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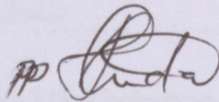
**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED BY FEMALE
DOMESTIC WORKERS IN THULAMHASHE AREA OF MPUMALANGA
PROVINCE.**

By

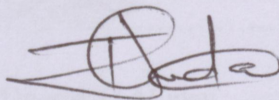
Sibongile Khosa (11606249)

**Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Masters in Gender Studies Degree in the
Department of Youth and Gender studies**

University of Venda

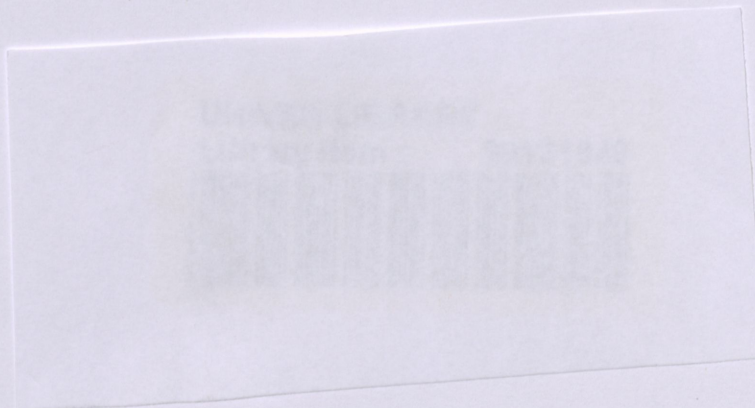


Supervisor: Prof TD .Thobejane



Co-supervisor: Dr TJ.Mudau

January 2016



DECLARATION

I, Sibongile Khosa (11606249), hereby declare that this dissertation for Masters in Gender Studies degree (MGS) submitted to the Institute of Gender and Youth Studies at the University of Venda has not been submitted previously for any degree at this or another university. It is original in design and in execution, and all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature *S. Khosa* Date *21/04/2016*

Sibongile Khosa

Supervisor *[Signature]* Date *21/04/2016*

Prof TD. Thobejane

Co-supervisor *[Signature]* Date *21/04/2016*

Doctor TJ.Mudau

ABSTRACT

Domestic work is vital employment opportunity which exists worldwide. Domestic workers play a pivotal role in supporting the labor market and economy at large. However unlike any other employment opportunities in the world, domestic work is often gender biased. This study was aimed at unpacking the challenges experienced by domestic workers in Thulamahashe, Mpumalanga province of South Africa. The study pursued a gender perspective in an attempt to examine the challenges faced by domestic workers in Thulamahashe, Mpumalanga province of South Africa. The study was undertaken in Mpumalanga, Thulamahashe Bushbuckridge local municipality under Ehlanzeni district. A qualitative research approach was used in the investigation. A case study design was utilised in the study. The study employed a snowball sampling procedure to select respondents. Semi-structured Interviews and focus group discussions were used as research instruments. The data was analysed using the thematic analysis method. The findings of this study will help private and public sectors in coming up with relevant policies regarding strategies to reduce challenges faced by domestic workers in Thulamahashe area of the Mpumalanga province of South Africa.

Key words: domestic workers, challenges, patriarchy, gender, feminism

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DECLARATION

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- CCMA Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration
- UIF Unemployed Insurance Fund
- SADWU South African Domestic Workers Union
- SADUSAWU South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union

ABBREVIATIONS

ILO	International Labor organization
NDWA	National Domestic Workers Alliance
HRW	Human Rights Watch
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration
UIF	Unemployed Insurance Fund
SADWU	South African Domestic Workers Union
SADUSAWU	South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and Background

Domestic work is a vital employment opportunity which exists worldwide. Modern societies would find it difficult to cope without it. However, unlike other employment opportunities, domestic work is often gender biased. This implies that in most societies, domestic work remains predominantly women's work. In this regard, it is rare to find men engaging in domestic chores which many feminist scholars refer to as reproductive work. On a positive note, the widespread gender equality protests and advocacy have led to an increase in women employment in the labor market previously dominated by men. This trend has ironically forced some men to become house husbands. Interestingly, instead of these men doing house chores as house wives traditionally do, they still employ women to be domestic workers. This phenomenon seems to emanate from patriarchal belief systems in some parts of Africa which declare that it is taboo for a man to do household chores.

In modern societies, domestic workers play a pivotal role in supporting the labor market and the economy of a country at large through relieving working families of household chores. Given this background Lutz (2007) argues that domestic work is a crucial tool for sustainability and functioning of the economy. Statistics have it that an estimated one third of the world's households rely on domestic workers (Albin, 2011). International Labor Organisation (2010) also echoes the same sentiment noting that, although statistics about domestic workers is scarce, the number of domestic workers worldwide is estimated at over 100 million and is on the rise everywhere. Given the fact that the sector is female dominated, it becomes the main source of employment for women especially in South Africa (ILO, 2010). This is testimony enough to show the significance of domestic workers in many countries. However, it is vital to note that developed countries have a higher percentage of domestic workers than developing countries (Steedman, 2009). This is mainly due to the labor market structure which absorbs many people regardless of their gender unlike in developing countries where the employment of women was very low until recently when gender equality was advocated. In the wake of the world economic recession, Lutz (2007) suggests that domestic work is an effective alternative employment opportunity for the majority of unskilled labor which cannot be absorbed in other occupations.

Dube and Bourdillon (2000) claims that, in some instances a close relationship often exists between domestic workers and their employers. For example, in some instances young females are made to stay with their relatives in urban areas while providing domestic labor in Zimbabwe. This implies that it is mostly the less privileged and poor ones who do domestic work. Nussbunm (1999) echoes the same sentiment pointing out that domestic work is stigmatized due to the fact that it is the poorest and desperate ones who are forced into it. The tasks required are also gendered and undervalued. This implies that it is mostly women who are employed as domestic workers (Nussbunm, 1999). However, it is important to take note that even men are also employed as domestic workers hence the need to look at the various distinct challenges they face in their workplace.

Despite the importance of domestic work to the modern society, its regulation is still a challenge due to various reasons (International Labor Organization: ILO, 2012). More significantly, the close intimacy between employee and the employer make the former appear as a family member than a worker. This reduces their value and the measurement of their economic status. Additionally, the fact that domestic work is invisible as it is performed behind closed doors, make it difficult to regulate (Anderson, 2007). According to Steedman (2009) the above mentioned fact of legislation vulnerability of domestic workers is historically entrenched, especially in the United Kingdom. In the UK, domestic workers were not included in the legislation for a long time. This was due to the proximity and intimacy to their employers among other reasons. Albin (2011) reports that, in recent years several changes have occurred regarding the legislation in the UK. However, he contends that within these changes there are still many pitfalls which expose domestic workers to economic vulnerability. For instance, they are still omitted from working time regulation in the Regulation 19 of the working time regulation Act. They can also be paid less than the minimum wage when their employer provides them with accommodation. Similarly, Zungu (2009) claims that in Asia, the contribution of domestic workers to the economy is never factored in the Gross National Product. This illustrates that domestic workers are undermined and less valued. This is exacerbated by the fact that they do not have specific working hours or rest periods, receive poor wages and poor standards of work termination among other challenges (Zungu, 2011). These challenges are evidence of how the legislation irregularities position domestic workers at a disadvantage hence exposing them to economic mistreatment.

However, the aforementioned omission does not apply in other countries. For instance in India, the National policy for domestic workers provides domestic workers the right to minimum wage laws, establishment of the number of working hours and rest period as well as social protection and security benefits (Ministry of Labor, 2011). The case of India shows that some countries are taking the plight of domestic workers seriously and are taking necessary steps to protect them from social and economic exploitation.

The demand for domestic workers has been on the increase in the past two decades (Gobind, Plessis and Ukpere, 2012). This increase has occurred even in the developing countries where there is a major incorporation of women into the sector (ILO, 2010). However, Gobind, Plessis and Ukpere, 2012) insist that domestic workers are mostly overworked and unprotected. This undermining of domestic workers is as a result of the lack of skill requirements of the job. This in turn makes it difficult for them to be recognized and to be remunerated fairly (ILO 2010).

South Africa is one of the Southern African countries with many domestic workers. Zungu (2009) reports that the domestic working sector accounts for around 800 000 workers and falls under the informal sector. This shows the significance of the sector to the country's economy. However, gender bias exists in the sector as female workers tend to dominate male workers in the domestic sector. A patriarchal belief dominates most of the South African communities hence domestic work is viewed as predominantly women's work. The socialist feminist theory proposes that the patriarchal family, motherhood and housework are the basis of women's oppression (Chinn & Wheeler 1985). Dinkelman and Ranchhod (2012) note that about 18% of all women in South Africa are employed as domestic workers and 80% of them are poorly educated. Similarly, Lutz (2007) asserts that domestic workers are mainly poor women. Rural poverty which has increased in many African countries due to the devastation of the agricultural sector and limited employment opportunities are all factors leading to women flooding the domestic work sector (Zungu, 2009). In light of above information, it becomes vital to conduct a fact finding study which examines the gender and age related challenges and coping strategies of domestic workers in South Africa.

There are also a number of economic related challenges which exist in the domestic work sector in South Africa. Dinkelman and Ranchhod (2012) point out that, domestic workers are poorly remunerated. Their mean wages are also lower than in any other sector. However, the

irregularities of their wages and privacy of their work make it difficult to know the lowest amount they earn. This poor remuneration situation triggers other social and psychological problems such as stress and insecurity among the workers. In line with the above, the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA, 2007) notes that domestic workers are usually more vulnerable to challenges as they work without guiding policies and employment contracts. According to Dinkelman and Ranchhod (2012), before 2002 there was no specified minimum wage in the domestic work sector and their wage negotiation mechanism was not standardized. This situation reduced domestic workers to mere slaves who depended on the mercy of their employers who unilaterally decided their wage structure.

However, in recent years, South Africa has tried to establish some policies and legislation for protecting domestic workers and increase their resilience to challenges and social challenges. Post 2002 saw South Africa passing a regulation which granted domestic workers the right to a minimum wage and up to 8% annual wage increase (Dinkelman and Ranchhod, 2012). Although this was a positive development, it remains challenging to judge if the minimum wage standard helps alleviate domestic workers challenges. This is especially so because circumstances of domestic workers vary greatly. Given this scenario, an enquiry into the conditions of domestic workers in a semi-rural area becomes vital. A semi-rural area is chosen due to the fact that there is limited information regarding domestic worker challenges in rural areas than in urban areas.

The South African government has also established the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 which covers domestic workers wage and working hours (Gobind et al 2012). This Act aims at improving the challenges of domestic workers in the country. However, the basic conditions included in this piece of legislation do not set the wages to a satisfactory level. A study by the International Labor Organization (2010) indicates that many domestic workers do not enjoy the protection level offered by this policy. This is mainly due to the privacy of their workplace and the unbalanced relationship between employee and employer. In other words, the private home deprives the domestic workers free interaction with other workers or trade union representatives (Gobind et al 2012). Moreover, the low level of education deprives domestic workers understanding the various protective legislations which exist for them hence they might continue to suffer behind closed doors. Additionally, the aforementioned legislation frameworks lack the feminist focus which considers domestic work as a predominantly women sector with

certain needs and challenges exclusive to them. It is clear that through an exploration of challenges faced by female domestic workers, there can be a conducive platform for them to interact and share their challenges and strategies to address the impediments resulting from the relegation of domestic work to unrecognized labor.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

This study was based on the premise that domestic workers are facing various challenges while there is little knowledge existing regarding those challenges especially in small towns and rural areas. Various labor laws meant to improve the quality of working conditions for all employees have been introduced in South Africa. In particular, for domestic workers, the Unemployment Insurance Act No. 97 of 1998 is a ground breaking regulation in South African labor history. It granted domestic workers the right to organise into trade unions, publicised minimum wage, stated legislated annual increase and mandatory contracts of employment. Despite the progress made thus far regarding new legislations on domestic work, the ILO (2010) reports that domestic workers are still lowly paid and the work remains undervalued and poorly regulated in South Africa. This shows that there is a gap between legal framework provisions and their effective implementation. There is also evidence of insufficient research on the subject especially in rural areas and semi-rural towns (Acher, 2011).

The aforementioned information proves the fact that the establishment of most policies relating to domestic workers is inadequately informed by situational analysis of the real challenges facing domestic workers in different geographical areas. The above information motivated the researcher to carry out an explorative study in order to understand the real situation on the ground. This will assist in crafting strategies for recognition of domestic workers and reduction of their challenges in the area.

1.3 Aim of the study

To investigate the challenges faced by female domestic workers in Thulamahashe.

1.4 Objectives

The following objectives facilitated the research questions guiding the study:

1. To explore the challenges faced by domestic workers in Thulamahashe.
2. To determine the coping strategies employed by domestic workers for sustainability.
3. To establish essential ways of making domestic work a recognizable and dignified profession in Thulamahashe.

1.5 Research Questions

The following are the research questions which guided the study:

1. What are the challenges faced by domestic workers in Thulamahashe?
2. What are the coping strategies employed by domestic workers for sustainability?
3. What are the mechanisms that can be put in place to conscientise communities about the importance of domestic work?

1.6 Definition of Terms and Key Concepts

A *Domestic worker* is a person in a private household who renders familial services such as cleaning, laundry, cooking, child minding, care of the elderly and gardening (Du Toit, 2013). In the context of this research, domestic work the above definition will be utilised.

Feminism is a belief that women are full human beings capable of participation in leadership in a full range of human activities within the realms of intellectual, political, social, sexual and spiritual disciplines (Davis and Busia 2000). For the purposes of this research, feminism implied that regardless of gender differences, women are as capable to work as their men counterparts in South Africa.

Gender in the context of this study gender referred to the socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities, and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women.

Patriarchy. Patriarchy implies that men are regarded as influential, more skilful, and controlling over women (Davis and Busia 2000). This definition will be used in the current study.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

This study was mainly based on Ian Smith's Feminist epistemologist theory. Tolla (2013) notes that Smith underscores that man enjoy a privileged position in societies while women continue to be suppressed and devalued. However, not all females are underprivileged in the same way. This implies that their oppression and suppression is situational based on geography, race and circumstances. In her Feminism and Marxist work, Smith reveals that objective social challenges and political relations shape and determine women's oppression. Tolla (2013) also points out that patriarchal beliefs are the root cause of male and female inequalities regarding gender roles in some parts of Africa. On the other hand, the gender distribution of housework is not a simple trade-off between work time and respective financial contributions. Instead, the way housework is allocated defines and expresses gender relations operating within households (Katz, 1997). Individuals are believed to perform gender through their daily behaviour, including domestic work, especially when interacting with individuals of the opposite sex (Gupta, 2007). This explains why women are dominant in the domestic work sector.

But even though the patriarchal beliefs are rooted in South African societies, the rise of feminism and gender equality advocacy has ceaselessly targeted the downfall of these beliefs in societies. However, it remains questionable why women's oppression in various spheres of life including their relegation to poor jobs like domestic work without them declining such opportunities does not abate. This brings us to Smith's bifurcation of consciousness concept. It stresses that in societies, there is a dominant view everyone has to adapt to. The concept of bifurcation of consciousness underlines that inferior groups are acclimatized in the sense that they observe the world from the lens of the main group, since the perspective of the latter is embedded in the institutions and practices of that society. Resultantly, the dominant group enjoys the privilege of remaining insensible to the worldview of the subordinate group, since the subordinates are fully

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

expected to accommodate them (Collins, 2009). Worth noting is the fact that the above fact mainly apply to Southern African societies rather than the rest of Africa and Europe. The aforementioned concept might explain how women in domestic work continue to experience oppression and poor conditions at the mercy of male and even female employers. Despite their suffering female domestic workers continue soldiering on. In light of the aforementioned, the current study sought to investigate the challenging conditions of female domestic workers who have undergone a lot of dehumanizing and marginalizing experiences in societies. To obtain a certain standpoint, the study concentrated on domestic workers situated in a semi-rural community with slightly different conditions from major towns. This will assist in drafting practical and situational female domestic worker centred strategies to improve their plight.

raised in traditional history.

2.2 Historical Background of Domestic Work

Domestic work is significant for national economies to function in modern societies. In the past two decades, demand for care work has been on the rise everywhere. The large recruitment of women in the labor force coupled with the intensification of work and the frequent lack of policy actions to enable the balancing of family life and work explains this development (Nair, 2011). Resultantly, over 100 million people have been recruited in the domestic worker sector in the past decade (ILO, 2010). For instance, in South Africa 9.4 percent of the workforce is made up of domestic workers. However, the statistics of domestic workers are usually not reliable given the private nature of their employment.

2.3 Conditions of Domestic Workers

Domestic workers resemble a unique working group living in isolation outside the regular labor force. Their nature of employment environment accounts for the aforementioned situation. They are employed in private homes by individuals. Dahan (2010) notes that "domestic workers are often described as forming part of the invisible labor force", due to the fact that they work in private households. This forced Chen (2011) to lament that, the fact that domestic workers are hired in private people's homes creates an unqually balanced

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Domestic work is a world phenomenon crucial for the efficient functioning of the economy and the home environment. It has existed for a long time, providing work for many women worldwide (Nazir, 2011). ILO (2010) echoed the same sentiment citing that domestic work is characterized by more women than men. The main reason being the stereotypical beliefs embedded in various communities expecting women to take responsibility for the home chores. In line with this view, Du Toit (2011) observes that women form a larger part of the domestic work sector due to the beliefs of shared obligations for domestic activities which is rooted in traditional history.

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relationship in favour of the employer. This results mostly in them being vulnerable to all sorts of abuse at the hands of their employers. Worth noting is the fact that most of the tasks in domestic work are stereotypically viewed as women's work hence devalued and disregarded. Du Toit (2013) highlights that domestic workers are highly individualised and non-standard in nature and this makes the sector difficult to regulate. This is also a factor which compels employers to resist legal regulations for domestic workers on the basis that domestic work is not employment but rather a private family arrangement.

According to Nadasen (2012), the association of domestic work with women's unpaid labor and its private nature in homes makes it difficult for many people to view it as real work worth any value. More often than not, paid domestic work is associated with unpaid domestic work performed by women for their families. In this regard, it is not calculated in the gross domestic product and in government statistics. This led Rollins, a renowned sociologist, to call it 'invisible work', as early as 1985. The aforementioned facts culminate in employers failing to offer domestic workers the rights and respect equivalent to other workers (Nadasen, 2012). In addition, the fact that the workplace is in the employer's home gives rise to serious challenges in imposing the standard range of labor protections that arise through collective bargaining. The workers often find it difficult to discuss their challenges with their employers given the intimacy of the working environment and the mutual relationship created with the employers' family members (Department of Labor, 2010).

2.4 Women as Important Agents in the Domestic Work Sector

Domestic workers' tasks are a vital tool for fostering development in many countries. Serano (2007) has called it as the most basic survival activity. This is mainly due to the fact that caring for children from young age and caring for the working class are fundamental tasks with significant connotations for human survival in every society. However, the association of domestic work is based on cultural notion that they are more interested in soft work whilst men prefer developing their individual competencies. ILO (2012) notes that, domestic work is mainly gendered because most of the workers are women. In this regard, it was delineated as a separate area of work when productive and reproductive work got separated. This indicates how the work has been culturally and traditionally organised for women.

On the other hand, even though many feminist suggest women oppression in the domestic work field some scholars think otherwise. For instance, Lutz (2007) report that in cases where they fail to establish fair sharing of responsibilities on home chores with their husbands, women usually resort to hiring a domestic worker to assist them. This is an indication that the employment of domestic workers is perpetuated by other women. Furthermore, the management of domestic work in households is done mainly by women. The aforementioned fact is testimony enough that women domestic workers usually suffer or face challenges at the hands of fellow women who are in a different class. This indicates structural oppression among women hence derailing holistic women emancipation efforts. However, as suggested by Albin and Mantouvalou (2012), not all employer and employee relationships are oppressive and abusive. In the light of this information, it becomes vital to explore the challenges faced by female domestic workers in relation to their employers who are either men or women in order to establish the relationships between the women domestic employers and their female employees.

2.5 Significances of Domestic Work

Domestic work is one of the valuable job activities in modern societies. Changes in the labor market which include the growth of service market, globalization and the increasing involvement of women in the market have put pressure on home care in many households. This has increased reliance on domestic workers to look after families. In the light of the foregoing discussion, domestic work becomes a vital tool for the functioning of the economy outside the household (Albin and Mantouvalou, 2012). In addition, it can be a desirable and readily available job for semi-skilled and unskilled personnel (Lutz, 2007). However, it is vital to note that some of the domestic workers are very skilled and educated personnel from other countries suffering from dysfunctional economies in their home countries. Anderson (2000) echoed the same sentiment citing that migrant domestic workers in western countries are skilled professionals who disguise their qualifications due to lack of proper documentation after being forced out of their home countries by various hardships.

The Social Law Project (2010) reports that, domestic work absorbs up to 10% of the total employment in some countries. In this regard domestic work absorbs a large number of people into the labor market hence reducing unemployment rates. In the same line, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Challenges of Social Council revealed that in many

industrialised countries, migrant domestic workers are being empowered to advance in employment and in society. This implies that through the help of domestic workers, many women have ample time to do productive work while their children and the elderly are looked after at a cheap price.

2.6 Domestic Work in South Africa

The acquisition of freedom in South Africa in 1994 enhanced the establishment of various policies directed towards disentangling the disadvantaged citizens from the jaws of oppression. In a democratic South Africa, one of the priority areas was the commitment to gender equity and equality at the public level. The reservation of 26% of national parliamentary seats for females alongside the establishment of a constitution devoted to non-sexism and the efforts to bring more women into the labor market were all crucial measures to ensure women's critical position in national healing and building at the public level (Fall, 2003). However, the success of the implementation of the aforementioned policies in the domestic work sector mostly dominated by women remains questionable. More often than not, women remain isolated in the private domestic work sector where their suffering remains under closed doors. In support of the aforementioned, Albin and Mantouvalou (2012), suggested that domestic labour represents a small-scale version of prevailing patterns of racial inequality that reflect clearly unequal relations between women established upon their race and class positions. This implies that the efforts to establish gender equality have mainly been established at the public level but fails to resolve outstanding feministic issues in various private sectors.

Throughout the apartheid period, domestic work has been an institution advancing and reflecting apartheid ideologies. This was mirrored by the relegating of black women to domestic work services in the homes of working white employers (Jennifer and Fish, 2006). Though men were also part of the sector, women dominated the sector as men would be working in sectors such as gardening. A scrutiny of this scenario reveals gender inequality wherein a black female suffered triple oppression through their class, gender and race. In recent years, the domestic work sector absorbs a large number of African women in the country (Statistics South Africa 2000). This is an indication that the sector has been highly alienated from the gender equality and democracy advocacy apparent in other sectors around the country. In light of this information, Jennifer and Fish (2006) concluded that the

relationship between the structural inequalities contained within domestic labor and women's collective intervention provides enlightening information into gender aspects of social change in the country.

In South Africa, since the inception of democracy, various labor policies that held the potential to protect women employed in private households and the formalisation of domestic work have been established. The domestic work sectorial determination of 2001 specifically set the minimum wage and conditions in the domestic work sector. In addition, the employment equity act of 1998 was meant to eliminate segregation in employment and bring a gender balance in all sectors including domestic work. However, Jennifer and Fish (2006) reveal significant women marginalisation and limited union representation in the domestic work sector, this symbolises limited success for the established policies to achieve the desirable change. The domestic work sector is plagued by various gender related challenges worth exploring in order to administer the transitional injustices into the democratic national building process.

Mpumalanga is a South African semi-rural province. Due to limited job opportunities in the local town, many people migrate to big cities like Johannesburg and leave their homes with domestic workers and children. Other employees working in the local cities employ domestic workers especially women to look after their families while at work. Tolla (2013) reports that, employers are not following the minimum standards set by the Department of Labor. On a local level, the rural nature of the Thulamahashe district in South Africa worsens the situation. This is mainly due to the fact that female domestic workers are seemingly taken advantage of and are not exposed to unions and other domestic worker organisations. Despite various laws in the country, Tolla (2013) findings indicate a continuous abuse and exploitation of domestic workers in Mpumalanga. This prompted De Waal (2012) to assert that pressure needs to be exerted on the government to ensure that employers abide by the set laws and regulations of domestic workers. This is an indication that a lot needs to be done to improve the conditions of domestic workers in Thulamahashe and Mpumalanga at large.

Dilata (2010) contends that employers sometimes take advantage of the desperate situations of domestic workers to manipulate them. This is apparent in Mpumalanga as a study by Tolla (2013) revealed situations which mirrored manipulation of domestic workers. For instance, employers use food and clothes as instruments to foster loyalty and in turn underpay and overwork their female employees. Dilata (2010) also mentions that domestic workers find it

difficult to have time off to see their families. This occurs mainly to those who stay with their employers. The fact that domestic workers are required to be working even on public holidays when everyone is resting deprives them of the opportunity to visit their families. Dinat and Peberdy (2007) echoed the same sentiment noting that the social lives of domestic workers are not free like other workers in industries. This is due to the fact that they have limited time out of work and are forced to socialise with the employers' family even when they do not like it.

2.7 Challenges Faced by Domestic Workers

Many studies have been conducted focusing on the nature of domestic work, gender and racial inequalities between domestic workers and their employers (Cock, 2011; Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2010). However, little research has been done on the various experiences and challenges facing female domestic workers (Acher, 2011). Furthermore, limited research has been done on the challenges facing rural based domestic workers. This results in policy formulators applying policies suitable for urban based domestic workers to rural based domestic workers. The generalisation of challenges of domestic workers to both gender and class also create a problem as the one size fits all approach bears little success. Having said this what follows are some of the challenges faced by domestic workers.

Despite the fact that 4-5% of the labor work force is in the domestic work sector in developing countries, their challenging conditions remain (LABORSTA, 2008). In Latin America, Tokman (2010) reports that incomes only reach 40% of the average wages of people in other employment sectors. Furthermore, Tokman (2010) indicated that, the income of women domestic workers is 73% of men in the same sector. This indicates women's discrimination and domestic workers in particular. ILO (2009) survey reports that 40 per cent of randomly selected countries world-wide did not guarantee domestic workers a weekly day of rest, and did not specify the working hours for domestic workers. This remains a problem for many countries as the pressure to improve these conditions from feminists, women representatives, domestic worker representatives, and various interested parties in the developing countries keeps on growing.

Tolla (2013) reports that, domestic workers in Mpumalanga earn between R700-800 per month. The salary is inadequate and not in the range set by the department of labor which is

R1491.86 per month (Department of Labor, 2002). The fact that female domestic workers are supposed to support probably larger families back home mean that they are in a difficult situation in the province. The situation prompts domestic workers to perceive their low wages as exploitation given that their employers can afford to raise their salary. Employers live luxurious lives at the expense of the domestic workers. Given the aforementioned information, it is vital to conduct a study to understand the situation of women in domestic work in Thulamahashe and draw practical strategies to assist them.

Nazir (2006) adds that child domestic workers are trapped in the jaws of various kinds of abuses at the hands of various employers. Verbal, physical and sexual abuses are the main categories of abuses the children suffer. More often than not, female domestic workers are vulnerable to rape and sexual harassment by the male employers as well as their visiting relatives. Albin and Mantouvalou (2012) adds that a survey done in the United Kingdom in 2010 reveals that 54% of domestic workers in the country suffered psychological abuse while 3% were sexually abused by their employers. This is a manifestation that mostly female domestic workers are on the receiving end of various abuses. Given this background, Du Toit (2011) laments that the poor conditions domestic workers face are also detrimental to their significant dependents. This implies that the challenges facing domestic workers impose some unforeseen challenges on their children and families who might be depending on them emotionally and financially. Their poor conditions also put them in a compromising and powerless bargaining position in as far as improving their situation is concerned. In this respect, an enquiry into domestic workers' challenges provides a free platform to share their concerns and views to neutral personnel.

The relationship between workers and employers is mainly defined by basic items such as food and cosmetics (Archer, 2011). Archer (2011) claims that domestic workers are often not allowed to eat food in the households they work, more specially the more luxurious food. Dinat and Peberdy (2007) also report that domestic workers in Johannesburg usually provide their own food because they are not offered proper food at work. The aforementioned facts attest to the fact that female domestic workers are often taken for granted by their employers hence their woes escalate.

Leaving family and husband to work in someone's home far away from home is another challenge facing female domestic workers. Dinat and Peberdy (2007) report that most of the domestic workers get entangled with the fear of losing their husbands or the worst scenario of

getting infected by HIV/AIDS as their husbands might engage in other sexual relationships in their absence. Tolla (2013) adds that domestic workers find it difficult to resist exploitation and abuse due to the fear of losing their only job. The situation becomes worse for illegal migrants who fear being reported to authorities who can then deport them. In the face of all these detrimental challenges, domestic workers become stressed and depressed. In light of the above, Clarke (2002) concludes that domestic workers may never experience any job satisfaction from their work. The main motive becomes the desire to earn a living under unbearable circumstances. Given the aforementioned information, it is plausible to comment that women's challenges in domestic work need to be explored separately in order to find circumstantial strategies to alleviate their exploitation.

Various categories of domestic workers face different working conditions that worsen the common challenges faced by all domestic workers. For instance, those who stay in the homes of their employers tend to suffer greater isolation and limited mobility which results in longer working hours. Worth noting also is the fact that they are at a greater risk of receiving payments in kind as well as physical and sexual abuse (Chen, 2011). Moreover, women may suffer more sexual abuse as compared to men. The fact that many women work far away from home compel them to admit to residing in their employers homesteads hence risking the prospects of abuse and lack of adequate support in difficult times (Tolla, 2013). Mkandawire-Valhmu (2010) suggests that women experience verbal abuse and physical abuse. This is probably because of the community belief that women are powerless and defenceless. The aforementioned facts attest to the fact that various categories of domestic workers require different attention if effective solutions to their problems are to be sought.

Obtaining legal documentation is also a major challenge for migrant domestic workers. Kalayaan (2009) indicates that in many countries, migrant domestic workers face difficulties in obtaining work permits. In many cases, working without proper migration documents place migrant domestic workers at risk of being excluded from the law when they experience unfair treatment and challenges. Without the protection of the law, domestic workers face resultant challenges such as lack of bargaining power with their employers, job insecurity and even dismissal without pay by employers.

In South Africa, domestic work is mainly characterized by the interconnections of race, gender and class. In this regard domestic work in the country is inherently dominated by black women or coloured women who are poorly paid (Dilata and Ngoepe, 2010). As a result,

Du Toit (2011) argues that domestic work is a sector deeply rooted in a neo-colonial set up especially in South Africa. This is because the perceptions which were inculcated in people's minds that black and coloured female are ideal for domestic labor were entrenched in societies from the colonial period to the present democratic South Africa. However, it is vital to note that domestic labor existed even before colonialism but at a smaller and less organized manner. It is therefore plausible to comment that dealing with this challenge requires demystifying the oppressive perceptions inherently rooted in people's minds. More than legislation is required in changing the complexities of political and social challenging factors by which the aforementioned inequality is maintained (Du Toit, 2011). In the light of the above, a fruitful legislative change can only be achieved through consultation with the domestic workers in order to find practical solutions to their everyday challenges.

2.8 Coping Strategies Employed by Domestic Workers

The previous section focused on the various challenges which domestic workers especially women are facing in their everyday life. Despite the aforementioned difficulties, domestic workers fight to stand on their feet and live like anyone else. They do so through various coping strategies meant to counteract the pressure exerted by certain challenges. In cases where domestic workers work far from home, women especially struggle to adapt to the environment. In this regard, Clarke (2002) reports that, many domestic workers in Jamaica rely on religion and their faith as a coping strategy. This gives them an opportunity to meet other women and domestic workers to discuss their challenges hence enhancing their sense of belonging.

A study by Tolla (2013) in Mpumalanga reveals that domestic workers resort to keeping quiet to avoid their employers' verbal abuse. They consistently read the mood of their employers to avoid upsetting them through talking. This is a strategy they employ to maintain a good but yet unhealthy relationship with their employers. However, it is important to note that not all relationships are unhealthy for domestic workers. This is because some of them enjoy intimate and healthy employer-employee relationships. A good relationship raises the performance of the domestic worker in many instances. Bell (2008) comments that a healthy relationship instils a feeling of belonging in the domestic worker and ensures high quality care.

2.9 Policy and Legal Frameworks for Domestic Workers Worldwide

In recent years, the international communities have established various policy and legal frameworks to address challenges faced by domestic workers. The International Labor Organization established some conventions meant to guide countries in designing domestic work labor legislation frameworks. Firstly, they set parameters fostering the equal treatment of men and women in employment. In particular, Convention No. 111 (1958) concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation is crucial for domestic worker protection (ILO, 2002). This is because under the convention, every employee is equal regardless of status and deserves reasonable remuneration.

In Ecuador, the Constitution of 1998 established that the State shall encourage the incorporation of women into paid employment with equal rights and opportunities (ILO, 2010). This was an attempt to improve the challenging plight of women domestic workers. In Bolivia, after a long period of oppression where domestic workers would work for up to 16 hours a day, Law No. 2.450 of April 2003 was enacted to ensure that domestic workers work only up to 10 hours a day. South Africa introduced a minimum wage of between R111 and R135 per month for domestic workers in 2009 (Department of Labor 2010). However, due to the privacy and informality of the work, domestic workers continue to earn less than what is desirable.

The international network of domestic worker' trade unions and support organisations have also been established to ensure empowerment of women and an end to their exploitation in the domestic work sector (International Domestic Workers Network, 2009). The International Labor Organization also made strides to establish domestic work as decent work in 2008. ILO also identifies the basic rights to freedom of association, equality and non-discrimination, as well as the prohibition of forced labor and child labor, as being central to the achievement of decent work in the domestic sector (Du Toit, 2011). This provision lays a foundation to domestic workers' rights and the recognition of their work in the labor market which is crucial in many countries including South Africa.

2.10 Legal Frameworks for Domestic Workers in South Africa

Before 1994, domestic work in South Africa was not regulated. Domestic workers' wages and working conditions were non-existent in the labor legislation of the Country (Zungu, 2009). This situation left them vulnerable to a plethora of challenges including exploitation as well as physical and emotional abuse by their employers. As has been highlighted throughout this discussion, mostly women suffer the challenges in the sector due to the fact that they form the majority of the workers in the sector (HRW) (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Upon the establishment of freedom in 1994 in South Africa, a new era also began for domestic workers. Domestic workers and their representatives made ceaseless efforts to gain recognition in the employment laws. Resultantly, in 1996 they were included in the Labor Relations Act and were granted permission to access the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). This enables them to stand on firm ground of fair treatment in cases of unfair treatment and dismissal from work (The Labor Relations Act, Act No 66 of 1995).

In 2003, domestic workers were granted yet more recognition in the National Labor Law. Their inclusion in the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) Act provided them with health cover for non-work related illnesses for at least 14 days and maternity leave benefits (The Unemployment Insurance Act, Act No 97 of 1998). However, the exclusion of domestic workers from the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act prevents them from seeking compensation for medical costs associated with work related injuries and occupational diseases (Department of Labor South Africa, 2009). The aforementioned drawback indicates lack of completeness in the regulation of domestic work hence exposing them to various forms of exploitation. The fact that most domestic workers work in private spheres, deny them full exposure to laws and regulations concerning them hence they remain docile about their situation. Their close intimacy with the employer neutralises professionalism hence creating a power imbalance which might upset any efforts to claim their rights when facing challenges.

Alley (2008) reports that further efforts have been executed regarding directly establishing domestic worker protection polices as part of the national democratisation process. Among the ground breaking regulations in the South African history is the granting of the right to organise into trade unions, publicised minimum wage, state legislated annual increase and mandatory contracts of employment (Alley, 2008). This was a positive initiative by the post-apartheid government in order to bring emancipation to domestic workers who were believed to be entangled by various challenges. However, Alley (2008) further argues that the state

paradoxically diminished the role of domestic worker unions through trying to be a representative and protector of domestic workers as a collective instead of leaving that to unions. The fact that domestic workers work in isolation to others under the employment of employers who largely deny to recognise it as formal work limit the success of domestic worker unionisation. In the light of this argument, the state's efforts to emancipate domestic workers are not unanimously acceptable due to their loopholes in addressing domestic worker challenges. In this regard, an enquiry into the domestic worker challenges and own tailored strategies might give insight into practical legal frameworks for particular groups of domestic workers.

Du Toit (2013) notes that in 2013, South Africa became the eighth country to ratify the Convention 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers by the International Labor Organisation established in 2011. This complimented the unionisation of domestic work which has existed for a long time in the country. Despite the difficulties on unionisation imposed by the private nature of domestic work, their collective organisation and unionisation bears a long fascinating history in South Africa. For instance Van Onselen (1982) notes that long back, domestic workers were the first members of a proletariat class to organise into criminal gangs known as *Amalaita* and *Izigebengu* and unions such as African Domestic Servants League. Alley (2008) also notes that in the 1980s domestic workers founded the most successful union called the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU). The main purpose of SADWU even up to date is to create a better understanding between an employer and employee by improving wages, conditions and general domestic worker status. However, the union was dissolved in the early 90s. The emergence of the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) gave renewed hope to domestic workers. However, just like the previous union SADSAWU grew weaker with years (Alley, 2008). Its main achievement being the ability to foster an increased minimum wage for domestic workers which rose from R800 per month in 2002 to R1 442.86 in 2010 in urban areas and from R650 per month to R1 197.78 in rural areas (Social Law Project, 2010).

Difficulties in member mobilisation and addressing some pressing issues like improvement of conditions like health account for the decline of the above mentioned unions (Alley, 2008). This suggests that there should be a mind shift on the employers' side to transparently honour domestic worker protection policies and living conditions rather than concentrating on establishing policies which are not effectively followed. As long as the private employment

of domestic workers without legal contracts and professional boundaries continues, it remains difficult to unionise the sector. The lack of research conducted by unions regarding the pressing issues facing domestic workers and how best to intervene also derail their success.

This chapter highlights the research methods that were used in the study. The researcher used qualitative approach which is viewed by feminist researchers as relevant in valorising the voices of the exploited and denigrated women. Feminist epistemologies of doing research build on this emphasis to include issues of partiality and positionality on research (Munira & Sweet, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information from the participants who are believed to hold what feminist research refers to as researcher privilege. Participants' knowledge was of paramount importance in this study. This chapter also includes the population of the study, research design, sampling procedures, description of the study area, data collection methods, ethical considerations, research questions and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to a strategic plan for a study which sets out the broad structures and features of the scientific investigation (Gray, 2009). This study employed a qualitative feminist research approach. Qualitative research is non-numerical, accommodates subjectivity and uses qualifying words or descriptions to room aspects of the world (Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee, 2006). The researcher chose to employ qualitative feminist research approach method. This approach enabled the researcher to adjust to changes that were not anticipated in the beginning. As described by Rubin (2010), qualitative feminist research approach was appropriate in this study, because it was more suited to the exploration, description, understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by female domestic workers in The Gambia. This is also in line with the paradigm theory for feminist research proposed by Smith (2000). It entails looking at social reality from the researched position or situation thus allowing for objective data applicable to a particular group of people in a specific area. In this regard, the qualitative feminist approach became an ideal methodology given that the researcher intended to investigate the social reality of domestic workers from their standpoint.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

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Essential to the use of a feminist research perspective in this study is the need for the researcher's reflexivity and acknowledgment of her power in relation to the research and the impact this power has on the research process (Yick, 2001). This implies that in the recruitment and interviewing of the participants, the researcher remained conscious of the power she possessed as educated, elite interviewing domestic workers with limited formal education, limited access to power and maybe low-income status. The researcher therefore ensured that the participants' voices were prominent throughout the interviews by allowing the discussion to be directed by the participants as much as possible while acquiring the data required.

The study was a case study of Thulamahashe municipality. Choosing a representative heterogeneous area of the District significantly allowed for the collection of in-depth data from participants with different variables, level of education as well as working conditions. The exploratory approach was also ideal for identifying and explaining the challenges faced by domestic workers due to the fact that it allowed for face to face interaction with the participants in order to obtain feelings and opinions.

3.3 Description of the study area

Bushbuckridge Thulamahashe Municipality is located in the North-east of Mpumalanga, and it borders the south-eastern part of Limpopo province. It is under Ehlanzeni district situated in Mpumalanga province of South Africa. Bushbuckridge Thulamahashe Municipality is made up of Tsonga and Pedi speaking people. According to statistics South Africa (STATSA, Census, 2006) there are about 500 000 people residing in 133 dispersed villages in an area which covers 2,23km. The area is semi-rural with a population density of 235 persons\km.

Bushbuckridge Thulamahashe Municipality has four major townships namely Mkhuhlu, Thulamahashe, Acornhoek and Bushbuckridge. The municipality is divided into two borders firstly the Blyde River Canyon the west and Kruger National Park and the second is Sabie Sand reserves in the east, Manyeleti and Andover game reserves fall into its area along the Northern border. Approximately 40% of the residents do not have basic education and the remaining populations have at least basic education. The population is made up of 53 percent of females and comprises 56% heads of households (STATSA, Census, 2006). Due to the fact that the area is semi-rural, there are few industries. Most of the employment

opportunities are found in government offices, non-governmental organisations and shops. Domestic work is also one of the major employment opportunities which exist in the area as many working families seek local people to look after their homes and families while they are at work.

3.4 Population of the Study

Population refers to the total number of possible cases, units or elements that are included in a study (Gray, 2009). Samples are drawn from the population and have particular or specific characteristic meant to make up an appropriate sampling frame. For the purpose of this study, domestic workers were selected as participants. Twenty participants were selected for the study from most villages which has domestic workers. Due to the limited time frame, a small manageable percentage was selected so as to properly manage the data collection process. Furthermore, since the study was qualitative in nature, the purpose was to gain as much detailed information as possible from a few representative participants.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

Sampling is the process of selecting units, for example people and organizations from a population of interest so that by studying the sample we can fairly generalize the results back to the population from which the sample was chosen (De Vos, 2002). The snowball sampling procedure was used in this study. This was due to the fact that the researcher did not know the exact residences to find domestic workers hence a few who were initially identified helped in identifying other participants in the area. Both youth and adult domestic workers were selected. Female and male domestic workers also formed part of this study. To ensure a proper representation of gender and age, all subgroups were identified in the first group of participants. Thereafter, various participants went on to identify other domestic workers in their subgroups. For instance, youth would identify youth and females would identify other female domestic workers in their surrounding areas.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interview guides were the data collection tool in this study. They were administered in both reflection circles group discussions and face to face individual interviews. The triangulation was done to ensure adequate collection of data from the participants. Mather *et al* (1997) notes that face to face semi-structured interviews are generally an ideal tool employed by feminist researchers. This is due to the fact that they allow for collection of data regarding feelings and opinions of participants whose views are usually perceived as suppressed in societies. Similarly, reflection circles are best for discussions as they produce a conducive and power balance environment for the participants to open up and vigorously participate in focused group discussions. In a circle everyone is equal, no one is the head and the circle has a symbolic potential (Barnes, Ernst and Hydae, 1999). For the purpose of data collection, meetings were called through inviting participants to meetings in their area of proximity. In the meetings domestic workers were divided into adults and youth then females and males. These groups were then given a set of semi-structured questions to answer in their reflective circles. After the group discussions, participants were also given individual questionnaires with the same set of questions in order to get all their responses as individuals. Research assistants were assigned to assist individual in understanding the requirements of the questions. This triangulation assisted to obtain in depth quality results. Semi-structured interviews were preferred in this study due to their flexibility in allowing for probing and clarification of questions.

3.7 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the non-numerical examination and interpretation of data for the purpose of discovering meanings and patterns of relationships (Babbie, 2010). The thematic analysis technique was employed in drawing meaning out of the data. The researcher firstly familiarized herself with the depth and the breadth of the content. She read over the entire data set at least once before beginning to code the ideas and the identification of possible patterns was shaped in the process of reading through. Transcription of verbal data informed the early stages of analysis. The researcher therefor developed a far more understanding of the data through having transcribed it. A list of the different codes was established. Lastly, the write-up was done in a logic and coherent manner following the identified themes.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics are guidelines and rules which state what is wrong and what is right in the process of conducting research. Social science research consists of the right and the wrong norms and values (Bless *et al*, 2006). One of the main reasons why social scientists are so worried about research ethics is that they have been many cases of abuse of people's rights through social studies. For the purpose of this research, ethics which were considered included confidentiality, informed consent, avoidance of harm and voluntary participation.

Initially, permission and approval for conducting the study was sought from the University of Venda ethics clearance committee. Secondly, community entry permission into the study area was sought from community leaders, traditional leaders and councilors of Thulamahashe town in Mpumalanga province of South Africa. The aims and purpose of the study, the likely ramifications and possible risks of taking in the study were clearly communicated to the respondents in order to secure informed consent. A formal written letter of informed consent was issued to research participants before the commencement of the study to ensure that they participated in the study out of their free will and knowing what they were connecting themselves with.

Voluntary participation is also a serious norm in research. For the purpose of this study, assurance was given to participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Doing so would not expose them to any form of harm. Participants were not forced into responding to questions which they were not comfortable with. In addition, honesty and professionalism were maintained during the stage of data collection. Participants who voluntarily attended the data collection meetings were considered to be respondents upon their agreement to participate.

Confidentiality is also one of the significant issues in research ethics. In this study, the researcher ensured that any information linked to the participant was kept private. The questionnaire did also not require participants to provide their names on the response charts. This ensured that any information provided was not be linked to any individual or group of participants.

Pseudonyms were also used to represent participants and to protect the identity of the research participants. Research assistants will also be notified of the need to keep participants responses a secret.

3.9 Significance of the Study

Domestic workers play a vital role in the well-being of people in most societies. It is therefore important to understand some of the challenges faced by female domestic workers. At a community level, this study helped help to amplify the voices of domestic workers. This study intended to give domestic workers a platform to discuss their grievances as well as the strategies of dealing with their problems. The study also highlighted the gap which exists between the legislation and its implementation in relation to the domestic profession in Thulamahashe. This will inform policy formulators on the gaps which exists, the practical situation on the ground and the strategies suggested by the domestic workers.

In this regard, the results of this study are important for the national policy makers in developing practical and effective working strategies to protect the rights and deal with the challenges faced by domestic workers of various genders and ages in Thulamahashe and other areas with similar characteristic. The study will also contribute to the board of knowledge on challenges of domestic workers in a semi-rural area with regard to a gender perspective on domestic workers in Thulamahashe. Currently there is very limited information regarding the situation of domestic workers in the area. This might lead to further marginalisation of the domestic workers in the area if information is not available on their conditions.

3.10 Limitations of the study

All inquiries have their limitations. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, some participants were not willing to participate in the research. The researcher however informed potential participants that anonymity and privacy was guaranteed. Some participants were also not free to open up during the interviews due to the fear that the findings could be used against them. To allay the fears, participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used for identification purposes. This made it easier for them to loosen up and provide responses.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF STUDY RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study results. The data was presented and analysed systematically using the thematic data analysis system. In this respect, the data was presented in the form of major themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews. The main aim of the study was to investigate the challenges faced by domestic workers in Thulamahashe area. Since the study was qualitative in nature, the result generally applies to Thulamahashe area rather than the whole of Mpumalanga Province. The main themes in this chapter include, challenges faced by domestic workers in Thulamahashe, gender and age disparities in challenges experienced by domestic workers as well as variations in challenges in relation to geographical location, that is, urban versus rural areas. Another theme relates to the coping strategies being employed by domestic workers in the area to deal with their challenges. Ways which can be employed to address the identified challenges are also covered in this chapter. Last but not least, ways of disseminating information to domestic workers in order to foster awareness about their rights, regulatory policies and legislative frameworks were also discussed in this chapter. The chapter ends with conclusion of the results.

4.2. Participants biographical Information

This section comprises of biographical information of twenty (20) participants of which 16 were females and 4 were males from Thulamahashe area who participated in the current study. All participants were residence of the Thulamahashe area. The biographically information of the respondents is presented according to age, gender and level of education. Five of the participants were below the age of 20 years while the rest were above 20 years of age. The study consisted of more female domestic workers than males due to the fact that they had numerical superiority in the households. The study was also aimed at investigating the challenges faced by female domestic workers hence more focus was on them. However male participants were included due to the fact that, during the data collection process the researcher realised that there were also a number of male domestic workers in the area. Involving males was preferred as it allowed a gender comparative perspective. A minority of

the participants had reached matric level while the majority of participants were either uneducated or had not reached matric level.

4.3 Presentation of results

4.3. Challenges facing domestic workers in Thulamahashe

This section presents findings regarding challenges of domestic workers in Thulamahashe area. The challenges which emerged from the study included mistreatment and harassment by the employers, depression and stress, domestic violence, working under pressure and sexual abuse. The gender and age disparities which emerged from the study were also covered in the section.

4.3.1. Mistreatment and harassment by the employers

“Being harassed by the employer, given difficult jobs”

“The boss can be rude and ignorant to me, doing unnecessary tasks and going home late without even being given money for my extra working hours and unnecessary complaints”

(Ester female 28 years old)

“Being bullied and beaten by my own boss and forced to have sex sometimes”

“Working after hours without being paid, including working many days without given off days”

(Nhlamulo female 25 years old)

“Working without contracts, being violated, victims of crime as well as being suspects of a lost property” (Masungulo female 36 years old)

The majority of participants indicated that harassment at work was the major challenge they were facing. Employers reportedly gave them difficulty tasks without real concern for their wellbeing. Despite being given difficulty tasks, participants were reportedly compelled to work for many days without off days, working extra or after hours but still being paid less. It

was also indicated that employers usually ignore their employees' pleas and grievances, a fact which made them feel oppressed, manipulated and harassed by their employers.

Secondly, a significant number of responses showed that domestic workers from Thulamahashe area were working without contracts. Their employment was based on mutual and verbal agreement with the employer. In this regard, they reported that their job description was not that clear hence they had no strong ground for negotiations when faced with challenges. Participants also reported that they were commonly suspected of theft if there were missing items in their employers' houses. For instance they were targeted in instances where money, lotion and food items went missing in the house. Participants indicated that they were facing the aforementioned challenges at the hands of their employers, relatives or employers' friends thus suffering a triple bond of challenges. There was apparently no distinction in perception between the female and male of different age groups regarding the aforementioned facts. This indicated the gravity of the above challenges across gender and age groups.

Contrary to the above mentioned challenges two of the participants noted that they were well treated by their employees. Even though they indicated the absence of contracts, they noted that their employees were usually ready to listen to their complaints especially with regard to the provision of off days and pay increase. It was also mentioned that their employers treated them like they were part of the family hence they had a strong bond and mutual understanding on issues affecting them. The aforementioned facts attest to the fact that, even though the majority of domestic workers do not get off days, are ignored continuously fall victim to false accusations, a minority enjoy the comfort of their workplace as their employers understand them. The above observation was apparent in the following statement from one of the participants:

"My boss is very friendly to me, the family treat me like their children and I feel free to tell them my challenges because I now see them as my second family".

4.3.2 Depression and stress

The mainstream of the responses also indicated that domestic workers from Thulamahashe were affected by the challenges raised above. As a result of these hardships, they developed hatred, stress, depression and anger which later manifested themselves in traumatic signs while they are with their families. Domestic workers also echoed that working without

contracts, long working hours and lower salaries limited their capacity to afford buying enough food that can sustain their families for the whole month. The stress and depression which domestic workers face while at work reportedly resulted in poor productivity and performance when executing their duties. This implies that all these challenges raised above affect the relationship between their family members as well as their well-being. Thirdly, some respondents pointed out that these challenges affect them because they lose self-confidence in everything they do, and feel discriminated because of being uneducated and not having what it takes to obtain higher paying jobs. Worth mentioning is the fact that there were no distinctions with regard to distance and gender on how domestic workers at Thulamahashe were affected by the above mentioned experiences. Some of the participants' sentiments are apparent in the following quotes:

"It affects your self-confidence, feeling discriminated and not having what it takes to survive" (Amaze, female 30 years old).

"The mistreatment by my employers causes stress, depression, which result in me not concentrating on my daily work basis and it causes anger as well as hatred towards my employer" (Gift, male 24 years old).

"Working without contracts, long working hours and after this hard work being lowly paid lead me and my family not to get enough food which can sustain us for the rest of the month" (Faith, female 27 years old).

Some of the domestic workers indicated that the challenges raised above affects their family members directly due to the unfair treatment they receive as domestic workers. They further pointed out that they lose interest on continuing with the jobs and they are always unhappy which makes them think of quitting their jobs even if they do not know the way forward. However, having presented the effects of the challenges faced by domestic workers, the following data concentrates on who is more involved in domestic work between male and females and the reasons behind that trend.

4.4 Gender disparities in domestic work

The results revealed that female domestic workers were more involved in domestic work in the whole district of Thulamahashe. However, this does not mean that male domestic workers

do not significantly participate in domestic work as well. The nature of domestic work in the district which is predominantly household chores, looking after children, cooking and washing clothes was reportedly favourable for female than male domestic workers hence their dominance. Another reason accounting for this trend was the fact that community patriarchal beliefs endorse male non-participation in domestic work by narrowing them to productive work. Male domestic workers reported that in most cases they were not involved in domestic work because they were being hindered by restriction from patriarchal beliefs and the shame from the community. However, the need for survival sometimes pushes them into domestic work. This is due to the fact that men were socialised into believing that women should participate in home chores while men participate in productive work. Below are interesting extracts from both male and female participants in relation to the aforementioned situation:

“Female domestic workers are more involved in domestic work because they are good in household chores, when cooking, cleaning and baby-sitting. (Decide, male 24 years old)

“Females are more involved in domestic work than males. Maybe it is due to cultural and patriarchal beliefs that women are more responsible in reproductive work than productive work (Sonnet, female 30 years old).

“Females, because they are the ones who usually do household chores at their homes so they understand exactly the needs and expectations of domestic work” (Ester, female 28 years).

The above sentiments show that females were more involved in domestic work than males. Females also usually remain at home where they end up seeking jobs as domestic workers while males go away to look for better jobs where they would not be harassed and ordered around. Having established that females are more involved in domestic work more than males in the district, what follows is an attempt to establish whether males and females domestic workers face the same challenges.

4.5 A comparison of challenges faced by male and female domestic workers

4.5.1 Domestic violence

The study results revealed that there are various challenges faced by female domestic workers than male domestic workers. Both female domestic workers reported that the challenges they

face were different nevertheless sometimes they could be similar. Ten of female respondents revealed that they face domestic violence whereby they were being forced to have sex with their male employers in order for them to get a salary increase and keep their jobs. The reason behind this situation was presumably that women were socialised to believe that they cannot defend themselves hence males can stand for themselves whenever this difficult situation transpires. Female domestic workers also echoed that sometimes they endure the sufferings because they are afraid of losing their jobs, because they do not have any other source of income. This implies that female domestic workers are more affected by social and economic challenges than male domestic workers. However, another female domestic worker indicated that the difference of the challenges they face is due to the fact that women are more experienced in undertaking household chores than males. This is deep rooted from patriarchal belief where male are socialized differently from females. Significantly, domestic workers working in rural communities noted that they were more affected by these challenges due to patriarchal beliefs than those in urban areas. This is probably because patriarchal beliefs are still more prominent in rural areas than in urban areas where there is now culture erosion. Below are some words of domestic workers to reinforce the aforementioned facts.

“No- females have many and different challenges than males, they face domestic violence and they are treated so badly, being beaten, forced to have sex for them to get some increases and to keep their jobs” (Sharon, female 29 years old).

“No-females face more challenges than males due to patriarchal believes where the society believes that most of the home chores it meant for women which is called reproductive work and male are responsible for productive work” (Promise, male 30 years old).

Based on the above statements, it is clear that men are taking advantage of women due to the fact that they are marginalised and patriarchal beliefs which are deep rooted in traditional history that men are superior than women hence they do not suffer much at the hands of their employers.

4.5.2. Working under pressure

Results demonstrated that working under pressure was one of the main challenges which was depressing female domestic workers more than male domestic workers. They indicated that they were being given many tasks per day which they fail to complete before sun set. For instance, they were expected to cook, clean, do laundry and child minding. As a result, they

had to work under pressure in order to accomplish the tasks before the evening. The results also indicated that due to work load, they fail to finish in time and as a result they receive bad treatment such as being kicked out of the house, deductions of the salaries and sometimes they get sex demands from their male bosses as a way of resolving the conflict. This demonstrates the fact that female domestic workers presumably cannot stand up for their rights hence they were prepared to suffer in order to preserve their jobs. To strengthen their views, some of the participants said the following:

“No-females face more challenges of working under pressure, doing all the household chores including the extra activities in the household” (Linhle, female 28 years old)

“No-females because of the workloads we are unable to finish tasks in time which cost us to lose our jobs, and this include mistreatment such as deductions of our salaries and losing our jobs” (Lindiwe, female 26 years old).

However, a minority of domestic workers pointed out that sometimes male domestic workers face the same challenges yet there is a gap between their challenges. Male domestic workers expressed that they might not be facing the same challenges as females face, such as being involved in the kitchen, but some become sex slaves unwillingly they lamented that the situation cause them to end up losing their significant spouses and having unsuccessful marriages because of the seductions they receive at the hands of both female and male employers. A particular male domestic worker pointed out that her boss usually forced him to have sexual intercourse when her husband went to work or attending some workshops. This shows that not only female domestic workers are being forced to have sexually intercourse with their employers but also male domestic workers face a similar challenge. One male respondent reported the following:

“My female employer used to force me to have sex with her the minute her husband was away and as a result I lost my partner because she find out what was happening at work, and I did it because it was the only way to feed my family until to date I do not have peace” (Nkateko, male 32 years old)

Given the above quotes and information, it is clear that there were male domestic workers who were also affected by the challenges which female domestic workers are facing although the impact and reactions to the challenges were different.

4.6. Comparison of challenges faced by domestic workers in urban and rural areas

The aim of this subsection was to determine if domestic workers in urban and rural areas face the same challenges. An assessment by the researcher was done about the challenges faced by few domestic workers in villages and those working in town, in different parts of the Thulamahashe area. Results indicated that the majority of participants believe that domestic workers from urban areas presumably face different challenges to those faced by domestic workers in rural areas. This is seemingly due to the fact that the environments they work in as well as the resources available to workers vary significantly between urban and rural areas. Those working in town were seemingly facing less challenges as compared to those working in the villages. Various reasons account for the aforesaid view. The main justification to this verdict as indicated by the majority of responses was that domestic workers from rural areas did not have enough materials or resources to use in order to complete their tasks in time. For instance, domestic workers reportedly had to do a lot of manual work such as fetching firewood, water, washing clothes without washing machines were some of the laborious tasks which were mentioned in support of the above fact. Variably, domestic workers from urban areas presumably had enough equipment to use around them to complete their tasks faster. Moreover, those in rural areas were more subjected to lack of information about their rights and labor regulations protecting them and limited employment opportunities while the ones in the urban areas had a better level of access to information and a better chance of obtaining another domestic work job in the event that they were fired. Below is what some participants had to say in line with the aforementioned facts:

“No- if it is urban the challenges are not the same because in urban areas is more developed than rural areas, while in rural you have to fetch water from far, collecting fire wood and in urban areas such equipments are usually found around the house” (Gift, female 27 years old).

“No- domestic workers from rural areas experience more difficulties than domestic workers from urban areas because they have better resources and they manage to execute their duties easier than processes than in rural areas, jobs are also available in town” (Nhlamulo, female 25 years old).

Another prominent issue raised by the majority of domestic workers was the fact that domestic workers from rural areas were lowly paid, while those from the town receive better

salaries. This implies that the nature of their surroundings and resources played an important role in differentiating the challenges being experienced in Thulamahashe area.

Conclusively, domestic workers from rural areas seemingly faced more and different challenges than domestic workers from the urban areas. This was likely due to the fact that urban areas were more endowed in terms of resources than rural areas among other reasons. On the other hand, the issue of rural based domestic workers fetching water, collecting fire woods and receiving low wages make their challenges worse. Worth noting is that domestic workers from rural areas agonize a lot than domestic workers in urban areas. In support of the above information, some participants had this to say:

“No- our challenges are different because in rural areas we are lowly paid, while in urban areas they receive better salaries and the treatment we receive is different” (Sonnet, female 30 years old)

“No-we are all domestic workers but in towns they have hotplates, washing materials, and some apparatus which help them to complete their tasks, and they knock off in time. They do not really feel the workload because the resources come to rescue them” (Tirhani, female 18 years old)

4.7 Coping strategies used by domestic workers

The results indicated strategies that domestic workers are using to cope with their challenges. These includes, keeping quiet and communication.

4.7.1. Being passive

This aspect emerged as the most significant strategy commonly used by domestic workers. Despite hardships, participants indicated that they employ a passive and calm approach as a way of coping in their daily lives. They act like this because of the fear of losing their jobs. Results also revealed that they kept quiet as a way of avoiding arguments and fights between them and their employers. This implies that domestic workers usually choose silence over addressing their situations due to the fear of losing their jobs and the possibility of not finding another job. In this regard, persevering with their jobs and working hard in order to feed their families was presumably the only critical factor in their lives. This view was expressed

regardless of gender, age and level of education of the domestic workers. The results also showed that participants avoided sharing their experiences with outsiders due to the fear of being sold out to their employers. Worth noting was the fact that there was no significant variance of opinions between male and female domestic workers although female domestic workers had numerical superiority in the study. Two illustrative verbatim words from participants read:

"I keep quiet because I want to save my job and if I can talk to others my boss can hear it by chance from outsiders and I will be expelled from my job" (Faith, female 24 years old).

"Sometimes even if it is hard to cope I learn to keep calm and quiet and I act as if nothing is bothering me to avoid argument and fighting around the house" (Tracy, male 35 years old).

"We accept our situations and work hard in order to feed our families" (Sonnet, female 30 years old).

4.7.2 Communicating with the employer

Despite the fact that the majority of responses indicate that domestic workers in the area usually employ a passive coping strategy, others reportedly resort to regular communication with their employers. It was revealed that some domestic workers were courageous enough to talk about their grievances with their employers despite the fear of losing their jobs. As a result, sometimes domestic workers are frightened that if they happen to complain they will lose their jobs. This really brings fear and drives them to keep quiet where they were supposed to talk. A certain female participant noted that she relies on a counsellors' help whenever she feels depressed, stressed and confused about her work situation. However, it was observed that most of the domestic workers cannot afford to consult a counsellor either because of lack of consultation fees or due to unavailability of such services in their area.

Results revealed that domestic workers in Thulamahashe seemingly preferred to share their experiences and challenges with their close families and close friends rather than outsiders. In this regard, they noted that friends and family had become their constant source of comfort, strength and encouragement to cope at work. The fact that most of them were breadwinners in their homes seemingly compels them to work in most of the adverse conditions they reportedly experienced. It is clear that some of the challenges and coping strategies revealed in this study are a result of other complex social ills such as single motherhood and poverty in

the area. Employers were seemingly taking advantage of the social ills which domestic workers are entangled in hence they made no or little effort to change the plight of their vulnerable employees. In some instances, participants indicated that they resorted to their religious teachings of forgiveness to their employers and continue with their work as usual. Below are responses of the participants after the interviews:

"I communicate with my employer to try to change my challenges. Some challenges need me to speak out but I sometimes accept my situation because I am afraid I might be chased out and end up being jobless with no source of income" (Tracy, female 35 years old).

"I keep calm, forgive and sometimes I feel like I can quit my job but I don't have any choice because I want to support my children" (Nhlamulo, female 25 years old).

On the other hand, a minority of younger female workers mentioned that they could not cope with their challenges and were currently planning to quit and find other jobs. The age difference regarding this fact probably indicated the influence of the level of responsibility on deciding whether to quit or persevere and cope under certain challenges. One response from a participant clearly revealed the aforesaid fact:

"It is very difficult to cope with it because sometimes you find that you come from work tired and all the mistreatment from the employer, I cannot deal with this anymore, I am thinking of quitting not so long maybe other jobs will come" (Nkateko, male 32 years old)

4.8 Suggested collective efforts for domestic workers in order to win their employers' attention

4.8.1 Meetings with the other domestic workers

Meeting with other domestic workers was the major aspect suggested by 12 participants. They indicated that domestic workers sometimes hold meetings with other domestic workers outside their work places to collectively discuss their challenges. However, they indicated that, just meeting and discussing the challenges was not enough to force their employers into action. This is due to the fact that they did not have formal collective bargaining organisations or groups to represent them whenever they have common challenges such as low salaries and no off days. In this regard, participants suggested that they need to take the challenges they usually discuss in their meetings to the local labour offices or N.G.Os. This

will probably foster the establishment of strategies which address their unique challenges at a local level. A minority of participants from the rural section of the area suggested the need for protests in order to force employers into action. However, they indicated that they were afraid of striking as that would result in them losing their jobs unless they would get the backing of the Department of Labour which they seemingly rarely get.

Results also revealed that seven participants from the urban area suggested that although they are not currently aware of the necessary procedures, approaching CCMA can be a better option to solve their challenges such as being unfairly dismissed and working without contracts. Government intervention was also reportedly required to help domestic workers to address the challenges they were facing. Even though the majority of domestic workers indicated the significance of collective action to solve their challenges, a minority pointed out that arranging meetings with their employers to discuss challenges affecting them can assist in solving individual challenges which might not be common to everyone in the area. Worth noting is the fact that perceptions and views on collective actions to take varied mainly with distance from the urban areas. Those in the rural communities mainly advocated meetings and protest while those in the urban areas mainly suggested approaching CCMA and the labour offices. Three illustrative verbatim words from participants are as follows:

“As domestic workers we must meet and write down our complaints and submit them to the local labour offices or even NGOs so that they can find some effective intervention on how to help us to solve our challenges” (Nkateko, male 32 years old).

“Arranging meetings and inviting other organisations in our area as well as our employers to have a talk with them, in order for us to be heard” (Ester, female 28 years old).

4.9 Strategies for improving conditions of domestic workers

4.9.1 Urgently required Legislation and policy frameworks for domestic workers

Results revealed that domestic workers in Thulamahashe area require protection from the legislation and policies. Even though there are legislative frameworks which indirectly or directly cater for domestic workers, the study observed that participants had very limited information about their rights, protection measures and who to approach for help when they faced challenges. In this regard, participants suggested the need for strict legislation protecting the rights of domestic workers. Direct policy framework stipulating compulsory

provision of work contracts was also noted in the area. Interestingly, responses mostly from the urban areas stipulated the need for the Department of Labor relations officers to do some door to door audits to ensure that all domestic workers are working under contracts. This would reportedly be a tool against which mistreated domestic workers can use to take action against their employers without fear of unfair dismissal. Participants also indicated the need for government to include, in their policy framework, minimum salaries for domestic workers and thenceforth strict adherence procedures. There was no age or major gender distinctions regarding the aforesaid sentiment thereby showing its significance as a suggestion.

"I think if there are strict regulations to protect us, and there were contracts we would be far much protected against ill treatment from our employers, the situation is now really stressing because I don't feel like I am safe to complain." (Sonnet, female 30 years old).

"If domestic workers come together and fight for their rights and also informing the labor act about the challenges they face every problems can be solved and hopefully the conditions at work can be change" (Decide male 24 years old).

4.9.2 Organizing domestic work

Results also showed a unanimous need to provide training for domestic workers at institutions so as to foster organization and upgrading of the field. In this regard, all domestic workers in future would be in possession of certificates which they can use to secure jobs. The results expressed that domestic work was perceived as a profession which is done by unskilled individuals. In this respect it is regarded as a useless profession which is done by people who come mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds and without any or proper qualifications. Furthermore, the study findings also showed that the community regards domestic work as reproductive work which only requires compensation or stipends rather than real salaries hence employers usually pay less or even in kind. This is due to the fact that the sector mainly consists of women who come from patriarchal societies that believe women are naturally meant for reproductive work. Professionalizing the field will therefore trigger the need to standardize the profession, raise the status of domestic workers and generally foster their recognition by their employers and the society at large.

The study findings established that domestic work is generally done by the lower class in Thulamahashe area. Due to their disadvantaged backgrounds, most of these workers do not have any say when they are abused and mistreated by their employers. This belief possibly

makes it possible for employers to manipulate their employees as they perceive them as people who can rarely find other jobs. In the light of the above, professionalizing the field will boost the pride and bargaining power of domestic workers while putting pressure on employers to comply with the requirements of their employees. The above mentioned notions are well articulated in the following statements by some of the participants:

“It is a job which is done by uneducated and poor people” (Decide, male 24 years old).

“It is also perceived as a job which is paying less and mostly done by unmarried people, widows, as well as people who are not aware of their rights” (Ester, female 28 years old).

4.11 Measures to ensure that local communities recognize the significances of domestic work

4.11.1 Establishment of Campaigns

Study results revealed that domestic workers preferred establishing some campaigns to make the communities aware of the great role they play in the community and the importance of domestic work in communities. NGOs and other organizations advocating workers' rights were also encouraged by participants to commence information sharing campaigns in order to raise awareness among employers and the general populace regarding the prevalent challenges in the area and the urgent need for solutions and change of attitude. Campaigns must also disseminate information such as the significant roles played by domestic workers in raising children, maintaining family hygiene and maintaining the wellbeing of their employees to ensure that they also productively contribute at their work place. The results show that they need to be taught about the importance of domestic labor. Worth noting is the fact that there were mixed perceptions about this factor as there were disparities with regard to gender and geographical location. Below are views that emphasize the above:

“Awareness should be raised amongst communities explaining the importance of domestic work and domestic work should be treated like other professions” (Trust, male 25 years old).

“Campaigns to alert the communities to be aware on the great role domestic workers are doing in the community. NGOs should also help us with campaigns so that people and employers can hear our problems and maybe they can treat us better” (Promise, female 30 years old).

4.11.2 Arranging meetings

The majority of responses mentioned that domestic workers need to mobilize and collaborate in regular meetings where they can discuss issues concerning them. Participants indicated the need to involve other stakeholders in the meetings such as government officials, labor relations officials, civic society, NGOs and community member representatives. Involving everyone will ensure that everyone hears their plight and probably contributes to finding solutions. The outcomes of such meetings are likely to be taken seriously for policy reform and change in the local community. Participants also indicated that they were not sure if government was aware of their incessant challenges due to lack of research work in their field in the area. In this regard, the current study was also viewed by participants as a platform to express their views to the local and international community and hopefully the government will consider the outcomes of the study for policy formulation and local community intervention. Below are some views that support the above observations:

“We must first hold a meeting as a community then submit the complains to the local government, then government will help in addressing our issues then domestic work can be recognized”. (Sharon, female 29 years old)

“We must request a meeting and invite different people in the community professionals and the government to come and teach about the importance of domestic work about. The communities need to be alert about the importance of domestic work and the great role domestic workers are playing in the society” (Ester, female 28 years old).

Having discussed what should be done to ensure that the local communities recognize the importance of domestic work, what follows is whether there is knowledge of policies or legislation for domestic workers.

4.11.3 Registration of domestic work by labor department

The results indicated that domestic work should be registered at the labor offices so that when they are mistreated the law will take its course. This is due to the fact that domestic workers are working without contracts, and this creates a big problem because when they are abused there is no place to report their matters due to the fact that domestic work happens behind closed doors. This means that the government need to intervene especially in monitoring and evaluating the conditions of domestic workers as well as coming up with rules that can guide

the domestic sector so that whenever they face problems the government can help them to resolve them. Domestic workers also mentioned that they know about some of the policies which include not working for more than 45 hours a week. The study findings also revealed that the labor department has set the standard that domestic workers should not be paid less than R1800 per month. Surprisingly domestic workers revealed that they are still paid less than the set amount. This implies that even if there are some policies set by the department of labor for domestic workers they are not effectively implemented in the Thulamahashe area. Significantly, there were different perceptions concerning this factor between males and female domestic workers. Below are some responses from the participants to support the above observation:

“Yes domestic workers should be registered to the department of labor, so that when they face challenges the law shall take its course” (Decide, male 24 years old).

“Yes domestic workers are not allowed to work more than 45 hours per week” (Masingita, male 33 years old)

“Yes the department of labor has set the standard that domestic workers should not be paid less than R1800” (Tirhani, female 15 years old).

Despite of the domestic workers knowing some policies for their field of work a minority pointed out that not much information has been compiled about their field of work. This showed that some domestic workers know little about the policies. The results indicated that domestic workers had not read any document concerning the policies. This might be because they did not have access to the information or just did not know if the policy documents exist. However, the policies are not much of help to them because domestic workers are continuing to face more challenges while there are policies to guide the domestic work profession. This implies that the role of these policies are invisible, they have no impact in the lives of domestic workers and this is why domestic workers continue to face problems in the Thulamahashe area. To support the above information two participants said the following:

“No, not much information has been compiled about domestic work profession” (Promise, female 30 years old).

“No, nothing I know about legislation for domestic workers, and I have not read any document about policies for domestic workers” (Masungulo, male 40 years old).

In a conclusion, the discussion above gives clear picture that domestic workers know the policies about their field, and only a few domestic workers are not aware about the policies. However, they continue to suffer behind closed doors, being raped, harassed, beaten and given low salaries, just to mention a few.

Results of this study. Challenges facing domestic workers, depression and stress, gender differences in domestic work between male and female domestic workers. The chapter also discusses challenges faced by male and female domestic workers, gender and age disparities in challenges experienced by domestic workers as well as variations in challenges in relation to geographical location. Coping strategies used by domestic workers will be explained. Furthermore, ways which can be employed to address the identified challenges will also be covered in this chapter. More ways of disseminating information to domestic workers in order to foster awareness about their rights, regulatory policies and legislative frameworks will also be discussed in this chapter. The chapter also outlines recommendations and directions for any future studies. What follows will be the discussion of the challenges facing domestic workers.

5.1.1 Challenges facing domestic workers in Tlokweng

In the present study, domestic workers revealed a number of challenges they are facing in their daily lives. However, being harassed, working many days without being given off days, being forced to have sex with their employers, receiving low wages, working after hours and extra hours as well as exploitation were reported as the main challenges they encounter. ILO (2010 and 2009) also supports the above aforementioned facts that domestic workers are usually paid low wages and the work remains undervalued and poorly regulated, and that the survey conducted in 2009 by ILO reports that 40 per cent of selected countries world-wide did not guarantee domestic workers a weekly day of rest, and did not specify the working hours for domestic hours. Tolla (2011) also reports that domestic workers from Mpumalanga earn between R400-700 per month, the salary is inadequate and not in the range set by the department of labor which is R1491.36 per month (Department of labor, 2002). Albin and Manfroyana (2012) note often that not female domestic workers are vulnerable to rape and sexual harassment by the male members as well as their visitors. Furthermore, they add that a survey done in the United Kingdom in 2010 reveals that 54% of domestic workers in the country suffered psychological abuse while 3% were sexually abused by their employers. Tolla (2011) adds that domestic workers find it difficult to resist exploitation and abuse due to the fear of losing their only jobs helping them to survive. The above facts, give a clear

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF STUDY RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on discussing the results of this study. Challenges facing domestic workers, depression and stress, gender differences in domestic work between male and female domestic workers. The chapter also discusses challenges faced by male and female domestic workers, gender and age disparities in challenges experienced by domestic workers as well as variations in challenges in relation to geographical location. Coping strategies used by domestic workers will be explained. Furthermore, ways which can be employed to address the identified challenges will also be covered in this chapter. More ways of disseminating information to domestic workers in order to foster awareness about their rights, regulatory policies and legislative frameworks will also be discussed in this chapter. The chapter also outlines recommendations and directions for any future studies. What follows will be the discussion of the challenges facing domestic workers.

5.1.1 Challenges facing domestic workers in Thulamahashe

In the present study, domestic workers revealed a number of challenges they are facing in their daily lives. However, being harassed, working many days without being given off days being forced to have sex with their employers, receiving low wages, working after hours and extra hours as well as exploitation were reported as the main challenges they encounter. ILO (2010 and 2009) also supports the above aforementioned facts that domestic workers are usually paid low wages and the work remains undervalued and poorly regulated, and that the survey conducted in 2009 by ILO reports that 40 per cent of selected countries world-wide did not guarantee domestic workers a weekly day of rest, and did not specify the working hours for domestic hours. Tolla (2013) also reports that domestic workers from Mpumalanga earn between R800-700 per month, the salary is inadequate and not in the range set by the department of labor which is R1491.86 per month (Department of labor, 2002). Albin and Mantouvalou (2012) more often than not female domestic workers are vulnerable to rape and sexual harassment by the male members as well as their visitors. Furthermore, they add that a survey done in the United Kingdom in 2010 reveals that 54% of domestic workers in the country suffered psychological abuse while 3% were sexually abused by their employers. Tolla, (2011) adds that domestic workers find it difficult to resist exploitation and abuse due to the fear of losing their only jobs helping them to survive. The above facts, give a clear

testimony about the challenges domestic workers are facing and how they withstand their challenges no matter how hard it can be.

On the other hand, the study revealed that heavy workloads, being shouted at when they make small mistakes, being disrespected, and not caring about the age difference of domestic workers were also pointed out as some of the challenges facing domestic workers in Thulamahashe. Being ignored, violated, victims of crimes as well as being suspects of lost properties in their employer's houses and being slaves were also the challenges which domestic workers encounter in their lives. The above mentioned facts show that domestic workers face a lot of different challenges in their work places.

5.1.2 Depression and stress

A spectrum of domestic workers indicated that as a result of the above hardships, when they knock off from work, they carry the hatred and anger home and their family members suffer because of their work frustrations. The results also demonstrated that working without contracts, long working hours and low wages are some of the problems they face. The ILO (2009) and (2010) notes that domestic workers are usually paid low wages and that most countries world-wide do not guarantee domestic workers a weekly day of rest, and did not specify the working hours for domestic workers. Results also indicate that challenges raised above cause stress and depression, which result in poor productive work. Furthermore, the results confirm that domestic workers lose self-confidence on what they do and they feel discriminated for not being educated and not having what it takes to survive. This shows that the aforementioned challenges have a negative impact in domestic worker's lives.

5.1.3 Gender disparities in domestic work

The study establishes that female domestic workers are in the majority. This is mainly due to patriarchal beliefs. In line with this view, Smith (2000) pointed out that patriarchal beliefs are the root cause of male and female inequalities regarding gender roles. These beliefs socialise female domestic workers to take responsibility for domestic work. On the other hand, female domestic workers are socialised mainly to be responsible for house chores, looking after children, cooking, washing clothes, was reportedly favourable for females than males. This fact concurs with ILO (2010) who indicates that women form a major part of the domestic work sector due to the beliefs of shared obligations for domestic activities which are rooted in

traditional history. Results showed that the reason encouraging this condition is the fact that community patriarchal beliefs endorse male non-participation in domestic work by narrowing them to productive work. The results indicated that male domestic workers reported that in most cases, they are not involved in domestic work because they are being hindered by patriarchal beliefs. This is due to the fact that men were socialised into believing that women should participate in home chores while men participate in productive work outside the home.

5.1.4 A comparison of challenges faced by male and female domestic workers

The study established that female domestic workers face more challenges than male domestic workers. The majority of female domestic workers indicated that they face domestic violence and sometimes they are forced to have sex with their male bosses unwillingly, as well as for them to get some wage increase and for them to be permanent domestic workers. In line with this fact Albin and Mantouvalou, (2012) also discovered that more often than not, female domestic workers are vulnerable to rape and sexual harassment by the male employers as well as their visiting relatives. The above scholars also add that a survey done in United Kingdom in 2010 reveals that 54% of female domestic workers in the country suffered psychological abuse while 3% were sexually abused by their employers. (Mkandawire-Valhmu (2010) adds that women experience more verbal abuse and physical abuse. This is probably because of the community beliefs that women are powerless and defenceless. The other reason is that women are afraid of losing their jobs. In line with this statement, Tolla, 2013) adds that female domestic workers find it difficult to resist exploitation and abuse due to the fear of losing their only job helping them to survive. This implies that female domestic workers are affected by more challenges than male domestic workers.

5.1.5 Comparison of challenges faced by domestic workers working in urban and rural areas

The study findings revealed that domestic workers from rural areas face more challenges than domestic workers from urban areas. Results indicated that domestic workers from urban areas have more equipment for use which makes it easy to accomplish their tasks in time. Results indicated that they have washing machines, they usually find water around the yard and they use electric stoves to cook. On the other hand, domestic workers from rural areas have to fetch water far away from the home, collect fire wood, and wash clothes without auto-washing machines which make it difficult to complete their tasks in time. Furthermore,

results indicated that domestic workers from rural areas receive low wages, knock off late, and have heavier workloads. In short, domestic workers from rural areas face more challenges than domestic workers from urban areas. The reason being urban areas are more improved than rural settings.

5.1.6 Coping strategies used by domestic workers

In this study, results indicate that domestic workers keep quiet and calm as a way of coping with their challenges. A study by Tolla, (2013) in Mpumalanga reveals that domestic workers resort to keeping quiet to avoid their employers verbal abuse. They consistently read the mood of their employers to avoid upsetting them through talking. They employ this strategy to maintain a peaceful but yet unhealthy relationship with their employers. The findings revealed that they act like this because of the fear of losing their jobs, as well as avoiding arguments between them and their employers. The results further pointed out that domestic workers accept their situations, and sometimes they work according to the rules of their employers and keep quiet no matter how they are abused. This is very common amongst domestic workers because most of them are uneducated so they resort to accepting their situation and continuing with their jobs. The results indicated that they avoid talking to others from outside because they think that the outsiders can take their matters and tell their bosses, and as a result they may lose their jobs.

Additionally, the study shows that domestic workers use communication as another strategy to cope with their challenges. They talk to their employers about the issues that are affecting them, but still they have the fear of losing their jobs. The outcomes show that some domestic workers talk to their counsellors as a way of coping with their hardships, but not every domestic worker can afford to pay a counsellor. However, despite communication as a strategy, domestic workers pointed out that they forgive and accept their situations as another way of coping with their challenges. The results also confirm that domestic workers practice patience as another coping strategy. However, communicating with their employers is not a simple task because they fear losing their jobs, and their employers do not want to be confronted.

5.1.7 Suggested collective efforts for domestic workers in order to win their employers' attention

Results indicated that domestic workers should have some meetings to discuss their challenges and after discussions they can take their complaints to the government's Department of Labour. This will ensure that rules are made in addressing their employers on how to treat them. Results also indicated that domestic workers must report their matters to the CCMA and request them to call their employers in order to solve their issues. This shows that domestic workers believe that an intervention from the government can help their employers to consider their problems. The study indicated that domestic workers can also invite their employers and have meetings with them in order to get their employers' attention. However this is not an easy task to perform.

Furthermore, results show that domestic workers need to talk with their employers addressing all the issues they face. However, results show that female domestic workers are afraid of communicating with their employers. The Department of Labor (2010) adds that domestic workers often find it hard to discuss challenges with their employers given the intimacy of the working environment and the mutual relationship created with the employers' family members. Only male domestic workers have the confidence of talking to their employers because they do not have the fear of losing their jobs. They believe that they can also look for some other jobs else, unlike women who are afraid to stand for themselves.

5.1.8 Strategies for improving conditions of domestic workers

The study results revealed that domestic workers should come together to fight for their rights in order to improve their situation. Domestic workers should write their problems together and submit them to the Department of Labor so that the department can help them address their challenges. The outcomes of the study also confirmed that the conditions of domestic workers can also change if their employers give them freedom to express themselves freely. The Department of Labor (2010) also points out that the workers often find it difficult to discuss their challenges with their employers given the intimacy of the working environment and the mutual relationship created with the employers' family members. This is due to the reason that in most cases domestic workers are not given platforms by their employers to air their views out. Furthermore, this gives a clear testimony that domestic workers are suffering

behind closed doors without the department of labor knowing the challenges they are going through.

In addition, results of the study also indicated that the government must introduce rules that can protect the rights of domestic workers, and that the government should create more jobs because there is a high rate of unemployment and this results in the domestic field absorbing more people. Domestic workers also echoed that at the community they should be programs where by all domestic workers can meet and discuss their issues and these programs need to be done by the state. The study findings also indicate that the government should make sure that people who need help from their homes should make sure that they have enough salary to pay their workers on a monthly basis. However, this is not easy to achieve because most domestic workers are employed behind closed doors and the agreement is between the employer and the employee. Results also indicate that domestic workers must register with the labor offices so that when they are mistreated the law will take its course. The need for the labor act to make sure that the rights of domestic workers are taken very seriously was also pointed out as another factor which can improve the conditions of domestic workers. The results also showed that domestic workers should not get less than R1500. This amount discloses that domestic workers are not remunerated well.

5.1.9 Professionalization of domestic work

Domestic workers need to be trained like other professions in order to receive certificates or qualifications. Results indicated that domestic work is seen as a profession for uneducated people in the communities. It is also a field dominated by women and is characterized by low wages. Nadasen (2012) laments that the association of domestic work women's unpaid labor and its private nature in homes makes it difficult for many people to view it as real work, worth any value. The results also demonstrated that most people who are involved in domestic work are underprivileged and do nothing when they are abused. They accept their situation because of the fear of losing their jobs. Domestic work is regarded as nothing but a division which is dominated by women as well as a field which is not well paying.

5.1.10 Measures to ensure that local communities recognize the significances of domestic work

The study findings revealed that domestic workers must come up with campaigns to make communities aware about the importance of domestic work. Results showed that domestic workers should lodge complaints and submit them to the local government so that government can come up with some policies that can explain the importance of domestic work. Domestic workers pointed out that campaigns should be held in the communities whereby the importance of domestic work should be briefly explained and that the domestic field should be treated as other professions. The reason why people do not take domestic work as a serious profession is the fact that it absorbs a lot of uneducated people who come from poor backgrounds. The responses also established that domestic workers must gather together and invite different stakeholders including the government to come in the communities in order to help domestic workers to highlight the significance of domestic work.

5.1.11 Registration of domestic work by labor department

The study results suggested that domestic workers should be registered with the department of labor so that when they face some problems the law can take its course. This was the fact that domestic workers work without contracts. It becomes difficult when they face problems because they have nowhere to lodge their complaints. The results demonstrated that domestic workers knew about some of the policies which include them not working more than 45 hours a week. The study findings also revealed that the labor department has set the standard that domestic workers should not be paid less than R1800 per month. Surprisingly domestic workers were still paid less than this amount. This implies that even if there are some policies set by the department of labor for domestic workers they are not implemented. However, the results also pointed out that the minority of domestic workers had not read any document about policies governing their profession and that not much information have been compiled about the domestic work profession hence perpetuating the problems.

5.3 Recommendations for policy formulation

5.2 Conclusion

The study revealed that domestic workers face many challenges which affect them such as sexual harassment, working without contracts, low wages, a heavy workload and mistreatment. The study also revealed that female domestic workers face more challenges compared to male domestic workers. This was due to the reason that the sector is mainly

dominated by women, and that most of the time men are interested in productive work more than reproductive work. The other reason for this is deep-rooted patriarchy where by men are trained to do manual or productive work and women are socialised to do domestic chores. The study findings revealed that the above challenges affect the lives of domestic workers because they lose concentration and become unproductive and ineffective at work. The study results showed that domestic workers from rural areas they face more challenges than domestic workers from urban areas. This was due to the fact that urban areas are more improved than rural areas. Domestic workers from rural areas have to fetch water from far, collect fire wood and sometimes go to the fields for farming. On the other hand, domestic workers from town have all the equipment and resources around them that help them execute their tasks easily and faster.

The study also established that domestic workers resort on keeping quiet and sometimes communicating with their employers in order to cope with their challenges. However, some of them pointed out that they accept their situations and sometimes forgive and exercise patience because of fear of losing their jobs. The study confirmed that domestic workers need to communicate with their employers so that they can consider their problems. Furthermore, the results indicated that domestic workers should involve the government in order for their problems to be resolved as well as their conditions to be improved. The study findings also revealed that campaigns should be held in the communities to educate people about the importance of domestic work. Communities perceived domestic work profession as a sector dominated by uneducated women and whereby people are not remunerated well. Domestic work need to be professionalised like any other profession in order to remove the negative perception people have about this field. Regarding the issue of the policies domestic workers mentioned that they knew about some of the policies and just few domestic workers indicated that they have not read any documents concerning the domestic work legislation

5.3 Recommendations for policy formulation

The present study recommends that direct policies targeting the challenges faced by domestic workers should be put in place in Thulamahashe district and Mpumalanga at large. The strategies to reduce or to curb challenges faced by domestic workers should be taken into consideration that domestic workers from rural and urban areas face challenges which are life

threatening. The policies can be guided by the findings of this study which are gender oriented.

5.4 Recommendations to the community

This study also appeals to the community members to develop a positive attitude towards domestic workers and domestic work on its own. The study recommends that community members should take a leading role in educating community members about the importance of domestic work, regardless of the gender and how people perceive domestic work. Developing a positive attitude towards domestic work may help community members to understand the importance of domestic work and to know how important domestic work is. More effective recruitment ways also need to be employed by community leaders in order to remove a negative attitude about domestic work profession among people in the district.

5.5 Recommendations to government sectors and the labor act

To government sectors and the labor act, the study recommends that the government should intervene in monitoring and evaluating the conditions of domestic workers so that if anything happens to them the law can take its cause. The introduction of a wide range of effective policies to guide domestic work profession should be available for domestic workers. The government should create more jobs because there is high rate of unemployment which results in the domestic field absorbing many people. The government should make sure that people who need domestic workers have enough money to pay their workers on a monthly basis. The labor act should make sure that the rights of domestic workers are taken very seriously. A trend of increasing domestic workers' salaries should be developed in order to match the prominence of domestic work in communities. In addition, the government must establish awareness campaigns about the importance of domestic work in various communities in order to emphasize its significance around the world.

5.6 Recommendation for future studies

This study explored the challenges faced by female domestic workers, gender and age disparities. Another theme relates to the coping strategies employed by domestic workers to

deal with their challenges. Ways which can be employed to address the identified challenges were also covered in the discussion. Last but not least, ways of disseminating information to domestic workers in order to foster awareness about their rights, regulatory policies and legislative frameworks were also discussed in this chapter. Having established this, future studies must explore the effective policies that can be put in place to guide domestic work profession from all communities around the world. This will provide concrete solutions to the problem facing the domestic work arena.

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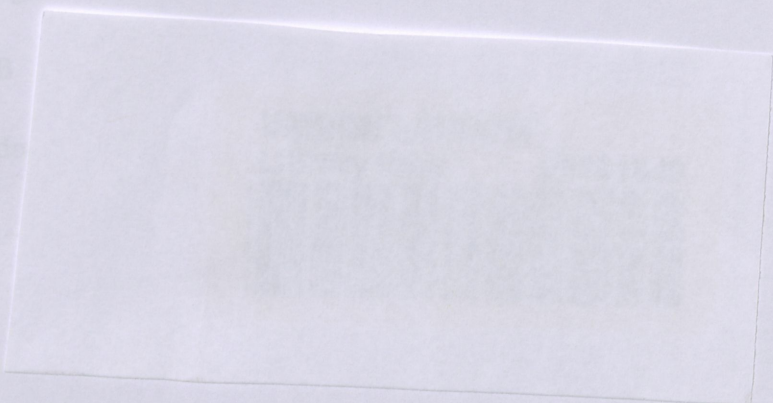
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Dear potential research participants

This communication serves to invite you to participate in this study. Please note that any information you will provide will be treated as confidential. This means that it will not be divulged to anyone without your consent. Also, your participation is voluntary, meaning that you are free to terminate your involvement at any time should you feel uncomfortable during the course of the study.

Semi- structured interview guide

Instructions

- Please take time to write your responses in the spaces provided under each question.
- When answering the questions, be honest and fair as possible.
- Remember that what we want are your own views and not those of any other person. Thus there is no right or wrong answers.

Section A

1. How old are you?
2. What is your sex MaleFemale
3. Which level of study did you attain
4. Which village/ zone do you come from?
5. Which gr

Section B

1. What does domestic work mean to you?
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2. What are the challenges you are facing as domestic workers in Thulamahashe?

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3. How do the challenges raised above affect your daily livelihoods?

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4. Who do you think is involved more in domestic work between male and female? Why is it so?

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5. Do male and female domestic workers face the same challenges? If yes or no explain why?

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6. Does urban and rural areas domestic workers face the same challenges? If yes or no explain why?

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7. How do you cope with the challenges you face as a domestic worker?

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8. What are the collective efforts which domestic workers can take to make their problems head by their employers?

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9. What do you think can be done to improve the conditions of domestic workers and by whom?

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10. What are the perceptions about domestic work as a profession in your community?

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11. What do you think should be done to ensure that the local communities recognise the importance of domestic workers?

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12. Do you know of any policy or legislation for domestic workers? If yes which one? If no why?

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