

### **Summary of the research:**

The research is an anthropological study on au pairs in the Netherlands during the covid- 19 global pandemic. Au pairs are young individuals who travel to a host country to learn about the culture and language while staying with a host family. I have attempted to represent an inside view of how an au pair experiences the au pair program, and how organizations involved in the program support, facilitate, or obstruct the working conditions of the au pairs during the covid pandemic. I used semi-structured qualitative interviews, participant observation, and autoethnography to gather my data. The collected data was critically analyzed using four main theoretical discussions, firstly 'wasted precariat' by Pajnic (2016), second, "boundary work" by Lan (2003), third, "oppression" by Young (1990), and lastly Weberian feature of modern bureaucracies by Heyman (2004). I have found evidence of the au pair's vulnerable and oppressed positioning, caused by the power dynamics in a domestic work environment. Lastly, I have concluded my research with suggested policy contribution concerning the au pair program.

Key terms: au pair, culture, language, wasted precariat, oppression, policy

### **Conclusion of the research:**

Based on the research that I have conducted; it has become apparent that covid-19 global pandemic has brought new challenges and has worsened different aspects of the au pair program. Additionally, the core au pair program policies and structure could also be put to blame for the existing abuse and exploitation.

Firstly, isolation of au pairs. The increasingly isolated work environment has made au pairs more vulnerable than before the pandemic. Not only has the pandemic bring an increased vulnerability of au pairs but has also made it more difficult to detect abuse or exploitation, as individuals were encouraged to stay indoors as much as possible to reduce social contact. It has become an ideal environment for the host families to take advantage of the au pair living in their house. Au pairs were in desperate need of support from the au pair agencies, however, au pair agencies were overwhelmed with the overflowing number of complaints from au pairs and therefore, had little to no time to respond to every au pair that needed help.

Secondly, I argue that there is too little inspection and monitoring of the au pair agencies. The report/complain rate sent to the IND are low due to the lack of information provided to au pairs as well as the possibility of au pair agencies selecting and ignoring certain abuse and exploitation. Au pair agencies fear losing their clients - host families – who pay the au pair agency. The privacy law seems to be a large part of the program which does not only make it difficult to detect anything that is happening, but also difficult to prevent abuse or exploitation.

Lastly, the new regulations proposed by the Dutch State Secretary of Justice and Security ("Justitie en Veiligheid", J&V) do not take the protection of au pairs or improvements on the structure of the program into consideration. I argue that the new regulations are placed to

decrease the number of specific participants who misuse the au pair program to migrate to the Netherlands or participate with the intent to have an income that could be sent back to their country of origin. NGOs such as FairWork are negotiating with policymakers for possible improvements in the program.

The new suggestions by FairWork (NGO) include the following: 1) Au pairs should be more informed about their rights, and where to go when there are problems. 2) There need to be good mechanisms to report without immediately losing their permit [au pair visa].3) Enforcements for agencies should be better, as it is not controlled enough. 4) They should explore ways of legal labor migration, for host families who just want domestic workers in their house.

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