responsibilities with their job obligations.
3. To identify ways and means of increasing the bargaining power of women employees in the informal sector.

1.5 Economic and Social Significance of the Study

The study highlights the diversity of the informal sector, an issue often glossed over by scholars and development planners. The problems faced by the entrepreneurs in this sector are quite different from those faced by the workers.

The study gives an insight into the working conditions of the women employees and identifies specific factors affecting them.

This knowledge will assist policy makers in government and non-governmental organisation in designing practical and appropriate intervention measures for the betterment of the working conditions of the women employees in particular and for the improvement of the informal sector in general.

Given the escalating inflation, the on-going retrenchment exercise as part of the structural adjustment policy, the massive rural–urban migration, the informal sector is an important and indispensable part of the urban economy. Thus this study will not only facilitate increased awareness about the potential of the informal sector but also the awareness about the complexity of issues regarding its problems and prospects. By focusing on the issue of social relations within the catering economic activity, the study presents a clear picture of the informal sector and also fills a big knowledge gap as far as the existing knowledge on women in the informal sector is concerned.

The study also contributes significantly towards the on-going debate on gender relations.

Statistics and data on women in the informal sector in general and on women employees in particular are seriously inadequate. There is an urgent need for more qualitative and quantitative data on women in this sector if they (women in this sector) are to be assisted. This study addresses this problem.

1.6 Study Design and Methodology

1.6.1 Limitation of the Study

This is a case study of women employees in the catering activity in Owino market in Kampala, Uganda. It is the employees in this section of the informal sector that this study is concerned with; since minimal research has been carried out on this aspect of the informal sector.

1.6.2 Choice of Owino Market and the Catering Activity as the Focus of Study

A number of factors influenced the selection of the catering economic activity in Owino market.

Owino market serves the middle and lower class people. The catering economic activity in this market can be put in the “community of the poor” section of the informal sector in which my interest lies. Yet the catering stalls are relatively permanent to make them researchable since the employees and their employers provided the bulk of the information and data for the study. The study utilizes heavily the observation method to investigate the relationship between the employer and employees. In the more prosperous catering activities the employers are usually absent but in Owino market the employers are present working side by side with their employees.

Owino market as a whole is dynamic with many other economic activities. Since the study had to investigate the implications of the interactions between the catering economic activity and other economic activities, Owino was the best choice.

Last but not least, I am familiar with the market and the language spoken thus I did not need an interpreter which made communication with the respondents easy.

Two factors influenced the choice of the catering economic activity:

- (a) Although the catering economic activity in Owino market is in the “community of the poor” section of the informal sector it is big to warrant the employment of one or two employees. Employees are the focus of this study.
- (b) The women employees are the focus of this study and the catering economic activity employs exclusively women.

1.6.3 Population

The study population was:

- (a) Women workers/employees (Population A);

These included all the women employed in the catering economic activity in Owino market and were remunerate for their labour in either cash or kind.

(b) The employers: (Population B):

These included all men and women in Owino market who own catering businesses and hire or employ women whom they remunerate for their labour in cash or kind.

(c) The government officials: (Population C):

Initially the study had targeted to interview officials in Kampala City Council concerned with the urban markets but these officials referred me to the market masters of Owino market. The market masters and Resistance Council Officials of the market carry out the day to day administration of the market like allocating stalls, collecting taxes and looking after the market generally.

1.6.4 Selection of Samples

Samples of respondents were selected according to the categories presented above.

Population A: (The women employees)

One employee from each stall was selected by random sampling.

The employees in each stall were few, ranging from one to three to warrant a complicated sampling technique. In each stall, the names of the employees were written on different pieces of papers, which were then folded. One paper was then picked. The name of the person on the paper picked would be interviewed. A total of fifty-two (52) women employees were interviewed.

Population B: (The employers)

There were fifty-two (52) operating catering stalls in Owino market at the time of the study. Some stalls were empty. All the fifty-two owners of the catering businesses were interviewed.

Population C: (The government officials)

The Market Masters and Resistance Council Officials were few and some of them were not available for interviewing. Therefore a convenient sample of three (3) Market Masters and four (4) Resistance Council Officials were interviewed.

1.6.5 Data Collection Techniques

Instruments:

Three instruments were used for data collection: unstructured interviews, in depth interview and observation method.

The unstructured interview schedule for the women employees covered the following topics:

- (a) Personal bio-demographic data;
- (b) Recruitment;
- (c) Nature of work/concrete conditions of service including relationship with employer;
- (d) Terms of service, payment, benefits etc.;
- (e) Household duties;
- (f) Workers organisations/associations/clubs;
- (g) Problems faced/aspirations;
- (h) Envisaged solutions/suggestions/recommendations.

The unstructured interview schedule for the employers covered the following topics;

- (a) Personal bio-demographic data;
- (b) The business – its performance, size etc.;
- (c) Recruitment and terms of payment;
- (d) Relationship with employees, government officials, customers and owners of other businesses in the market;
- (e) Workers' associations/clubs;
- (f) Problems faced;
- (g) Envisaged solutions/aspirations/suggestions/recommendations;

The government officials were also interviewed using unstructured interview schedule. The instrument sought information pertaining to the administration of the market, the tax collection, allocation of resources in the market.

In-depth Interviews (with groups)

Two sessions of in-depth interviews were carried out; one with the employers who were five in number and the other with the employees who were also five. The topics covered were like those covered during the individual unstructured interviews but in this case with greater details and exchanging of ideas.

Observation Method

This method was used to validate and compare information collected by the unstructured interview schedules especially concerning:-

- The setting and working condition.
- Social behaviour and social relations.
- The activities carried out especially the specific duties and tasks.
- The general management of the business.

Secondary Information

Documentation and library search focused on:

- (a) Previous studies on the informal sector in general and the women employees on the informal sector in particular.
- (b) Documents in Kampala City Council offices dealing with municipal markets.

1.6.6 Data Analysis

The presentation, discussion and analysis of data was done concurrently. The analysis aimed at showing important relationships between the variables studied.

Data was categorised and broken into appropriate descriptive statistics some of which were presented in frequency tables.

Cross tabulations from the descriptive statistics for some key variables of the study were produced to show the extant relationship between these selected variables. Percentages were also used in the analysis.

1.6.7 Limitations

A number of obstacles were encountered during the course of data collection, the major ones being the busy schedule of the respondents (the employees and employers) and the small sizes of the stalls where the interviews took place.

The employers' responses concerning their income were evasive. Despite assurances of the purely academic nature of the study the employers kept on giving evasive answers as far as their business returns were concerned. This is because they thought that such information would be used to increase their taxes.

The employees were also reluctant to answer some questions especially those regarding their relationship with their employers. This was due to the fact that the stalls were tiny and therefore there was lack of privacy as the employer was privy to what was spoken by the employees during the interviews.

The above two problems were overcome by the observation method and by the in-depth interviews.

The Resistance Council officials and market masters were also at first hostile. That academicians just use them as ladders to acquire qualifications without assisting them. I laboured a lot to explain the nature of my study and my limitations as far as assistance to the market women was concerned.

1.6.8 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study adopts a socio-economic approach in analysing the production process and the relations of production within the catering economic activity in the informal sector.

In this study the major actors in the production process are the women employees and their employers.

Central to this study are the conditions under which the production process takes place and also how the major actors relate to each other. The classical economists' theories of exploitation have pointed out that the opportunity for labour exploitation arises from the confrontation between capital and labour as factors of production; that this relationship is often conceived between two unequal partners.

Also significant in this connection are the determinants of production relations, which include among others the way major resources used in the production process are owned, managed and controlled. Ideally there are two main forms of ownership of these resources namely: -

- (a) Private ownership by individuals or groups.
- (b) Public ownership; where all members of society supposedly have equal access to and control of the resources.

In the former, the private owners literally buy the labour power of the property – less majority, and employ it in the production of material wealth. The relationship here is presumably antagonistic because having bought the labour power and the means of production extra effort is made to extract as much surplus value as possible, through either increasing the number of working hours or by the use of the most productive instruments of labour, i.e. improved technology.

This situation embitters class relations, leading to conflicts and struggles. In formal economic sectors, industries and plantations, there are normally structures and systems instituted to regulate these relations. These include trade unions, workers committees/councils etc. This is unfortunately not the case with informal enterprises like the catering business in Owino market.

In public ownership of the means of production, the ideal is that production relations are amicable as the different categories are working towards a common good. Reality has frequently been different, evidenced by constant struggles, repressions and bureaucratization of labour unions, committees, councils and co-operatives.

This brings us to a deduction that class conflicts and struggles in the process of production are inevitable as long as there are still “employers” and employees.

The catering industry is a simple commodity production, which are characterised by individualisation and privatisation of the ownership of production. Many producers in such simple businesses as the catering economic activity are private owners of their means of production and at the same time they invest their own labour power in the production process.

Relations of production are highly influenced by such factors as age, education levels etc. Of equal importance and relevance is the analysis of the catering activity as an integral part of a wider socio-economic phenomena, establishing linkages and associations with other business activities. The importance of this approach is authenticated by Nikitin in his analysis of the production process.

“Even the small peasant is not isolated from the world of producing his bread, he requires agricultural implements, salt, soap, made by other producers. This means... people are tied to one another, that they interact on the basis of specific relations.” (Nikitin: 1983;17)

The numerous issues raised in this section provide a framework to guide the empirical analysis of the study.

1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS: -

1.7.1 The Informal Sector:

The international Labour Organisation (ILO) has defined the informal sector as that set of economic activities characterised by relative ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership, small scale of operations, labour intensity, reliance on skills acquired outside formal educational system and unregulated and competitive markets (Grown: 1989: 35)

The informal sector can be divided into 2 sections:

- the modern informal sector where goods and services produced are similar to those in the formal sector.
- the community of the poor: - this sector accounts for about 90% of the informal sector and the majority of people involved in it are women (ECA/ATRCW/88).

1.7.2 Relations of Production: These are interpersonal links between people in the production process.

1.7.3 Private Labour: where a person is recruited to perform certain tasks for a fee. The recruitment and terms of service are not based on kinship relations.

1.7.4 Family Labour: where a person is recruited on the basis of kinship ties and the terms of service are also pegged on the same relation.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY:

The study is divided into four chapters.

Chapter One is the foundation of the study; it presents the general introduction to the location of the study area, the research problem, objectives, economic and social significance of the study, the study design and methodology, the theoretical and conceptional framework and the operational definitions.

Chapter Two presents and analyses the character and organisation of the catering activity in Owino market and the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the key actors in this business.

Chapter Three discusses the actual production process and the social relations in the catering economic activity. This is the central chapter of the study and it brings out in details the concrete conditions of work of the employees and also the struggles and conflicts between the key actors which reveal themselves in the course of production.

Chapter four summarises and concludes the study offering policy and research recommendations.

2. THE CHARACTER AND ORGANISATION OF THE CATERING ACTIVITY AND THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HE KEY ACTORS.

This chapter is divided into three sections:

Section I analyses the character and organisation of the catering activity in Owino market by investigating such factors as the ownership of the means of production, the forms of labour, labour recruitment and terms of service.

Section II analyses the reasons given by the respondents for entering the catering activity and their aspirations for the future.

Section III centres on the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the key actors.

2.1 Character, and Organisation of the Catering Activity in Owino Market.

The means of production in this study refers to the stall and the materials used, specifically the cooking stoves, utensils, saucepans, tables and benches.

The major forms of ownership identified were individual and partnership. Partnership was practised by women employers who had received the initial capital from their husbands or relatives. It was discovered that in cases where the husbands had supplied the initial capital to start the business, they (the husbands) had a say in

how the profits or proceeds accruing from that business were utilised. Nevertheless the day to day running of the business was done by the sponsored party.

Individual ownership was by far the most prevalent form of ownership. Ownership of the means of production in the catering industry was determined by financial ability and availability of contacts. Thus employers had either got their initial capital from their relatives or from money invested in other businesses.

Contacts were also necessary to know where to go for licences, to know the vacant stall and to know how to go about establishing the business generally. All these were related to knowing people. Although the employer owned the means of production, they were full time in the stalls, supervising and labouring side by side with their employees.

Forms of labour:

There were two major forms of labour identified

- private labour
- family labour

Table 1
Forms of Labour

N = 52		
Forms of labour	Prevalence	
1. Family labour	3 %	(2)
2. Family labour	10%	(5)
3. Private labour	87%	(45)
(Recruitment only)		

As indicated in the table, 13% (7) of the employees interviewed had kinship ties with their employers; 10% (5) of these had their terms of service unaffected by the kinship ties since they were being paid the agreed wage and were also staying on their own. The remaining 3% (2) recruited on the basis of kinship relations were staying with the employers and their terms of payment were also pegged on these relations.

Women recruited in this category were new arrivals from the rural areas, young (about 15 – 20 years), school dropouts and distant relatives of the employers. 87% (45) of the employees interviewed were recruited as private labour, through their own initiative or through a friend or relative who knew the employers.

Both forms of labour had implications for the condition of work and terms of service of the employees. As indicated in the table the high prevalence of private labour and as such the low prevalence of family labour might be as a result of the loosening of family/kinship ties in urban areas. The exploitative relations which

exist in family labour structures might have led also to the decline of family labour. For instance the employees related to the employers and whose terms of service were pegged to these ties complained of being given no wages other than occasional hand outs.

In addition, given the commercialisation of urban life family labour with its inherent tendency to satisfy domestic subsistence needs, has become increasingly counter productive. Yet family labour is bound to stay given the importance of social and family ties in the acquisition of jobs in the informal sector.

In any case with the rampant poverty in the rural areas and high incidence of school drop-out, such sectors as the catering activity in urban areas is a stepping stone for many rural migrants, who have to rely mainly on their relatives to secure these jobs.

Labour Recruitment:

There are three different ways in which respondents said they acquired their employment:

- Through their personal initiative.
- Through a friend or relative who knew the employer.
- Through kinship ties whereby the employer and employee were related.

Table 2
Labour recruitment

N = 52

	Recruitment method	Prevalence
1	Personal initiative	12% (6)
2	Through friend/relative	75% (39)
3	Through kinship ties	13% (7)
		100% (52)

75% (39) of the employees interviewed acquired their employment through a friend or relative who knew the employer. The high percentage of employees who acquired their jobs through friends or relatives may indicate that in the absence of formal advertisements, the relatives and friends take on the role of being intermediaries as far as jobs and job seekers are concerned.

13% (7) of the respondents acquired their jobs through kinship relations with the employer. Yet of these only 3% (2) could be grouped under family labour; that is, those employees who stay with their employers and are not paid regular wages but paid in kind i.e. food, accommodation etc.

The low prevalence of family labour has been discussed in the preceding section.

12% (6) of the employees interviewed got their job through personal initiative. This low percentage can be explained by the fact that with the absence of formal referees

as in the formal sector, the informal sector depends on friends and relatives as referees. Hence the high incidence of employees who got their jobs through a friend or relative.

Table 3
Occupational Background of Employee Respondents:

	Occupational background	Duration of stay in Town/employment	Prevalence
1.	Jobless/from rural area	2 – 6 months	72% (37)
2.	Jobless/in town	3 months – 1 year	18% (9)
3.	Employed in the same market – selling vegetables and fresh foods	2 – 3 months	6% (4)
4.	Employed in hair saloon In slum area around market	1 – 2 months	4% (2)
			100% (52)

72% (37) of the employees interviewed were new arrivals from the rural areas (ranging from 2 – 6 months). All of them further claimed that this was their first employment in the city.

18% (9) of the respondents had been in town but jobless. As indicated in the table the rest of the respondents were employed in the market and hair saloon. Asked why they changed employment the women who had been employed in the hair saloon and market pointed out that at least the present employment ensured them a meal.

All the employers agreed on the fact that they prefer recruiting girls freshly from the rural areas. Such employees were reportedly easier to control given the traditional social norms inculcated into children i.e. respecting the elders. Thus the newly arrived girls in the city were still well behaved. That is they respected their employers whom they viewed as a parent and could take on exploitation and oppression without much question.

Terms of Service:

All the employee respondents pointed out that there was no written agreement/contract prior to commencement of work. The most important aspects of the job were discussed verbally. These were:-

- the nature and mode of payment
- the tasks to be performed.

The employees were paid on a daily basis a wage ranging from 500/= - 1000/= Uganda shillings (50 cents - \$1). The wages were not based on the daily income of the employer since it was fixed. Some employees reported that they had been promised a raise at the commencement of work but that they had never received it. Yet the employees also did not give the employers a chance to give them a raise as we will discuss later.

The employers interviewed would not explain the rationale behind the wages they gave to their employees.

The employees pointed out that the wages given were very meagre and would not sustain them. Asked how they make ends meet all the respondents reported that they were being assisted in one way or another by a relative.

This brings in the issue of the existing social system of extended families as a factor in the exploitation of the employees in the informal sector in general. This factor will be fully discussed later.

The employees related to the employers can be divided into two categories as far as remunerations were concerned.

The first category consists of those paid their daily wages normally like the other employees not related to the employer.

The second category includes those who stayed with the employers and were remunerated for their labour in kind. Only one respondent in this second category claimed that she did not mind the system very much as it guaranteed her welfare and placed a moral obligation upon the employer/relative to look after her.

However a deeper analysis of these claims may indicate otherwise.

In the first place, among all the employees interviewed none had stayed in the catering employment for more than six (6) months. This indicates that there is a high turn over of employees in all the categories of workers.

The high turnover indicates dissatisfaction with the conditions of work in the catering activity.

In any case the respondent who claimed to enjoy the system had just come from the rural area and this claim might have been as a result of the insecurity felt in the new environment.

2.2 The Social, Economic and Cultural Characteristics of the Key Actors in the Catering Activity

The study identified four (4) actors in the catering activity in Owino market.

These were:-

- the employers (owners of the means of production) .
- the employees.
- the government officials represented by the tax officers, market masters and resistance council officials.
- The customers (those who buy the food in the catering stalls).

This study deals mainly with the first two actors who are directly responsible for production in the catering activity. These are specifically the employees and their employers.

The findings confirmed that the categories of employees on the one hand and those of the employers on the other were to a large extent homogeneous. These categories were in terms of age, educational levels, marital status and position in the household.

All the respondents (both employees and employers) were women except one employer. This gender imbalance may confirm the fact that women dominate the lower and poorer sections of the informal sector.

Mawanda on the other hand argues that the gender imbalance in the catering activity suggests the persistence of the traditional demarcation of duties. (Mawanda (ATRCW/UNECA 1991: 62)

This argument is not applicable to all catering activities in the informal sector since in the intermediate section of the informal sector, the catering activities (restaurants) the gender imbalance is not very pronounced.

Age and Marital Status:

The women employers interviewed were mature women aged between 30 – 45 years. 38% (6) were divorced, 31% (16) were widowed and 19% (10) were single.

The employees on the other hand were young aged between 17 – 25 years. 93% (48) were single while 7% (4) were divorced or separated from their husbands.

Table 4
Marital and Age Characteristics of the Key Actors

	Single	Married	Separated/ Divorced	Widowed	Av. No. of Dependants	Av. Age
Employees	48(93%)	-	4 (7%)	-	-	21
Employer	10(19%)	20(38%)	6(12%)	16(31%)	5	45

From the above table one can deduce that among the poor people (lower class) capital is accumulated over time since it is only mature women who are the owners of the businesses on this economic activity. Capital is required to hire the stall to buy assets like tables, saucepans, cooking stoves etc. and also the useable like charcoal, food etc.

The disparity in age between the employers and employees as indicated in Table 1 brought about matronage in their relationship.

Education levels:

The education level of the major actors also affected the working conditions of the employees.

Table 5
Education Levels of the Key Actors

N = 52				
Respondents	None at all	P. 1 –4	P.5 – 7	S.1 – S.2
Employees	12 (23%)	14(27%)	19 (37%)	7 (13%)
Employers	5 (10%)	36 (69%)	9 (17%)	2 (4%)

According to Table 5 the majority of the employees attained some level of primary education. Yet the education levels attained by the majority were very low. This had negative implications for their conditions of work. For instance they would not look for alternative employment in the formal sector or even in the modern informal sector. Neither would they demand better wages as they lacked the confidence to do so.

A bigger percentage of the employers on the other hand had attained primary four level. (i.e. 41 employers). This enabled them to keep track of their business transactions. During the field research, I noticed that although no employer had proper books of accounts, at least 90% had some scraps of papers where they wrote their figures.

The other 10% reiterate that they never read but would remember all their transactions. The fact that the employers kept no books of accounts (however simplified they might be) may have contributed to the low returns from their business. This turn affected the terms of service of the employees.

Position in the Household and Family Size:

As indicated in Table 1, 93% of the employees interviewed were single, the rest were divorced or separated. 95% of the employees were staying with relatives like an uncle, aunt, sister, brother, cousin etc. These relatives provided the respondents with accommodation and other necessities. The 5% of the respondents who claimed to be staying on their own had no families/dependants.

In fact all of them explained that they were staying on their own but with a brother, cousin or friend assisting them with their needs.

10% of the employee respondents claimed that they had one – two children but that the children were staying with a relative, usually a grandmother in the village. Thus the employees had no household obligations apart from doing a few chores. In my proposal I had intended to analyse how women employees balanced their household duties and their obligations at work; but given the fact that the women employees are single without families of their own this analysis is no longer necessary. Yet the fact that all the employees are young, single and without household obligations may be an indication of two important things.

First of all the nature of work in the catering activity on Owino market, i.e. the working hours, tasks involved, remunerations... cannot allow a mature person with obligations to work there.

Another issue to consider is the fact that the employers may be interested in employing young girls to attract male customers.

The lack of household obligation in a way played a big role in influencing the conditions of work of the employees since with no dependants and therefore no urgent needs, their demands and needs were few. Thus they would afford to work for any amount of money offered as wages.

By relying on the relatives for sustenance in terms of housing, food, medical and other needs, the employees were not very desperate to demand for equitable terms of service. Thus the existing social system of extended families becoming a factor in the exploitations of the employees. The employers on the other hand had household obligations. As table 1 indicates 38% of the employers were married. These women reported that since they were earning an income, their husbands expected them to contribute to the expenses in the home. Thus most women employers reported that they were paying school fees for their children and dependants and also shouldering other expenses.

30% of the employees were widowed, thus being the sole heads of their households. The employers had an average of about five dependants (including their own children) in their homes. Some of these dependants were their grandchildren whose parents had died of AIDS.

Such obligations meant that the employers had to get as much profit as possible from their businesses and this meant recruiting as few employees as possible, overworking these few employees, and paying them as little as possible. This can explain the long working hours, the varied tasks undertaken by the employees, and the low wages.

2.3 Reasons Given by the Respondents for Entering the Catering Activity and Their Aspirations for the Future

The discussion on the manner in which the women employees joined the catering activity leads us to another discussion of examining the reasons individuals gave for entering this business activity.

The majority of the employees responded that this was their first job they or their friends and relatives had got for them. The employers on the other hand reported that they had assumed that the catering economic activity in Owino market required little capital to start and that it would bring in sizeable daily profits.

Other employers had been brought by friends who already had business in Owino market.

Most of the employers seemed to be disappointed in their business. Thus when asked about their future aspirations they gave a number of responses.

Table 6
Future Aspirations of Employers

N = 52

(Total % is greater than 100% because of multiple replies).

Responses	Frequencies	
- get money and start another business	20	39%
- return to the village	15	29%
- abandon the business	12	23%
- resigned to stay in present business	23	45%
- no concrete plans	3	6%

The responses indicated in the above table portray the disappointment of the employers in the catering economic activity reflected in their desperate aspirations. The employers who said they would stay in the business also pointed out that it was because they had no where else to go since they were making no profits to invest in any other business. The fact that none of the employers thought of improving his/her business for better returns is an indication of the lack of commitment to their businesses. Yet when queried, the women employers pointed out that they were shouldering a number of financial obligation in the homes i.e. paying school fees... Therefore the women employers were at least getting something out of their business.

When asked why they did not strive to improve their businesses all of them reported that apart from lack of money, there was no room for improvement in terms of space, furniture and quality of food. That the conditions of the stalls were beyond their powers and that as far as the food was concerned their customers wanted the cheapest fare.

The owners of the catering activity would not hope for better customers given the state of the market in general.

This response is an indicator of two things:-

The women employers in the catering activity in Owino market do not own the most important item in the production process – the stall. Thus efforts to improve their business would be hampered by this factor.

The clientele of the catering activity and the condition of the market may indicate the class stratification in Kampala. In the first place the market was constructed to cater for the lower class. Therefore it may not be by accident that the market is dirty and the stalls shabby.

The response of the employees centred around looking for a better employment. In fact for all employees the present job was a stepping stone for better prospects like working as a house-maid or in a well established hair/beauty saloon.

These findings indicated that the catering activity in Owino market is heavily hampered by its environment.

The findings further indicate that the employees are resigned to their fate of just making a little amount of money just for survival. The women employees viewed their jobs as a stepping stone to better prospects. Thus the employers and employees (as individuals and as a group) would not consciously put in an effort to improve their conditions of work and terms of service.

3. THE ACTUAL PRODUCTION PROCESS AND THE SOCIAL RELATIONS IN THE CATERING ACTIVITY

This chapter is divided into two major sections:-

Section one analyses the production process and the social relations in the catering activity. It focuses on the struggles and conflicts which reveal themselves in the course of production and their various dimensions.

Section two presents and analyses the problems envisaged by the key actors in the catering economic activity.

3.1 The Production Process and the Social Relations in the Catering Activity

The employees in the catering economic activity together with their employers started work at 07:30 a.m. until around 07:30 p.m.

The tasks performed ranged from peeling, cooking, serving and delivering food to the customers who are at their station of duty, washing the utensils and cleaning the stalls.

Table 7
General Schedule of Employees' Work

	Tasks performed	Estimated time
1.	Collecting utensils from customers	07:30 – 08:00 a.m.
2.	Escorting employer to purchase foods	08:00 – 08:15 a.m.
3.	Fetch water	08:15 – 08:30 a.m.
4.	Prepare food for cooking i.e. wrapping it in banana leaves, putting it in the saucepans and putting it on a lighted cooking stove. The foods usually prepared included: bananas, cassava, potatoes, rice and yams	08:30 – 09:30 a.m.
5.	Prepare different kinds of sauces (i.e. meat, ground nuts, vegetables)	09:30 – 11:30 a.m.
6.	Break tea (at the same time carrying out small tasks like cutting onions and tomatoes and prepare plates)	11:30 – 12:00 noon
7.	Put final touches on the food (this involves the traditional squeezing of the bananas)	12:00 – 12:30 p.m.
8.	Serving and delivering food to the customers	12:30 – 03:00 p.m.
9.	Collecting plates and money from customers and also have their lunch	03:00 – 4:30 p.m.
10.	Washing plates and other utensils (especially the saucepans which are scrubbed clean)	04:30 – 05:00 p.m.
11.	Peeling bananas and other foods for the following day	05:00 – 06:30 p.m.
12.	General cleaning of the stall, packing and storing the utensils and retiring	06:30 – 07:30 p.m.

The tasks enumerated above indicate that the employees rarely had time for resting between the various tasks.

On the demarcation of work between the employees and the employers, the former pointed out that there was no clear demarcation of duties between themselves and the employers since even the employers participated in all the tasks in the stall.

It is true that the employers participated fully in the activities in the stall. In fact in some stalls it seemed as if it was the employees assisting the employer.

Yet in all the stalls visited, the employers had specific duties which they themselves carried out.

This included the purchasing of all the essentials in the stalls. Items like food, meat and vegetables were normally purchased from particular people in the market. In other words the owners of the catering stalls had specific people from whom they purchased their goods. The employer reported that they would sometimes get the goods on credit paying them afterwards when they had cooked and sold the food. That this was reciprocated also by the sellers of the foods and vegetables in that they also bought their meals from their customers and paid later or balanced their books accordingly. The employer also reported that the price of their food depended on the price of the fresh items in the market. This indicated that there are linkages between the different economic activities in the Owino market.

Other specific duties carried out by the employers included the allocation of the type and amount of food to be prepared for the day and the cutting of meat into appropriate pieces for cooking. This was done by the employers so that they would be able to determine the size of the pieces of meat and also the number of plates to be served. It would have been also out of fear that if left to the employees, they might cut big pieces thus leading to lower profits or even total loss.

The employers also rationed the food on each plate for sale, again for the same purpose of controlling the amount of food on each plate and hence ensuring profit maximisation. The employers also kept the money from the sales.

Apart from these specific duties, the amount of work undertaken by the employers depended on the number and experience of the employees she/he had.

Thus employers with either one or newly recruited employees had to be heavily involved in the tasks in the stall.

The involvement of the employers in the day to day activities in the stall was viewed by the employees as a sign of a cordial relationship. The employees cited such things as being given tea and lunch, as an indication of the good relationship between them and their employers. Another indicator of the cordial relationship cited by the employees was the fact that the employers consulted them in the course of work, on such issues as the amount of salt to be put in the sauce, the nature of seasoning. I observed such consultation in the stalls.

Yet deeper analysis of the situation indicated that the employers got involved in the activities in the stalls in order to supervise closely the employees for the purpose of maximising their returns and also the labour output of the employees.

The employees were also given tea so that they may have energy to work harder (i.e. reproduction of labour).

The consultations observed and cited by the employee were over minor issues i.e. the amount of salt in the sauce which would not affect the daily returns.

From the observations carried out in the stalls, the relationship between the employers and employees can best be described as matronage. This can be explained by the age factor and the fact that the employees were new arrivals from the rural areas where elders are respected. In fact the employees regarded their employers as parents, addressing them as “Madam” or “Sir” all the time.

The relations between the employers and the employees in the catering activity in Owino market is far from cordial. The conflicts between the employers and employees is evidenced by the high turnover of employees. Thus lack of open hostility in an employee-employer relationship is not an indication of the absence of conflicts.

3.2 Section Two: The Problems Encountered by the Key Actors

The major problems cited by both the employer and employees that they encounter in the course of their work gave an insight into the nature of the social relations in

the catering activity and also shades light on the conditions of work of the employees in this economic activity.

The employees major problems by order of importance were:-

- the meagre wages;
- the long working hours;
- the many tasks done;
- the conditions of the stall in particular and the whole market in general especially when it rains;
- the unruly and rude customers;

The employers on the other hand cited the following problems:

- the high taxes and other charges levied by the government or its representatives;
- the high turnover of employees who just disappear without giving notice;
- the poor hygienic conditions of the market;
- defaulting by the customers;
- the low returns in the business;
- the fact that new employees take time to get to know the work. Thus the employers are always in the vicious circle of employing and training new employers.

The findings indicate that the most outstanding problem to both employers and employees concerns money. The employees reported that the daily wage of Uganda Shs. 500 – 1000= (50 cents – \$1) was too little. This reflects the existence of conflicts and dissatisfaction over the wages paid. This is evidenced by the walking away of the employees in protest.

The employers on the other hand reported that the returns from their business were meagre given their financial obligations at the place of work. The employers' expenditure were as follows:-

- A monthly rental fee to Kampala City Council of (U) Shs. 3, 450/= (\$3.45) per stall.
- Graduated tax of Uganda Shs. 7,500/= (\$7.50) per year.
- Daily security fee of Uganda Shs. 200/= (20 cents) to the market security guards.
- Uganda Shs. 600/= (60 cents) per month to the Resistance Council offices to cater for things like waste disposal and the renovation of the market. The employers reported that this money is never used for its proper purpose since it is the employers themselves who clean the market and renovate the stalls.
- Other recurrent expenditures which included:-

Uganda Shs. 50/= (5 cents) per visit to the toilet.

- Uganda Shs. 200/= (20 cents) per day for the storage of the utensils and any other things in the market stores.
- Daily purchase of foodstuffs fuels and wages.

The employers refused to say how much income they earn per day but from observation and according to information gathered, their gross income is about 10,000/= per day. The assumption here is that the employer sells between 20 – 50 plates of food per day and each plate costs 400/=. The total estimated expenditure is roughly around 10,000/= per day. Therefore the gross income is roughly between 8,000/= – 10,000/= per day.

Given the gross income of the employers, the wages paid to the employees were not very low. Yet this does not mean that they were not exploited given the tasks performed and the long working hours.

The other problem cited by both the employer and employees was the condition of the stalls in particular and the market in general. As already pointed out the stalls were very small yet all food preparation was carried out there and also in the small alley ways separating the stalls. This made the place dangerous for the people working in the stalls. In the rainy season the stalls leak and the floor being uncemented becomes muddy. The market being in a swampy area becomes muddy and almost impassable. There was no waste disposal system in the whole market. Although the owners of the stalls paid a monthly fee to the Resistance Council officials for cleaning the market, this was never done. In any case there was no designated place for dumping the waste. Thus the whole market is generally dirty with rotting vegetables and other refuse. As already indicated, toilet facilities were limited and there was no running piped water in the market. The water for preparing the food is either bought from water carriers or fetched by the employees.

It is suspected that the water brought is sometimes dirty, got from open water canals flowing through the market.

All the employers complained bitterly about the Resistance Council officials, the market management committee and the Kampala City Council officials who collected money from the market vendors without putting it to proper use.

When contacted, the Kampala City Council and Resistance Council officials agreed that they collected the money from the vendors. They also agreed that the market was in disrepair but they defended themselves by claiming that they took the money collected to the top officials in Kampala City Council officials; that it was these officials who did not care about the market.

Asked about the money collected for cleaning the market, the officials were giving lame excuses that they do the work but that it was a big market.

The conditions under which the employees in the catering activity in Owino market operated were dangerous and unhygienic.

The place is poorly built, muddy, and unhygienic and poor people eat from there. Thus the conditions of the market influenced the type of customers and the returns in the catering activity.

All these factors in turn affected negatively the conditions of work and the terms of service of the employees in this economic activity.

The problem of unruly and rude customers cited by the employees and the problem cited by the employers of customers who default are interlinked.

The employees reported that after distributing food to the customers, they would collect the plates and also ask for the money; but sometimes some customers just abused them and refused to pay. The employers on the other hand would also insist that the employee gets the money from the customer. Therefore the employees would find themselves in a tight corner which made their lives very miserable.

On the part of the employers the defaulters led to the reduction of their income.

The fact that there were defaulters and rude customers in the market would be attributed to the poor condition of the market which attract people with dubious characters.

All the above problems make the employees' conditions of work and terms of service very difficult.

4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary of Findings:

The study has presented and discussed the conditions under which women employees labour in the catering economic activity in Owino market. The study further presented the social relations in the catering activity and also the struggles and conflicts between the employees and their employers which reveal themselves in the course of production.

Chapter II analysed the character and organisation of the catering activity and the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the key actors.

This chapter focused on the major forms of ownership of the means of production and it was discovered that the most prevalent form was the individual ownership.

Two forms of labour were identified.

These were:-

- Individual/private labour
- Family labour.

It was discovered that although acquisition of jobs through relatives was still in existence, family labour was declining as family roles were changing and as life became more commercialised.

The study analysed the labour recruitment exercise and the terms of service for the employees in the catering activity and found out that the majority of employees were newly arrived from the rural areas, young and single. There was no written contract at the commencement of work. The working hours were long and the tasks many. The socio-demographic and cultural characteristics of the employees also influenced their terms of service.

The social system of extended families played an important part in subsidising the employees' wages thus in a way perpetuating the exploitation of the employees at their place of work.

The working conditions of the employees are unenviable and due to lack of proper channels of protest the employees just walk away from their jobs.

The reasons given by both the employers and employees for joining the catering activity and their aspirations for the future indicate that both actors were in this business just for survival.

Chapter III presented and analysed the actual production process in the catering economic activity. It focused on the struggles and conflicts which reveal themselves in the course of production. This chapter further analysed the problems encountered by the employees and their employers in the course of production.

The study indicated that the employees worked for long hours (from 7.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m.) and at varied tasks. Relations in the catering economic activity were mainly characterised by the matronising of the employees by their employers.

The major problems cited by both actors centred around money. The employees complained of being paid very meagre wages while the employers complained of getting little returns and yet being subjected to high taxes and dues from government and its representatives.

The other problem cited was the condition of the stalls in particular and the whole market in general. The market was in an appalling state leading to dubious market vendors and therefore dubious customers.

The study discovered no gender biases in the relationship between the sole male employer and his women employees, and those employees under female employers.

4.2 Conclusions:

The first conclusion one makes from the experiences reported in the study is that the fortunes and tribulations of the women employees in the catering activity in Owino market are closely tied with those of their employers and also to the environment in which the catering activity is located.

The study helps us to establish linkages between the theoretical issues raised in the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study and the empirical findings. For instance: the relationship between the ownership of the means of production and the relations of production comes out clearly in the discussion on how the needs of the

owner/employer to maximise his/her profits led to the rise in the number of tasks performed by the employees, and the long working hours.

The study has highlighted the existing linkages between the catering activity and other economic activities in the market and also the linkage with the environment in which the activity is located.

The study further indicates that the conditions of work and terms of service are bad and that the relations of productions are far from cordial.

By neglecting Owino market in general, the government represented by the Kampala City Council has influenced the working conditions of the employees and the returns of the employees.

The general condition of the market may be an indication of the compartmentalisation of society; that Owino market is for the lower class and does not therefore deserve better facilities.

The low level of education of the employees, their tender age, the unfair terms of service and the appalling conditions of work indicate that the labour practises in the informal sector are hidden from and ignored by the policy makers and development planners.

The problems cited by the employers and the employees which they encountered in the course of production indicate that the informal sector in general and the catering activity in Owino market in particular is neglected by government and by non-governmental organisations.

4.3 Recommendations:

The following policy and research recommendations are made in view of the research findings and conclusions.

Policy Recommendations

1. In view of the low education levels of the employees, their ages, terms of services and working conditions in the market, the following steps should be taken:-
 - (a) The policy makers should design laws and regulations that offer workers in the informal sector some measure of protection from exploitation.
 - (b) The educational system should be overhauled to ensure at least each citizen especially females attain primary level of education and more technical institutes should be established and made accessible, to equip school leavers with practical skills.
2. In view of the problem of organisation and training for employers and employees I recommend that:
 - (a) Government, through the Ministry of women in development and Non-governmental organisations, step in to assist the women in Owino market

in general and the catering activity in particular in terms of offering them simple loans, educational programmes to suit their needs i.e. simple aspects of book-keeping, marketing, business and financial management, economic diversification and loan management.

- (b) The government and NGOs should pay greater attention to the poor women's problem of capital formation. Thus revolving loan funds and guarantee loan schemes would go a long way in supporting women in the catering activity.
3. In view of government neglect of the market and its attendant consequences on the working conditions and terms of service of the employers; and in view of the taxes levied on the employers, the following steps should be taken:
 - (a) Kampala City Council should be held accountable for funds collected from Owino market.
 - (b) Utilisation of funds collected from municipal markets should be decentralised; that is, money collected from Owino market should be reinvested back.
 - (c) In case government is unable to improve the conditions of the market then it (market) should be privatised.
 - (d) The system of taxation should be revisited – criteria for taxing individuals should be made clear and appropriate assessment of the individuals' income be made before deciding on the amount of tax to be levied.
 4. Considering the fact that government is divesting itself of its responsibilities as evidenced by the cost sharing schemes and the privatisation drive, I suggest that the people themselves operating in Owino market should spearhead the solutions to their problems. This will entail greater commitment by the operators to the improvement of their businesses and their place of work.

Recommendations for Future Research:

1. The informal sector has not until recently been considered an important component of national African economies. Consequently little is still known of the actual form and structure of this sector in general and on the women who labour in this sector in particular. The fragmentary data that exist cannot be used as a basis for policy intervention.

Therefore extensive data on the informal sector in general and on women in the informal sector in particular is essential and more research in other informal economic activities in which women engage should be carried out.

2. The existing research on women in the informal activities should be documented and compiled. The existing research on women is fragmented and this makes co-ordinated research difficult.
3. A number of existing studies on women in the informal sector have put forward policy recommendations as regards government intervention to assist women in this sector. Most of these recommendations have not been

implemented. Research is needed to determine both conceptual and practical issues, which have hindered the implementation of identified courses of action.

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