

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS IN PROPELLING JOB SATISFACTION AMONG WORKERS IN ARMED CONFLICT SOCIETIES

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Social protection of workers working in armed conflict societies has increasingly become an essential component in the management of employees working in war torn countries. The purpose of the study was to establish social protection mechanisms and systems that increase employee satisfaction in armed conflict societies. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, where semi-structured interviews were employed as the main data collection instrument. Data was collected from 50 (fifty) participants who were selected using the snow balling technique. The study established that social protection mechanisms which can be employed to mitigate social injury or damage and increase job satisfaction among employees in armed conflict societies include subsidized medical/health aide facility, counseling services, provision of security services for workers, in kind assistance, family feeding, social insurance and labour market intervention such as provision of jobs on infrastructure projects for cash or food. The study concluded that employer funded social protection systems play a critical role in boosting job satisfaction among workers in armed conflict areas. Social protection systems that address workers' needs boost job satisfaction, motivation, commitment and loyalty among employees working in war torn areas. It was recommended that organizations should design various employer funded social protection mechanisms which can address workers' needs.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, social protection, armed conflict, employees, employers

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1. Introduction

Job satisfaction among workers in armed conflict societies is increasingly becoming a subject of much debate in the twentieth century (Nyanga 2018, Dava 2013, Karatepe 2013, Nyanga and Sibanda 2013, Nyanga et al 2018). The management of the human resource in armed conflict societies has become very difficult to ignore since armed conflict societies house a significant number of employees. Studies (Saari 2014, Nyanga et al 2012) have shown that job satisfaction plays a pivotal role to the success and growth of any organization irrespective of size and complexity. Job satisfaction has traditionally been found (Vanderschnere and Birdsall 2018, Thompson and Phua 2012, Saari 2014) to be propelled by giving workers higher salaries and wages, good leadership, good working conditions and other internal and external factors. Nyanga (2018) observed that armed conflict affects several facets of human resource management; hence there is need for employees in armed conflict societies to be managed and treated in a special manner. The war affects employees' wages and salaries and also destroys employee social protection mechanisms yet social protection mechanisms have the potential of shaping employees' attitude towards their work. Emotionally and physically injured workers need to be socially protected if their job satisfaction level is to be kept high.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) article 22 and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) declared social security a human right. Article 22 of the declaration reads, "Everyone, as a member of society has a right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each state, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the development of his personality." It follows that social protection of people is a critical issue which needs to be managed in a professional manner and to the satisfaction of the United Nations declarations and conventions. The growing importance of employee social protection has increased the momentum of the debates on the social protection landscape throughout the world. The debates on the social injury which employees working in war torn countries experience continue to surge. In light of the need to provide social protection services among workers, most countries whether in peaceful or armed conflict areas have set up platforms, legislations and systems where debates on improving social protection programs and services are done. Most countries have put in place national platforms meant to advance the social protection agendas of their countries (White 2016). United Nations Development Program (UNDP) views social protection as a key antecedent to realize its vision of helping countries achieve their objectives of eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and exclusion. In war torn countries there is heightened brain drain and high rate of labour turnover mainly because of low job satisfaction caused by failure by organizations to put in place social protection programs for employees. Brain drain is one of the major factors that impede organizational performance in war torn societies. For instance, during the civil war in Mozambique the country lost a significant number of highly skilled and talented human capital to neighboring countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Namibia and Tanzania. The trades which were heavily affected by brain drain include among others engineering, health, accounting and academia

(Dava et al 2013). Brain drain in war torn countries is mainly caused by war induced low job satisfaction. Low job satisfaction in armed conflict societies can be addressed by introducing new and improving the existing social protection systems in the country.

In view of the importance of social protection programs as espoused in various countries' legislation and arms of the United Nations such as International Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), several studies (Zeeuw 2001, Devereux and Sabates 2004, Jackson 2004, Harvey et al 2007) have been done on social protection programs, agendas and mechanisms. However, most studies focused on people in peaceful environment and none have addressed the needs of employees in armed conflict areas. Moreover, such studies have focused on social protection for people in general. The researcher did not come across any study that examined social protection programs for workers in armed conflict societies. Workers in armed conflict societies are vulnerable to various war induced risks hence they deserve to have social protection programs and systems that address their specific needs. The main purpose of this study was to explore the social protection mechanisms that can be introduced to cater for workers working in organizations in armed conflict societies. Social protection programs for workers in armed conflict societies should address their job satisfaction challenges which usually lead to high rate of brain drain, lack of organizational engagement, lack of commitment and loyalty.

2. Literature review

Several countries in Africa such as Sudan, South Sudan, Mozambique, Rwanda, Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo have been in armed conflict for over 10 (ten) years. War torn societies are characterized by poverty, inequality and exclusion of people on the basis of political affiliation, race, creed and religion, which consequently make employees suffer from various forms of injuries. Prolonged armed conflicts in Africa and beyond have led to the destruction of economic infrastructure (Nyanga et al 2018), displacement of people, sexual assaults (Jackson 2004), violence, increased poverty and many other anti- development activities, which in turn destroyed social protection mechanisms for various trades and organisations. Armed conflict reduces employee satisfaction, loyalty and commitment (Nyanga et al 2018, Kuslivan et al 2010). All forms of armed conflict lead to the erosion of employees' salaries because of high inflation rates, destruction of workers' homes, displacement of workers and their relatives, exclusion of workers based on differences in political affiliation and religion. War torn societies face many challenges such as armed conflict induced psycho-social disorders among employees (Zeeuw 2001) which have the potential of derailing employee performance and satisfaction. Employees are impoverished, abused, brutalized and killed because of the fighting between armed forces (Nyanga 2018). The war induced job satisfaction problems faced by employees in armed conflict societies significantly affect the organization's output. Employees with low job satisfaction usually report for work late, lack commitment to work, register a high rate of absenteeism and

presenteeism which are ingredients to low organisational productivity (Lankau 2006, Kusluvan et al 2010, Johnstone 2008).

Harvey et al (2007) defined social protection as a system concerned with assisting the poor and the vulnerable such as the aged, physically handicapped, the sick, women and children, and those displaced by war and/or natural phenomenon. Devereux and Sabates (2004) viewed social protection as all public and private interventions that provide protection to the vulnerable against livelihood disasters and reducing the socio-economic vulnerability of the poor and the marginalized. Social protection varies from one country to the other but its principal objective is to reduce poverty and vulnerability, building human capital and responding to economic and political shocks (Haider et al 2010, White et al 2015, Hickey 2011). For the purpose of this study social protection is defined as any system concerned with reducing the vulnerability, response to political and economic induced shocks, improvement of workers' livelihoods and restore workers' lost status, dignity and pride. Employees in armed conflict societies are vulnerable to various forms of risks such as sexual assaults, political and economic shocks which negatively affect their job satisfaction levels. There is need to put in place social protection mechanisms that protect employees in war torn areas from such risks.

Studies (Delevereux and Sabates 2004, Brown 2013, Harvey et al 2007) are of the view that there are basically four categories of social protection systems which are protective, preventative, promotive and transformative. The protective component provides reliefs to the deprived in society and includes such social protection systems as state pensions and other income benefits. The other social protection system which is referred to as the preventive averts deprivation by providing such services as savings clubs and social insurance. The promotive section of social protection enhances generation of incomes by workers to cater for their social needs. Social equity, inclusion, labour laws and empowerment falls under the transformative category of social protection systems (Delevereux and Sabates 2004). It implies that there are several forms of social protection systems and platforms which can be employed to reduce the vulnerability and risks some people in society are exposed to. For example, employees in war torn countries are vulnerable to various forms of risks hence there is need to have social protection mechanisms that specifically address their needs. Addressing workers' work related social injuries in peaceful work environments boost job satisfaction among workers. What has however remained unclear is whether the same types of social protection systems can be universally applied for employees in peaceful and war torn areas. It was the purpose of this study to address this question and close the knowledge gap.

Barrientos and Hulme (2010) argue that social protection is a form of human capital investment which reduces brain drain, labour turnover, increases workers' satisfaction and reduces employee medical bills. For example, in war torn societies social protection should be used to invest in human capital so as to curb labour migration and other misdemeanors at work. Social protection systems also reduce vulnerability and risks of workers from various environmental shocks (Jones and Shahrokh 2013). Labour market interventions such as unemployment insurance, labour legislation can be used to socially protect vulnerable people

(Kwan 2009) such as employees working in war torn countries. People who are exposed to war induced risks need to be protected by their employers, government and other stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). According to Mares (2007) vulnerable people such as those people living with disability, the poor, the uneducated, and the unemployed need various forms of social security systems so as to protect them. Such groups of people can be protected using social insurance, education insurance and creating relevant legislation. From the reviewed literature it shows that preceding studies covered several groups of vulnerable people regarding social protection services but very little if any has been covered for workers in war torn countries. All the other vulnerable groups of people such as those living with disability, the poor, women and children were covered but workers were not probably because they have always not been regarded as vulnerable and facing various forms of risks in and outside the work environment. It is that yawning knowledge gap which this study aims to close.

3. Research Methodology

The study employed a multiple case design within the qualitative research paradigm. The design was used to solicit views of workers working in organizations in Tete province. The data that was collected focused on the effects of social protection mechanisms to job satisfaction for workers in armed conflict societies. Snowballing sampling technique was used to select ten organizations that participated in the study. Snowballing sampling technique was further used to choose participants from the ten selected organizations. Initially the researchers identified five people who were in employment during the civil war. The identified employees then referred researchers to other employees who were in employment during the civil war in Mozambique. The process went on until 50 participants were selected. Prior to the research, researchers sought and were granted permission by various organisations for workers to participate in the study. From the 50 participants who were selected, 31 were male while 19 were female. 18 participants were below 14 years of age, while 32 were above 40 years. Respondents had the following educational qualifications: ordinary level and below (n = 14). Diploma (n =18), undergraduate degree (n = 10) and post graduate degree (n =8). Participants comprised (16) human resource management practitioners, (23) supervisors, (4) members of employee representatives and (7) other line managers who deal with employee welfare issues.

Data was collected using semi-structured interview guide which comprised two major sections. The first part of the interview guide collected biographical data while the second part solicited data on social protection systems and mechanisms and the role they play in enhancing job satisfaction among workers in armed conflict societies. An interview was the most preferred data gathering tool because it gave the researcher an opportunity to probe further and get the finer intricacies about the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, the researchers opted to use an interview to collect data because they wanted to individually meet the participants and fully explain to them the purpose of the study. Nyanga and Sibanda (2019) observed that employees in war torn or post torn societies hold almost all strangers

with suspicion hence they need to be assured that the study will not physically and emotionally hurt them. Interviews were conducted at the participants' work places. Responses of the participants were recorded verbatim and, in some cases, where participants consented to it were audio- recorded. The collected data was analyzed using the thematic data analysis technique. Themes and sub-themes were created as the researchers recorded the participants' responses. Researchers had also an opportunity of listening to audio recorded responses and made an in-depth analysis of the responses. Researchers stopped collecting data when they reached the saturation level that is when they were no longer getting any new views and opinions.

4. Findings

The study established that medical/health care services are some of the social protection mechanism which organizations operating in war torn countries can employ to mitigate workers from war related physical and emotional injuries or war related diseases. The provision of health care services by employers helps to boost employees' level of job satisfaction. In war torn countries medical costs are usually exorbitantly high to the extent that most employees fail to access medical services. Participant 7 said, "Medical fees in both private and public hospitals are not affordable, so most people including workers have resorted to seeking medical help from traditional healers." Provision of medical services to employees working in war torn areas make workers develop a positive attitude towards their work, workmates and management. War breeds several health hazards such as elevated blood pressure, which when allowed to go unchecked can cause serious health problems to employees. The fighting between armed forces directly and indirectly cause unprecedented damage to employees' health, hence it is essential to have a health fund or health care service such as an organization based medical clinic or hospital to provide health services to the affected employees. One of the respondents said, "Medical aide or health care services fund is one of the most critical social protection mechanisms that promote job satisfaction among workers in war torn societies." Subsidizing health care services reduces medical costs incurred by employees. The reduction of medical expenses improves job satisfaction among employees working in armed conflict societies. This implies that the provision of social protection services in the form of health care services make employees develop a positive attitude towards their work, organization and management. Nyanga et al (2018) observed that job satisfaction is a critical issue that has the potential of affecting the financial growth and stability of organizations in war torn countries. Companies with low financial growth face challenges of partially or wholly covering war induced medical costs. The findings are also consistent with Ibrahim (2000) who observed that subsidized medical services increase employee motivation and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) article 25 says, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." To help workers working in war torn countries develop a

positive attitude towards their work organizations should provide or subsidize workers' medical expenses.

Armed conflict causes a lot of misery and induces poverty among members of society. War results in the destruction of the economic infrastructure (Nyanga et al 2018) which in turn results in company closure and stunted growth of firms. Armed conflict results in companies failing to pay their employees on time or failing to give them a living wage. Employees may end up getting salaries which cannot meet their basic needs such as food and shelter for their families. Employees usually run out of food because of the destruction of crops, food manufacturing firms and transport infrastructure and closure of shops. Basic food stuffs such as mielie-meal, meat, fruits and vegetables become unaffordable and unavailable. To mitigate the risk of food shortage, employers should employ family feeding program or mechanisms where employees and their relatives are provided with food by their employers and or non-governmental organizations. Free nutritious meals that are given to families in the form of rations make workers develop a positive attitude towards their work. The provision of food reduces the vulnerability of workers and their families to mal-nutritional diseases such as kwashiorkor and marasmus. The findings are consistent with (Kwan 2009) who observed that social security among children can be provided by introducing school feeding programs. It shows that feeding programs can mitigate and reduce social risks which employees in war torn areas get exposed to. Family feeding schemes at household level and/or school level boost job satisfaction among workers in armed conflict areas since they indirectly increase workers' income by adding valuable food packages / incentives to their financial rewards.

The study also found out that the re-construction and / or construction of homes for employees whose homes will have been destroyed by the war is another social protection mechanism organization can employ to boost job satisfaction among workers in armed conflict societies. Organizations can put aside a fund or create an organization based home insurance premium which is lower than the market rate premium which can be used to reconstruct destroyed homes. Participant 4 remarked: "War destroyed employees' homes and or displaced employees, hence there is need to put in place a home insurance system which ensures that in the event of the destruction of an employee's home, the employees do not become a destitute." Building homes for employees whose homes will have been destroyed by the war is a very useful social protection mechanism which employers can put in place to reduce the vulnerability and risks of employees living in dilapidated homes. In war torn countries people and workers experience war induced psycho-social problems which are caused by the destruction of their homes or being displaced from their homes. The reconstruction of employees' destroyed homes propels employee satisfaction and helps to attract and retain competent, skilled and talented staff.

The labour market intervention is one of the social protection mechanisms which organizations can employ to reduce the vulnerability of employees from social risks. Labour market intervention is a situation where employers allow employees to participate in additional personal income generation activities. Such mechanisms augment employees' salaries and hedge employees' salaries from being eroded by war induced inflation. Participant 17 remarked, "Employers should allow employees to engage in alternative income

generation activities such as buying and selling, preparing food to sell on and off campus, knitting jerseys for sale, owning small private businesses such as tuck shops within or outside company premises.” Nyanga et al (2018) observed that employees’ salaries are eroded by inflation which is synonymous with war torn societies. It should however be noted that employees can only be allowed to embark in private businesses which do not pose a conflict of interest with their employers’ businesses. Furthermore, the additional personal economic activities performed by employees should be done during break periods or when the employers’ business will be low. For employees to effectively and efficiently perform their roles of pursuing employer and personal businesses, employers should employ flexible working arrangements or programs such as flextime or compressed work week. Flexible work arrangements make workers achieve both their employer and personal business goals. However, allowing employees to do business within his /her employers’ business breeds psycho-social disorders because workers will not have enough time to rest and participate in recreational and leisure activities. Work overload leads to psycho-social disorders such as stress, high blood pressure and others (Abbasi 2015, Karatepe 2013). According to Altaf and Atif Awan, (2011, p. 127) “Work overload is the main cause of many job-related attitudes such as stress and anxiety which result in poor performance and job dissatisfaction. From research and through common practice, it has been seen that work overload has negative effect on job satisfaction.” It implies that employers should have full control regarding how the inside trading should be managed so that it doesn’t breed adverse effects to the survival and growth of organizations and the health of employees. Furthermore, employees may be allowed to do consultancy services for other companies provided the companies receiving the service will not be doing the same business with their principal employer.

The study also established that the provision of counseling services within or outside the organization by the organization is one of the social protection mechanisms that can be employed to boost job satisfaction among workers in armed conflict societies. Employees in war torn countries experience war induced psycho-social and financial problems, hence the establishment of counseling platforms within the organization help to improve job satisfaction. The findings corroborate (Shoniwa et al 2013, Samanyanga and Mafumbabte 2014, Kaputa et al 2010) who observed that counseling provided by competent professional counselors make profound impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities. Providing counseling services assist employees in armed conflict societies to navigate through war induced difficulties such as displacement of people, death of loved ones, loss of jobs, sexual assaults and psycho-emotional assaults. Participant 19 said, “Counseling is essential because it makes me heal quickly from various forms of psycho-social injuries that I suffer from because of the war.” Participant 8 also reiterated the same view when he remarked, “Counseling is normally not a social protection system but in war torn countries it should be treated as one because it helps in restoring injured, displaced and depressed workers” Counseling employees in war torn countries is a key instrument that help workers navigate their emotions as well as understanding the emotions of their workmates. Companies in war torn countries can establish a division within their human resource management departments that deals with counseling of employees who will have suffered

from war related injuries. Some organizations can outsource counseling services from well trained and registered psychologists or counselors.

The study also established that providing workers and their immediate families with clothes can help to restore workers' lost pride and dignity. Organisations and civil society such as NGOs can supply workers with new or good second-hand clothes because the prices of clothes are beyond rich to a number of white-collar job employees. In illustrating the point participant 12 remarked, "During the war between FRELIMO and RENAMO most workers in Tete town could not afford to buy new clothes so they ended up putting on old patched clothes. I went for over 2 (two) years without buying clothes for myself and my family. Failure to buy food and clothes for myself and my family was the main force which motivated me to leave the country to South Africa to look for a job." Participant 16 said, "Clothes are an essential social protection mechanism for workers in armed conflict society. When NGOs and government give out clothes to the less privileged they also need to consider giving some groups of employees since they are equally less privileged." It implies that armed conflict causes a serious economic and financial difficulty to employees. Organisations can also include clothes on the list of workers' benefits so as to ensure that workers become presentable to both the internal and the external customers.

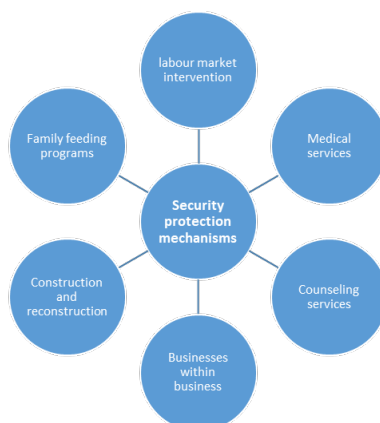


Figure 1. Social protection mechanisms that propel job satisfaction

5. Conclusion

The study reached the following conclusions: firstly, the study concluded that medical/health care services are some of the key social protection mechanisms that enhance job satisfaction among workers in armed conflict societies. Giving employees working in armed conflict societies free or subsidized medical care insurance and government or employer assisted education service help to boost employee morale and level of satisfaction. Secondly, it was concluded that family feeding programs where workers and their immediate family members are given free nutritious food by either their employers, or government or non-governmental organisations propel the level of satisfaction for workers in armed conflict areas. Thirdly, the re-construction and construction of homes for workers affected by war also positively

influence job satisfaction. Shelter is one of the basic needs which all workers need; hence providing them with such a need make them develop a positive attitude towards their work and the organization. Fourthly, it was concluded that labour market intervention is one of the key social protection mechanisms that can be used to boost worker morale and job satisfaction. The war environment disrupts several work activities and disbursement of workers' salaries, so allowing workers to engage in other income generating projects help to propel their level of satisfaction. Employees need flexible work arrangements interventions so that they get time to attend to their social problems and engage in other socio-economic activities to augment their meager salaries and wages. Fifthly, the study concluded that providing counseling services within or outside the organization propel job satisfaction for workers in armed conflict societies. Workers experience war induced stress hence they require emotional and psychological support.

6. Limitations and Future research

This study is essential in that it informs policy formulation and also provides human resource and line managers with relevant skills and knowledge of managing social protection systems for workers working in armed conflict societies. The study, however had the limitation of covering a small geographical area, Tete province yet all the provinces in Mozambique were in a war situation. The study area might not be representative enough; hence future studies should cover a wider geographical area. Furthermore, future research can focus on the effects of social protection mechanisms on job satisfaction of workers in armed conflict societies by gender, age and educational levels.

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