# THE GLUE THAT BINDS DOMESTIC WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS IN ARMED CONFLICT SOCIETY: A CASE OF CHANGARA VILLAGE IN MOZAMBIQUE

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**Abstract -** Armed conflict in Africa and beyond has become one of the key precipitators to unemployment, deterioration of working conditions, poverty and impeded socio-economic development. The purpose of this study was to establish the factors that bind domestic workers and employers in armed conflict society. This study used a purely qualitative methodology. An interview solicited data from eight purposively sampled domestic workers in Changara village in Tete province, Mozambique. The findings of the study indicated that job satisfaction and poverty are the key antecedents that bind domestic workers and their employers. The provision of social services such as health facilities and education to domestic workers and their children, assistance of domestic workers' displaced relatives and provision of physical security are some of the factors that bind domestic workers and their employers. The study recommended that employers should provide adequate socio-economic support and avoid exploiting them by giving them low wages and also sexually and emotionally harassing them.

**Keywords:** Armed Conflict, Employers, Domestic Workers, Job Satisfaction

## I. INTRODUCTION

Armed conflicts across the world and in Africa are inevitable and have serious ramifications on all forms of development in the war torn country and the region. Davaet al (2013) are of the view that armed conflicts in Africa and beyond have negative influence on the development of the country. The war in Mozambique was not exception because the fighting between the government forces and the opposition forces in Mozambique seriously impeded development by destroying the country's economic infrastructure. According to Dava et al (2013) the war was intense and resulted in economic recession and lack of social services. The conflict in Mozambique just like all other forms of armed conflicts resulted in civilians losing their lives and relegating people to abject poverty because of the limited opportunities for employment. Most people, whether educated or not, did menial jobs such as domestic chores. Employers of domestic workers were however failing to fulfil their employment contractual obligations such as paying employees living wages, benefits and creating good working conditions, which are all key antecedents to job satisfaction (Dava et al 2013, Nyanga et al 2012), employee motivation, employee retention, employee loyalty and commitment.

Almost all the economic activities on which Changara, mainly centered, were put to a halt. Before the war Changara was regarded as one of the fastest growing growth points with the possibility of creating more employment. During the good economic fortunes of the village people domestic workers included used to move from one job to the other and one company to the other (Fields et al 2007).The minimum wage would regularly increase, hence workers would continuously search for better paying jobs (Fields et al 2007). In armed conflict societies domestic workers are sexually, emotionally and physically abused by their employers (Elias 2004) but surprisingly despite the violation of their human rights such as discrimination they continue to report for duty.

It was established that during the war in Columbia the poor and uneducated, mainly women were found with one option of cleaning the homes of the wealthy to earn a living. To them domestic work means long working hours for low pay and no benefits (Elias 2004). A study carried out by (Mwale 2000) in Malawi established that during the war domestic workers' rights are infringed upon by their employers. Workers are verbally and physically abused by their employers and in some instance they go for months without receiving their salaries. Another study showed that people can stay in unpaid job (Shoniwa et al, 2013). Shoniwaet al investigated what motivated Shabaniemine workers in Zvishavane in Zimbabwe to continually report for work for over five years without remuneration. The study established that a living wage and good working conditions are key antecedents to employee recruitment and retention. Lowly remunerating employees usually lead to brain drain, labour turnover, high levels of absenteeism and other business ills. With the importance that is attached to remuneration, the current study sought to find out what is keeping domestic workers in unpaid or lowly paid work and what binds them with their employers.

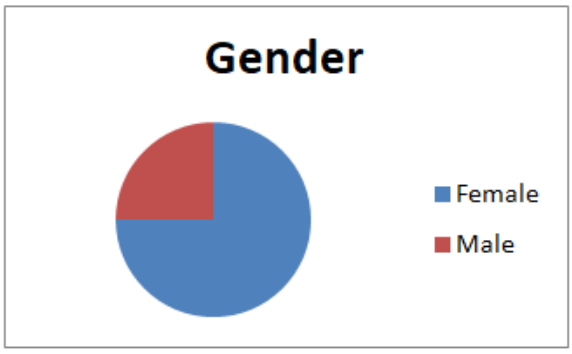
Given this background, the researchers were enthused to carryout this study in order to establish what binds domestic workers with their employers in armed

conflict society in light of the employers failing to give them a living wage and failing to provide good working conditions.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed purely qualitative research methodology. Unstructured interviews were used as the key data collection instruments. Qualitative methodology was employed because it enabled the researchers to generate rich descriptive data that helped in unravel the conditions and factors that bind domestic workers and their employers in armed conflict society. The qualitative methodology is the appropriate approach to this study since most of the respondents were drawn from disadvantaged backgrounds and societies living in abject poverty. Most of the respondents were not literate hence the use of other instruments which required them to respond to questions on their own was going to be difficult. The oral conversation through interviews with the respondents was the most appropriate method. Through this methodology domestic workers' experiences, feelings and perceptions were revealed since the methodology gave participants the opportunity to give detailed accounts of their activities which resulted in them staying longer in employment. The ages of respondents ranged from 35 to 48 years. Interviews were held at the domestic workers' workplaces which generally made them comfortable and respond to questions in a relaxed environment. Interviews gave the researchers room to probe further for clarification from the participants. Purposive sampling method was employed to select the 8(eight) participants. The researcher subjectively selected the participants who had worked in armed conflict society and had experienced the war between government forces (FRELIMO) and opposition forces (RENAMO). Data was analyzed using thematic data analysis. Only demographic data was presented on tables and charts, the rest was reported in descriptive form.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION




Consistent with other studies on the demography of domestic workers the findings of the study shows that there were more female than male domestic workers in Changara Village in Mozambique. On educational status of the respondent, four (4) participants were illiterate while the other four (4) were literate but they all came from very poor socio-economic backgrounds.

The study established that job satisfaction was the principal 'glue' that binds domestic workers with their employers. Most employers used a host of methods to retain domestic workers. The methods that were used to increase job satisfaction included provision of physical and social security, provision of social services such as education and health, provision of emotional support to displaced domestic workers parents and provision of basic commodities to domestic workers. The findings are consistent with Nyanga et al (2012) who established that job satisfaction was a key factor to employee retention and performance. The displacement of the poor who usually live in high density areas make domestic workers prefer to stay longer with their employers even if the employment conditions are poor. Most domestic workers are homeless because of the destruction of their homes by armed conflict hence they do not regard themselves as workers but slaves and local 'refugees'.

The study further established that armed conflict induces insecurity among people in society due inter-community violence and fighting between government and opposition forces. Most people in armed conflict societies do not have the capacity to provide adequate security for themselves and their families. Domestic workers therefore prefer to stay longer in jobs because their employers were generally people with a strong economic or political stamina hence they could afford to provide security for their families which automatically benefitted domestic workers since they are part of the families. The provision of security as has been propounded by Herzberg in his hygiene and motivator theory security motivates workers to stay longer with their employers. All the 8participants indicated that they have stayed in their employment for a longtime because they didn't have security in their homes. One of the participants remarked, my employer's house has several security features which include among others cameras, razor wire, alarm, perimeter fence and others.

Poverty is one of the factors that motivate domestic workers in armed conflict society to stay longer in employment. Domestic workers donot have enough financial and material resources to provide essential services such as water, food and shelter. In ability by workers to fend for themselves make them opt to stay with their employer so that they can be provided with the basic needs by their employer. One of the respondents remarked, "I worked for my employer for over 8 years because my parents were so poor that they could not provide us with enough food. I didnot like the job but I had to do it because I had no option. The war made everyone here very poor."The findings

show that in armed conflict society people stay in employment not because they like the job but because of their poor economic backgrounds and conditions. Armed conflict breeds poverty and enslave people to work for lowly paying or unpaying jobs. Poverty makes domestic workers glue to their employers irrespective of various forms of harassments which they were subjected to. For example participant 3 who was female remarked, "I was physically and sexually harassed by my employer but I did not report him to the police because I was afraid of losing my job yet my parents could not afford to buy me clothes and food. The results are consistent withGukurume and Nyanga (2013)'s observation that poverty can enslave people or make them vulnerable to child labour and forced labour. Domestic workers in armed conflict have been enslaved by poverty to the extent that they find themselves with no option but to stick to the domestic jobs. Although the working conditions were deplorable for instance working irregular hours they continued to hang on their jobs.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the 'glue' that binds domestic workers and their employers in armed conflict societies is in two fold; firstly it is through job satisfaction and secondly through voluntary 'slavery'. Employee motivation is the key driver to retaining domestic workers in armed conflict societies. Domestic workers expect their employers to treat them with respect and dignity. If that is provided their motivation and job satisfaction is bound to increase. Armed conflict results in work failing to provide autonomy and sustainable route for employees to get in and out of employment. Furthermore it was concluded that if both personal and job security are low employees prefer to stay in a place where their security is guaranteed even if they do not get any meaningful salaries.

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