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Higher Wages Vs. Social and Legal Insecurity: Migrant Domestic Workers in Russia and Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This paper addresses the under-researched issue of migrant domestic work in post-Soviet space. There is an emerging trend of increase in the female share of migrants coming to Russia and Kazakhstan from Central Asia republics. The growing demand for domestic work could be an explanation of the feminization of migration in the region. Using the data of the research project conducted in 2013 in Russia and Kazakhstan, this paper investigates conditions of employment of female migrants in the domestic sector. We find that domestic sector work in the post-Soviet space is rather prestigious and well-paid, while at the same time, highly informal relationships and employment arrangements in this sector seem to satisfy both employers and workers. These findings highlight regional peculiarities of migrant domestic sector work and are important to better understand the feminization of migration within post-Soviet space.

Keywords Female migrants · Domestic workers · Russia · Kazakhstan · Post-Soviet countries

Introduction

Recruitment of migrants for domestic work and increase of demand for this type of services as a trend started emerging in post-communist countries in 2000s and has not been thoroughly studied. Within post-Soviet space, only two countries—Russia and Kazakhstan—make use of migrant labor in various sectors of economy including domestic work. Major suppliers of the migrant labor force to Russia are Central Asia

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republics—Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, as well as Moldova and Ukraine. Kazakhstan, which is the second largest economy in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS[1]) after Russia, attracts migrants from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and, due to the common border, from China. Although migration flows to Russia and Kazakhstan from the CIS are dominated by male migrants, many researchers note the increase of female migration in recent years, which is characteristic not only of migration from countries such as Moldova (Vanore and Siegel 2015), but also for migration from the republics of Central Asia to Russia (Tyuryukanova 2005; Female migrants 2011). The most frequent explanation for the "feminization" of migration is the development of a specifically "female" employment sector in receiving countries—the domestic work sector, as well as in the limited employment opportunities for women in countries of origin (Cangiano 2014; De Ruijter and Van Der Lippe 2007; International, 2013). Such an explanation can be applied to women's migration from the CIS countries.

On the one hand, in the cities with higher-income level (these are capital cities in the post-Soviet space), the demand for domestic workers grows. The reasons are numerous ranging from the necessity to provide care for the elderly parents to a social trend to have domestic workers. On the other hand, economic, demographic, and even psychological factors push women (especially from Central Asia republics) to go work abroad.

Thus, a growing sector of domestic work is the result of both increased demand and supply. Can this demand be satisfied from beyond the CIS? What are the peculiarities of this type of migrants' employment? How secure and how precarious is it? These and other questions should be answered as it was already done with regard to other developed countries (Anderson 2000; Williams 2012; Van Hooren 2012; Da Roit and Weicht 2013; Guo et al. 2011; Jokela 2014; Rostgaard et al. 2011 etc.). The objective of our research was to find out which advantages and disadvantages of domestic sector work in Russia and Kazakhstan stimulate or constrain migrants' employment in this sector considering the growing demand for domestic workers which stimulates female migration from post-Soviet space.

Until 2010, domestic work as a type of migrant work was not recognized in the Russian migration legislation: there existed no special procedures for individual employers to hire a migrant worker and no procedures for a migrant worker to obtain a permit for such type of work. The absence of clear regulations concerning documentation of migrant domestic workers, the reluctance of employers to disclose recruitment of such workers, and other factors turned this category of foreign workers into "illegal migrants." In 2010, Russia introduced the so-called patents, a job license granting migrants from the CIS the right to work for households. The goal was to legalize the work of migrant domestic workers: nurses, gardeners, guards, maintenance workers employed by individuals. No special regulations were introduced for individual employers. Kazakhstan followed Russia's example and introduced a similar type of patents in 2013. Thus, due to numerous factors, migrants' work in the domestic sector remains hidden putting this category of migrant workers under risk of precarious employment and abusive treatment.

Considering the above data constraints, this paper aims to achieve the following objective: based on the results of the research project devoted to migrant domestic

[1] CIS stands for the Commonwealth of Independent States, established after the break-up of the USSR in 1991, Currently, 11 post-Soviet countries are members of the CIS, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

workers of 2013,[2] to present key characteristics of this type of female migrants' employment in Russia and Kazakhstan, and to explore competitive advantages of domestic work compared to other types of migrants' employment.

Literature Review

The literature review shows that qualitative and quantitative research addressing migrant domestic workers in the post-Soviet space provides a fragmentary knowledge on the subject (Tkach 2011; Savoskul 2013; Tolstokorova 2013). Relevant information can be derived from studies on female migration to Russia (Female migrants 2011; Tyuryukanova 2005; Rocheva and Varshaver 2017) or post-Soviet female migration to the European Union (Marchetti and Venturini 2013; Vanore and Siegel 2015; Fedyuk and Kindler 2016). Additionally, migrant domestic workers are mentioned within broader studies devoted to various aspects of labor migration in Russia (Varshavskaya 2014; Buckley 2018; Schenk 2018). Finally, the analytical paper of Akhmetova (2012) based on the overview of migration legislation and mass media coverage of migration issues in Kazakhstan also sheds light on the employment of migrant domestic workers. However, these works can serve the basis for arguing that employment practices, including gender aspects, channels of job search, and work contract arrangements in the domestic work sector in the post-Soviet space are similar to those found in various destination countries in the EU and in the USA, while at the same time, certain regional peculiarities also exist.

Many authors researching migrant domestic workers across the globe have recognized the dominance of women in this sector—both as employees (Hanson and Pratt 1991; Hochschild 2012; ILO 2013) and as organizers and coordinators of such work in the households (Anderson 2000; Bettio et al. 2006; Burnham and Theodore 2012; Tkach 2009; Cortés and Tessada 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). For example, Anderson (2000) points out that in Greece as in many other EU countries, domestic work is the only type of work available for migrant women apart from the prostitution, although many such women are well-educated and speak very good English (Anderson 2000; 52). Thus, female migrants who end working in domestic sector seem to have few or no viable alternatives.

In the case of Russia, previous research on female migration revealed that a very small share of women works for households, while most of them are employed in other types of services and trade sector, and migrant women from Moldova and Belarus often work in construction (Female migrants 2011). Also, unlike European Union countries, where domestic work sector itself is often dominated by foreign workers (Anderson 2007; Da Roit and Weicht 2013), in Russia, migrant domestic workers compete with locals. These variations may be determined by many factors including a share of migrants' employed in formal economy (not working for households) and informal sector of economy, government support of the care sector, effectiveness of migration management (Cortés and Tessada 2011; Brednikova and Tkach 2010; Gregson and Lowe 1994; Devetter and Rousseau 2009; Portes and Sensebrenner 1993; Pfau-Effinger 1998, 2000).

[2] The research project was funded by the UN Women.

As noted by researchers (Tiaynen-Qadir 2015; Tkach and Hrženjak 2016), in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in former Soviet countries, women rather rely on relatives, neighbors, and colleagues to assist with taking care of children or elderly parents, to be able to work themselves as domestic workers either abroad or in the home country.

The illegal status of migrant domestic workers has been discussed by many authors. For instance, it is pointed out that migrant domestic workers are often undocumented and have to "go under cover" (Abrantes 2014; De Genova 2013; Raijman et al. 2003), using tourist visas for entering a destination country. Latina female domestic workers in Israel come to the country as tourists with their plane tickets funded by the Israeli employers. After their visas expire in 3 months, they turn into irregular migrant workers (Raijman et al. 2003). Unlike migrants in Europe, the irregular status of migrants from CIS working in Russia and Kazakhstan is not associated with visas, since CIS is a visa-free regime, but rather with documents such as patent and employment contract. For example, research has provided evidence for refusal of employers to provide migrant workers with written employment contracts, as required under Russian law (Buchanan 2009). Buckley (2018) also illustrates how migrants in Russia were forced into domestic work with their passports being confiscated.

There exist a considerable body of literature demonstrating how personal connections land jobs for migrants, including domestic workers. Based on the interviews with Mexican migrant workers providing cleaning services in the households in California, Mattingly (1999) found that social networks[3] were meaningful for securing employment in certain sectors of the labor market of San Diego, including obtaining access to higher wage and better working conditions. Similarly, domestic work in Russia has been an issue of personal connections, although some recruitment agencies do provide services for employment in this sector (Tkach Tkach and Hrženjak 2016).

Numerous existing studies examined living conditions of migrant domestic workers, noting that one of the seemingly advantageous features of domestic work is living with the employer's family. On the one hand, it is beneficial for migrants (mainly, for undocumented migrants) as they are more likely to escape deportation (Griffin 2011). On the other hand, live-in workers are more vulnerable: they frequently get additional work hours, often unpaid, and become highly dependent on the employer's family (Lin and Bélanger 2012; Human Rights Watch 2006, 2010; International Labour Organisation 2009, 2011; Huang and Yeoh 2007; Ntisa and Selesho 2014; Hochschild 1979; Thomson 2009). Domestic workers often have constraints in negotiating their salary (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Gheasi et al. 2014; Parreñas 2001; Van Wulsum 2011; Abrantes 2014), but live-out workers enjoy more autonomy as they can have multiple jobs and can choose an employer. In case of Russia, living conditions of migrants in general are reported to be very poor. For example, a recent research argues that a migrant's salary can hardly cover half the average rental cost of a simple flat in the outskirts of Moscow. As a result, most migrants live in property that is "invisible" to the state and rely on private firms and middle-men to obtain the registration documents needed to remain legally visible (Reeves 2011).

The review of existing literature demonstrates that migrant domestic work in the post-Soviet space has been assessed to a very limited extent. Although studies on labor

[3] Social networks are understood by Mattingly as personal connections used by migrants in job search.

migration in post-Soviet space have been conducted by many authors, no previous research investigated comparative advantages of migrants' employment in domestic work sector in this region. This paper aims to fill in the existing gap by exploring employment practices of migrant domestic workers, focusing on gender aspects, channels of job search, and work contract arrangements. Based on the review of the prior studies devoted to migrant domestic work both in Russia and beyond, we identify four hypotheses to verify key characteristics of this type of migrants' employment. Hypotheses 1 and 2 address potential similarities of domestic work sector and migrants' work in other sectors, while hypotheses 3 and 4 serve to confirm meaningful differences.

Hypothesis 1: Social connections act as the main channel of job search in the sector of domestic work.

Hypothesis 2: Domestic work is primarily informal, i.e., no official labor contract is in place.

Hypothesis 3: Domestic workers' wages are lower than wages of other categories of migrants.

Hypothesis 4: Living in the household provides certain benefits but increases the workload of migrant workers.

Data and Methods

The testing of hypotheses and conclusions of the paper are based on the results of the project *Identification of the Status, Needs and Priorities of Migrant Domestic Workers in Russia and Kazakhstan* conducted in 2013. The project was the first study in the CIS addressing specifically the subject of migrant domestic work.

Russia and Kazakhstan were selected because these countries are two main destinations for migrant domestic workers in the post-Soviet space. The findings of the research showed that migrants' employment conditions in domestic work sector in Russia and Kazakhstan have much in common. Therefore, the cases of Russia and Kazakhstan are presented within one section, and relevant differences are indicated accordingly.

The analysis presented in this paper relies on the data collected through a sample migrant domestic workers' survey in Kazakhstan and Russia, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with migrant domestic workers in both destination countries, representatives of recruitment agencies in Russia and Kazakhstan, and employers of domestic workers (10 in-depth interviews in Russia and five interviews in Kazakhstan), and a focus group discussion with female migrants working for a household in Moscow, Russia.

The standardized survey covered 405 migrant domestic workers (of them 62% in Russia and 38% in Kazakhstan). Due to the lack of statistical data on migrants employed in the domestic work sector, we applied quota sampling method. The target population consisted of women (90% of all respondents) who had neither Russian (while working in Russia) nor Kazakh (while working in Kazakhstan) citizenship. For the survey, no quotas on workers' occupation, income level, or education level were used. The final sample for the survey included female domestic workers of about 40 years on average, with retirement or pre-retirement age women dominating. These female workers mostly had a good command of the language of the destination country (Russian or Kazakh) and 36% of them had either higher or incomplete higher

education. Female' occupations dominated as a type of work performed by our respondents in Russia and Kazakhstan—babysitters (slightly over 30%), housekeepers (24%), care workers, and cleaning ladies (each 10%). Male respondents worked as drivers, security guards, and gardeners/workers in the country houses. Both men and women worked as cooks in the households. The reference group was composed of internal migrant domestic workers (citizens of the countries) in each of the countries, and the share of these respondents in the sample was 12%. The respondents were migrant domestic workers aged over 18, employed in the household, with relevant experience in such type of work for 3 months and longer.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 73 questions grouped into the following blocks: "Personal profile" (questions on age, gender, country of origin, family status, etc.), "reasons and duration of labor migration" (including a question about a valid patent), "employment and labor contract" (questions about the work performed for the household, contents of the job contract, salary, additional benefits, or payments received from the employer), "working conditions and working hours" (including questions about living conditions of the live-in domestic workers), "job satisfaction and protection of rights" (including questions about the conflicts with employers, sexual harassment, conflict resolution strategies, etc.), "family" (questions about keeping in contact with the spouse and children), "financial support of the family" (questions about remittances to the relatives in the home country), "healthcare and health status" (questions about access to healthcare services in the destination country and health condition), and "living abroad" (questions exploring the costs of working abroad and migrants' plans for the future).

In addition to the survey, the focus group discussion with female domestic workers in Moscow helped obtain and document narrative evidence about experience of migrants working for households, as well as to reveal discrimination practices in relation to migrant domestic workers. Apart from that, a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews both in Russia and Kazakhstan, held with employers of domestic workers, with representatives of recruitment agencies dealing with domestic work, and with migrant domestic workers contributed to a deeper understanding of the existing recruitment practices in the domestic work sector and motivations behind this type of employment.

Below, we present the results of our analysis grouping them according to the formulated hypotheses, making use of the data obtained from the survey, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group discussion. Additionally, where relevant, we refer to the results of the previous survey of female migrants in Russia (Female Migrants 2011), to compare female migrant domestic workers with migrant women working in other sectors. The mentioned survey was conducted in six regions of Russia in 2010 and covered 1169 migrant women.

Results

Social Connections Act as the Main Channel of Job Search in the Sector of Domestic Work

The results of our survey showed that personal connections appear to be more significant in search of a job in a household than in search of any other type of job.

Earlier survey of female migrants in 2010 (Female Migrants 2011) demonstrated that 64% of respondents found the job with the help of their relatives and friends. Also, 75.6% of respondents surveyed in 2013 (Survey, 2013) found domestic employment using the same channels. Strategies of job search in Russia and Kazakhstan are very similar. In both countries, migrants rely on friends, relatives, and other personal connections to find a job. In Kazakhstan, the role of personal connections is slightly more significant than in Russia—79% of migrant workers look for a job through their relatives and friends and 10% use the services of a mediator or a recruiter (in Russia, these shares are 73 and 4%, respectively). At the same time, only 1% of those working in Almaty and Astana rely on Internet job announcements, while in Moscow, this share is 11%. Alternative ways of job search such as newspaper announcements, TV and radio announcements, and recruitment agencies are much less popular. The focus group discussion and in-depth interviews also confirmed the importance of personal connections in assisting with job search:

> …I started asking those who I know to help me, and they found a job for me here. (*Moldovan woman, 52 years, higher education, a housekeeper and babysitter, Moscow, Russia*)

> My colleague who is also my friend, offered me to come, she came to work in Moscow before me; … she said a family needed a well-educated babysitter speaking correct Russian. (*Ukrainian woman, 50 years, higher education; a babysitter in Moscow, Russia*).

Employers, too, use personal connections to find workers, especially in cases when they look for a domestic worker for their apartment in the city, or a babysitter for children; less frequently, personal connections are used for finding a worker for a country house.

> We do not have a well-established practice yet of looking for such workers with the help of recruitment agencies or other organizations. Frankly speaking, I would hesitate to do it, no one knows what people they will offer you. (*Kazakh woman, 45 years, higher education, a housewife, Astana, Kazakhstan; an employer of a housekeeper and a driver*).

> It often happens at the playground. Babysitters come out with children, and find new employers. (*Kyrgyz woman, 42 years, higher education, director of a charity foundation, Moscow, Russia; an employer of a babysitter*).

Personal connections as a job search channel are especially important for migrants of non-Slavic appearance. For example, personal connections were successfully used for finding a job by only 65.5% of Russian domestic workers and 66.7% of Ukrainians, while almost all Armenians, 85.7% of Kazakh, and 85% of Uzbek migrant workers. Common ethnic background helps establish more trustful

relationships, but above that allow exercising potential control on behalf of the recommender, verifying information both about a migrant worker and about the household employing him. Verified strangers are easier allowed to approach person's sacred place—his house—and his children.

> Uzbek housekeepers are in high demand here, they can work well and quickly, they take care of the child properly, will never hurt him, because they have ten children themselves, …I always have someone from Uzbekistan working for me. Every week somebody asks me to find a worker for him too.. It is an entirely informal request. And recruitment is always through personal connections, it guarantees quality and security. (*Uzbek woman, 47 years, higher education; a businesswoman, Moscow, Russia; employer of a babysitter and a housekeeper*).

Ability to speak the native language of an employer also influences the success of employment. It plays a role when an employer wants to use his native language when talking with a worker, or when he wants his children to practice their native language.

> …My housekeeper, she always speaks Uzbek with my daughter, and it helped my daughter start understanding the language better, at least in oral communication. Here [in Moscow] everything is in Russian, so that it is easy to lose all your native language skills. (*Uzbek woman, 47 years, higher education; a businesswoman, Moscow, Russia; employer of a babysitter and a housekeeper*)

Those who came with an intention to work for a household, dominate in the group of migrants who used personal connections in search of a job (43% compared to 32.3% of those who used other channels of job search): for these respondents, domestic work sector is rather a well-thought choice.

Unlike findings of Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 61), Mattingly (1999), our research has not revealed cooperation practices among domestic workers, because employers are reluctant to replace their domestic workers for another person even for a short time:

> My employers are happy to "lend" me to another family for a weekend. But they do not want, for example, my niece to replace me in another house in case of emergency, when I am sick. It makes difference for them. (*Ukrainian woman, 61 years, secondary education, a babysitter in Moscow, Russia*)

When a job placement was secured through personal connections, it helps to maintain the mutual trust and confidence between an employer and an employee even if no job contract is actually signed. However, migrants employed by their compatriots tend to have more demanding jobs with lower wages: in Kazakhstan, the average wage of those who found job through relatives and friends amounted to 49,400 tenge (US$321[4]), while the average wage of those who used other channels of job search was 55,700 tenge (US$362). In Moscow, the average wages for corresponding categories were 24,400 Rubles and 27,000 Rubles (US$758 and US$839).

[4] US dollar-Ruble exchange rate used here and further in the article is as of the moment of the survey.

At the same time, more demanding is a job found through personal connections: a statement "I work non-stop except at night" more often belongs to those who found their job through friends or relatives—38%—compared to 21% of those who found jobs through Internet, a recruitment agency, or an advertisement. Thus, the first of our hypotheses was confirmed: personal connections are an effective and important channel of job search both in Russia and Kazakhstan.

Domestic Work Is Primarily Informal; No Official Employment Contract Is in Place

Migrant domestic workers in Kazakhstan and Russia are considered legal in terms of employment and stay under the condition they have valid documents for entering the country, staying in the country (registration with authorities, in case of Russia), patent, and employment contract. Among surveyed migrants, 56.9% respondents in Russia and 36.4% respondents in Kazakhstan were staying legally in the country as of the moment of the survey. At the same time, 53.8% respondents in Russia had patents and only 17.4% respondents in Kazakhstan had valid patents.

On the whole, the share of migrants without valid work permits is large in both countries. In the USA, for example, only 23% of migrant domestic workers were irregular as of 2008 (Passel and Cohn 2009). Moreover, the studies conducted in Russia in 2000–2010 revealed that female labor is more often found in the informal sector than male labor (Florinskaya 2010), women being less noticeable for the police. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the share of irregular workers among migrant domestic workers is higher than in other sectors not dominated by women.

Informal type of employment is even more common than absence of a patent. Similar to other countries, domestic work employment in Russia and Kazakhstan is arranged on the basis of oral agreement between employer and employee. Only 9.7% of respondents in Kazakhstan and 15.6% of respondents in Russia had a written work contract. Although this points out to high level of informal employment, the situation in other destinations, such as Italy and Spain, is pretty similar: it is estimated that in 2011, 70% of domestic workers had no contract (Farvaque 2013). In Russia, female migrants working for legal entities are three times more likely to have a written work contract than female domestic workers (Female migrants 2011).

Formality of employment is not connected with the citizenship of a worker. One in five Russian women working in Moscow has a work contract, and one in seven Kazakh women working in Almaty and Astana has a work contract. On the other hand, formal employment practices are more often found among Ukrainian domestic workers who were pioneers in this sector among CIS citizens. One can hardly say for sure that this is due to their earlier work experience in European countries. However, the example of neighbors, relatives, and friends who successfully resolved legal issues with employers—that very social capital which matters a lot for successful job search—also plays important role.

The absence of a written labor contract in the majority of cases is an informed choice of migrant domestic workers. More than 60% of respondents did not need any contract (Table 1); in Russia the share of such answers is higher, than in Kazakhstan.

Almost 10% of respondents said they did not find it necessary to have an employment contract or never knew it could be signed (option "other'"). Most employers

Table 1 Reasons of the absence of the written labor contract

	Total, %	Russia, %	Kazakhstan, %
Employer refuses to sign a contract	12.9	17.8	5.3
I do not need a contract	61.5	67.8	51.5
I cannot sign a contract, I am an illegal immigrant	16.2	3.8	35.6
Other reasons	9.4	10.6	7.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

interviewed do not consider a written employment contract with a domestic worker as a necessity either, because, in their opinion, it can hardly improve anything or be helpful in conflict resolution.

> …Oral agreement is a must, written contract—no, because they cannot write in Russian. We simply talked it over, so that everyone knew the responsibilities, to prevent any omissions and misunderstanding. (*Russian woman,48 years, higher education, a housewife, Moscow, Russia; employer of a housekeeper and a guard*).

> …No, I have no contract with her, and why should I have one—no one has a contract. All the more so, she worked for my friend and I knew her for a long time. Gulia came to me, we discussed everything, I mean, all her duties—and she started working. (*Kazakh woman, 45 years, higher education, a housewife, Astana, Kazakhstan; an employer of a housekeeper and a driver*)

Written employment contracts with domestic workers are extremely rare, according to the recruitment agencies' representatives dealing with domestic personnel:

> …We can help with drafting such an employment contract, but I remember only two or three clients who did it, because usually they prefer to negotiate details without any formal arrangements (*HR director in the recruitment agency, St. Petersburg, Russia*)

> …In fact, only fourth or fifth client does it. We ask if an employer is interested in having a written contract with the worker. And in case he is, we help him, explain how it can be done. Whether a worker is interested?—Rarely, much more rarely, only an experienced employee coming from Europe, the UK, the USA (*Deputy head of a recruitment agency, Moscow, Russia*)

> …Later the sides (a worker and an employer) can agree to have an employment contract, but to tell you the truth, as a rule it does not happen. (*Head of the domestic workers recruitment agency. Astana, Kazakhstan*)

The key peculiarity observed is that domestic workers in Russia and Kazakhstan, in other countries (Abrantes 2014; Raijman et al. 2003), do not see a problem in the lack of an employment contract. Even considering a possibility to have a written contract, the respondents in our survey expressed little enthusiasm: only 18% of those without a contract would want to have one; 37% said they would never want it, and 45% replied "I do not care."

Only 6% of all respondents in Moscow and 1% of all respondents in Kazakhstan had officially registered written employment contracts. In Russia, the registration of a labor contract with local authorities is made in the form of a notification; in Kazakhstan, there is no such requirement. According to the regulations in both countries, an employer is to pay all social insurance contributions for the worker; however, not a single respondent reported about such payments.

Thus, a written employment contract is not considered a fully operational document. Few respondents said they could make use of the contract in legal proceedings for conflict resolution. Among the few basic elements of the contract discussed by an employer and a worker are the amount of the compensation (although 17% do not discuss it before the work starts), schedule of payments, and key duties (Table 2).

More than 90% of respondents admitted that the contents of the employment contract were offered by the employer; moreover, in 40% of cases, employers never discussed contract terms with employees in advance (over 50% of domestic workers surveyed in Kazakhstan reported such cases).

Since majority of agreements between employers and domestic workers have no legal authority, there is no guarantee that the contract will be executed. Thus, relations between the employer and the employee are based on mutual trust: 61.5% of respondents claimed that only the "good will of the employer" can guarantee compliance with the terms of the contract ("I trust my employer"); 23.8% told that they had "no guarantee at all."

Although majority of domestic workers replied they did not care a lot about the contents of the labor contract, the mere existence of such a contract influences many

Table 2 Content of the contract with an employer (written or oral agreement), %

Issues covered by the contract	Which of the listed conditions of work (discussed) are in your contract/oral agreement?	If it were up to you, which issues would you include into the contract?
1	2	3
Salary (per month/per day)	83	81
Payment schedule	62	78
Duties/obligations	74	75
Daily working hours	44	64
Working conditions	43	50
Leaves of absence payments	10	33
Sick leave payments	6	30
Overtime payments	15	49
Conditions of the contract's termination	14	19

$N = 405$

aspects of life of workers and the degree of job satisfaction. For example, 9.4% of those who had a labor contract reported that their employer took their passports from them, while 20.7% of those without a contract reported the same situation. Termination of the current job was considered possible by 90.7% of workers with a contract and by 79.7% of workers without a contract. Job satisfaction was reported by 77.8% of formally recruited workers and by 63.6% of informally recruited workers.

Employment contract can hardly influence the number of working hours (58 h per week for workers with a contract, and 58.5 h for those without a contract) and risk of being cheated by an employer (24.1% of workers with a contract and 27.7% of those without a contract). Both categories of workers often work overtime (37% of workers with contract and 42.6% of those without a contract).

Finally, sexual harassment in the employer's household was reported by 16.7% of domestic workers with a contract and by 6.9% of workers without a contract. Evidently, this difference is the result of informal practices of domestic workers' recruitment through personal connections, when control exercised by the ethnic community and by compatriots, is of key importance. Most migrants having an employment contract did not use personal connections in their job search, and therefore support of the compatriots is of less importance for them.

What could be the explanation of this controversy: indifference towards having an employment contract and observed higher frequency of rights' deprivation and violation among those without a contract?

In our view, the reasons are numerous. First, the share of informal employment in post-Soviet countries is traditionally high, including informal employment of the local population. According to Rosstat, in 2010–2013 in Russia, the share of informally employed persons was never below 20%. Among migrant workers, the share of informally employed is even higher. There are almost no economic benefits for migrants to seek legal and formal employment (Female Migrants 2011). Restrictive regulations such as deportation and ban for entry for foreigners violating Russian laws have emerged only recently. Employers are not interested in formal recruitment of domestic workers either. The reason is not only their intention to avoid paying additional taxes. Informality of employment is also explained by reluctance to disclose publicly the fact of using domestic worker services and to follow administrative procedure of recruitment registration with local authorities.

Second reason of the mentioned controversy is the lack of trust in law enforcement practices which was quite explicitly formulated in one of the interviews:

> Ok, suppose I have a labor contract, you mean I should use it in the court proceedings? Why and what court? It is ridiculous. You'd better search for a compromise with a family you work for. (*Tajik woman, 25 years, secondary education, a babysitter in Moscow, Russia*)

Third reason is the faulty assumption that within the CIS space, there are no additional legal or administrative arrangements to be observed in the labor market. Fourth reason is the fact that employment opportunities for migrants in the domestic work sector in the CIS emerged quite recently, compared with the European Union countries or the USA. As a result, there is no solidarity among

domestic workers in the CIS; they have poor understanding of their rights and no instruments for protection of these rights.

Thus, hypothesis about dominance of informal employment among domestic workers in Russia and Kazakhstan was confirmed, but in contrast to other destination countries, workers here express less discontent and less desire to improve the situation.

Domestic Workers' Wages Are Lower than Wages of Other Categories of Migrants

Majority of the previous research (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Parreñas 2001; Lutz 2008; Weicht 2010; Tomei 2011; Griffin 2011; Ntisa and Selesho 2014; Lin and Bélanger 2012) pointed out that domestic workers' wage is low or is below the standard minimum level. Moreover, live-in domestic workers are often paid less both due to the illegal status of their employment and to the high supply of domestic services which exceeds demand (Lutz 2008). The survey of domestic workers in Russia and Kazakhstan revealed that this category of migrant workers is well-paid. Average wage of a migrant domestic worker is 25,000 Rubles per month (US$775) in Moscow and 48,900 tenge per month (US$318) in Astana and Almaty. Internal migrant domestic workers earned even more—27,400 Rubles per month (US$852) in Moscow and 62,300 tenge per month (US$405) in Astana and Almaty. These amounts correspond to average wage of locals in the cities where migrants were surveyed.

Significant difference in wages is observed between domestic workers with and without an employment contract: 24.6% in Kazakhstan and 22.2% in Russia. However, since in general the wages are rather high, illegally and informally employed domestic workers in Russia and Kazakhstan do not fight for their rights, which is quite typical for other countries as revealed by many researchers (Chen 2011; Abrantes 2014; Tomei 2011; Thomson 2009; Gabriel and Macdonald 2014). Domestic sector work in both Russia and Kazakhstan is more attractive in terms of earnings and possibilities to diversify jobs or to work for numerous employers, while high wages are thought to compensate for hard work and additional constraints.

> I work more and harder than my flat-mate, she is a shop assistant. But I earn more too, and I have more job options: three days a week I babysit with Ilyusha; two days, and sometimes if they ask me, three days a week I babysit with Sasha, on week-ends I do cleaning at Ilyusha's grandmother. Next week-end I will do cleaning for her friend. I always do some work. But that's what I have come here for – to earn money. I do not complain. (*Ukrainian woman, 61 years, secondary education, a babysitter in Moscow, Russia*)

Wage level is also determined by domestic workers' knowledge of the Russian language (in Moscow) and Kazakh language (in Almaty and Astana). In Moscow, migrant domestic workers who speak Russian well earn 39% more than those with poor knowledge of the Russian language. In Kazakhstan, migrant domestic workers with poor knowledge of the Kazakh language earn 25.5% less. In Moscow, the wage difference determined by this criterion is much bigger than in Astana and Almaty. It is explained by geographic proximity of a country of origin and a country of destination and also by common ethnic and linguistic background of workers and employers. In Almaty and Astana, migrant

domestic workers come mainly from Central Asia republics, while migrants working in Moscow households are much more diverse in terms of countries of origin; therefore, ethnic and linguistic gap between workers and employers is wider.

Thus, the hypothesis saying that domestic workers in Russia and Kazakhstan are paid less than other categories of migrant workers was not confirmed. At the same time, some of the findings of earlier research were justified. For example, a survey of women migrants working in Russia showed that domestic workers' wage is 22% higher than wage of other categories of migrant workers: 19,000 Rubles (US$615) and 14,900 Rubles (US$483) correspondingly. "This sector is to a certain degree a 'privileged' one—earnings are higher, job satisfaction is bigger, and jobs are more stable" (Female Migrants 2011, 163). The same conclusions were made by Varshavskaya (2014) based on the analysis of domestic workers' responses from the survey of migrants carried out in Russia in 2011.

What are the reasons of the higher wage level of domestic workers in Russia and Kazakhstan compared with other countries? Domestic work sector is rather young, and its functioning is determined mainly by service providers. Gender misbalance in migration flows in post-Soviet space and deficit of women migrants who dominate among domestic workers also contribute to higher influence of the service providers. On top of that, migrant workers come from former USSR and therefore feel more confident in comparison with migrants coming from developing countries and working in Western countries.

Living in the Household Provides Certain Benefits, but Increases the Workload of Migrant Workers

Informal character of domestic workers' employment described above, their desire to remain invisible for the police, to spend less on accommodation, and lack of affordable housing for migrants, as well as the specific nature of job of a caregiver, make domestic workers believe that living with the employer's family is an effective migration strategy. At the same time, such absolute dependence on the employer is considered to be cultivating the "appearance of reverence and obedience" (Griffin 2011) as well as certain vulnerability (Chang 2000; Ayalon 2009; Avril 2006; Murphy 2013).

> Hiring a person as a live-in worker, is considered sometimes advantageous, because such worker is not hurrying to return home, he treats the work differently, he is more motivated, more flexible, hardworking. (*HR director in a recruitment agency, St Petersburg, Russia*)

In Russia, 39.6% of domestic workers live in the household of their employers. In Kazakhstan, this share is 54.2%. Usually, workers are not charged for accommodation. Such workers make up a category of migrants who do not leave for their country of origin for years and who found their job through relatives or personal connections.

Working hours of live-in and live-out domestic workers differ significantly: 79.8 and 42.5 h per week correspondingly. Partially, it can be explained by the type of work they do (cleaning ladies, cooks, babysitters attending school-age children often live separately, while caregivers and domestic workers almost always live with the employers) and partially by feeling of dependence (on behalf of workers) and exploitation (on behalf of employers) which develop when workers and employers live together.

> …I had no pre-arranged days-off, I never insisted on having them because I did not rent an apartment when I arrived, so I had nowhere to go to even if I had a day off… Day and night I was by the child. These several years were a hell. (*Ukrainian woman, 50 years, higher education, a babysitter in Moscow, Russia*)

Live-in domestic workers often do not have a lunch break; they can eat only when they have a spare minute. It should be noted, however, that the food is provided by the employer and the worker is never charged for it.

Over half of live-in domestic workers do additional work, on top of the work negotiated at the moment of recruitment. They work on weekends, get busy with activities not related to their main duties, etc. In Russia, these cases are 1.5 times less frequent than in Kazakhstan—43.4 and 61.5% correspondingly. The share of those who do additional work is lower among live-out workers.

> It is better to live separately, when you live at the employer's you depend on him, he always needs you, you have no fixed working hours. They can call after the working day is finished and ask to come and clean, for example, if the child spelt a cup over. (*Ukrainian woman, 44 years, professional secondary education, a nurse in Moscow, Russia*)

On the other hand, working for a household is in general risky because of the constant close contact with an employer. In this regard, a live-out mode is a more safe option, although not entirely safe.

> Domestic work, even in a nice family, always means you are not free, it is not safe. Even if there is no sexual harassment, your employer can blame you when something goes wrong. For example, he can forget where he has put the money. Or, as it was in my case, the child hid the expensive watch, but they blamed me, and fired me. A week later they found the watch and called me, apologized and asked to return, but I refused. (*Moldovan woman, 52 years, higher education, a housekeeper and a babysitter in Moscow, Russia*

Previous migration experience helps workers compare costs and benefits of living in the employer's household. As a result, more experienced migrants choose to live out. Those who have not learned yet how to avoid problems with police, how to find a cheap room for rent, or who simply do not feel confident because of being a migrant prefer to live with the employer's family. Thus, the hypothesis about the trade-offs of living with an employer is confirmed. Benefits of living with the employer get less attractive when one takes into account longer working hours, limited free time, and pressure to agree to other additional conditions set by an employer.

Conclusion

For a long time, female migration in post-Soviet space was constrained by traditional norms which assigned the role of the breadwinner to the man, and the woman's duty was doing household chores. Gradually, such division of roles is getting blurred. The

number of children in the families decreases releasing women from their traditional role of a housewife. Additionally, growing divorce rate—including in the Central Asia republics—also contributes to the increased economic activity of women. At the same time, employment opportunities in the home countries for such women are limited by low surplus of jobs and they start seeking jobs abroad. The emerging domestic work sector in Russia and Kazakhstan provides additional employment opportunities for women from the former Soviet Union. The common historical past, the presence of friends and acquaintances who can help with employment, relatively understandable "rules of the game", and residual knowledge of the Russian language are factors that shape the migratory flows of domestic workers in the post-Soviet space.

The demand for domestic workers in Russia and Kazakhstan is also associated with active participation of women in the labor market. The households in the large cities in these destination countries prefer to rely on the earnings of both husband and wife. Due to the increase of the life expectancy rate, the share of the elderly grows, and working-age family members have to take care both of the elderly parents and children. Attempts to maintain a balance between family and work, children and the elderly, and public and private life lead to a growing need for hiring of domestic workers.

It should be noted that the flow of female migration from CIS countries takes different directions, with Asian migration being almost 90% Russia oriented and Moldovan and Ukrainian migration flows dividing between Russia and countries of the European Union. Thus, Russia and Kazakhstan emerge not only as the main migration destinations in the post-Soviet space but also as countries competing with main European destinations for female migrant domestic workers from the CIS, mainly from Moldova and Ukraine.

Our research showed that these destinations can offer decent legal protection of domestic workers, well-developed employment infrastructure, and level of wages comparable with European countries for domestic work. As a result, Russian and Kazakh domestic work sector cannot be considered a serious competitor to the corresponding segment of the labor market in European countries.

As of today, domestic work in Russia and Kazakhstan is already very attractive for female migrants from the countries of the former USSR. The findings of our research confirmed three of the four hypotheses formulated. It turned out that personal connections function as a primary channel of domestic work search. Moreover, similar to other countries (Mattingly 1999), domestic type of employment is based on informal agreement between workers and employers: a written labor contract and often also the lack of trust in the legal power of such contract as a guarantor of worker's labor rights. Alternatively, both workers and employers prefer to rely on the recommendations of relatives and personal connections: such recruitment practice is considered secure. In Kazakhstan, informal arrangements are more widespread than in Russia, because domestic work sector started developing even later than in Russia, and because national traditional norms are more influential than in Russia. Living in the employer's household is one of the elements of informal arrangement system. Like in other countries (Griffin 2011), living in the household provides some benefits for domestic workers in Russia and Kazakhstan (first of all, it helps reduce accommodation expenses, but also means less visibility for the police, no necessity to navigate each day through a big unknown city, and others). In return, domestic workers are expected to be more

flexible, to work longer hours and to perform additional work. It is from these working arrangements the abusive treatment arises.

In contrast to other countries (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Parreñas 2001; Lutz 2008; Weicht 2010; Tomei 2011; Griffin 2011; Ntisa and Selesho 2014; Lin and Bélanger 2012), domestic work sector in Russia and Kazakhstan is characterized by relatively high level of wages. For a variety of reasons, including the early stage of domestic work sector development and relatively low competition for jobs, as well as deficit of women migrant workers, rather high self-esteem and educational level of domestic workers, the wages of migrants in Russia and Kazakhstan correspond to average wages of the local domestic workers.

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