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**“Working Behind Closed Doors”: A Study on the
Organisation of Namibian Domestic Workers**

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AGRIPPINE NDEMUKULUNGA NANDJAA

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Members of the Examining Committee:

Dr Freek Schiphorst

Dr Lee Pegler

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

Inquiries:

Postal address:

Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460

Fax: +31 70 426 0799

Contents

<i>List of Acronyms</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>vii</i>
Chapter 1 . Domestic Workers in Namibia and the Necessity of Organising Collectively	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. The Research Problem	2
1.3. Objectives	3
1.4. Research Questions	3
1.4.1. Main Question	3
1.4.2. Sub-Questions	4
1.5. Structure of the Paper	4
Chapter 2 . Agency, Power, and Solidarity: A Critical Component for Domestic Workers Source of Power to Organize	5
2.1. Introduction	5
2.2. Source of power that domestic workers can explore	6
2.2.1. Structural Power	6
2.2.2. Societal Power /Coalition Power	7
2.2.3. Institutional Power	8
2.2.4. Associational Power	9
2.3. Agency; critical to source of power	10
2.4. Empowerment and Power	11
2.5. Solidarity	12
2.6. Conclusion	13
Chapter 3 Methodology	14
3.1. Introduction	14
3.2. Method of Data Collection	14
3.3. Data collection Process	15
3.4. Conclusion	17
Chapter 4 Understanding the Labour Movement in Namibia Landscape	18
4.1. Introduction	18
4.2. Historical Background	18
4.2. Division and Consequences	19

4.3. Domestic Workers Unions in Namibia	20
4.4. Understanding the Heterogeneity of Domestic Workers.	20
4.5. Conclusion	21
Chapter 5 Level of Sources of Power in Namibia, The Opportunities and Challenges for Domestic Workers Unions	22
5.1. Introduction	22
5.2. Assessing Workers Sources of Power in Namibia.	22
5.2.1. Associational Power	22
5.2.2. Institutional Power	24
5.2.3. Societal Power	25
5.3. Challenges against the Application of Workers Sources of Power in Namibia	27
5.3.1. Structural Power: The Lack of Workplace and Marketplace Bargaining power.	27
5.3.2. Poverty, Lack of Trust in DWs Unions and Cost of Advocacy	29
5.4. Improving the Domestic Workers Unions Capacity in Exploring Workers' Sources of Power	31
5.4.1. Unified front and avoid been affiliated to the ruling party or the opposition	31
5.4.2. Empowerment Initiative to Address Lack of Structural Power	32
5.4.3. Decentralization of Domestic Workers Desk At Ministry of Labor	33
5.5. Conclusion	33
Chapter 6 Conclusion and Recommendations	34
6.1. Introduction	34
6.2. DWs Union in Namibia and Level of Sources of Power	34
6.3. Challenges against Successful Harnessing of Workers Sources of Power by the Unions	35
6.4. How Best To Address the Challenges?	35
6.5. Recommendations	36
References	37
Appendices	44

List of Acronyms

CBO	Community Base Organisations
CDW	Child Domestic Work
DWs	Domestic Workers
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GRA	Government Reserved Area
IDFED	International Federation of Domestic Workers
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
LaRRI	Labour Resources and Research Institute
LRO	Labour Relation Officer
MTUC	Malaysia Trade Union Congress
NAFTU	Namibia Federation of Trade Unions
NANLO	Namibia National Labor Organization
NANTU	Namibia National Teacher's Union
NCCU	Namibia Cabin Crew Union
NDAWU	Namibia Domestic and Allied Union
NFPU	Namibia Football Players Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSA	Namibia Statistic Agency
NPSM	Namibia People's Social Movement
NUNW	National Union Workers of Namibia
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TUCNA	Trade Union Congress of Namibia
TUN	Teachers Union of Namibia
UIHENI	Union for Institutional and Household Employees of Namibia
UN	United Nation

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Abstract

This study's primary focus is to bring to the fore of discourse the importance of workers' sources of power that the domestic workers' unions in Namibia can explore to organise and mobilise enough support for the actualisation of the minimum wage and decent working conditions for domestic workers. In particular, how they can sustain the gains of their agitation for domestic workers in Namibia. In achieving the objectives of this study, a qualitative methodological approach was adopted to collect data through semi-structured interviews, focus groups discussion and working with the text. With the help of the conceptual framework that comprises of agency, empowerment, power, and solidarity as data analysing tools, this study was able to identify the challenges that can hinder the domestic workers unions in Namibia to tap into the workers' sources of power to improve their capacity to organise and mobilise. The study found that out of the four sources of power, only institutional power has a fairly strong presence in Namibian domestic workers movement. The associational power is very weak and would have benefited from the societal power through coalition forming if only the domestic workers unions would not have been into unproductive rivalry. However, the biggest obstacle to harnessing worker sources of power in Namibia is the lack of structural power which is further reinforced by poverty, lack of trust in the union leadership as well as lack of funding for the unions to operate. The study discovered that there is hope in strengthening domestic workers union positions in the country if the members of the unions are empowered to have access to alternative income that will allay their fear of losing their jobs to their employers who have unrestricted access to alternative sources of labour. Besides, the two unions must come together to present a unified front to be taken serious by other unions and stakeholder, form alliance with non-union social force to address burning fundamental societal issues in a bid to establish coalition and solidarity. Most importantly the Ministry of Labour should establish branch offices in various informal settlements to give access to DWs that might want to report their employers as well as NUNW should play a role in the issue of funding and international support for the DW movement.

Relevance to Development Studies

In the era of women empowerment, many women that traditionally stay at home to take care of household chores have now become working women which in turn make demands for domestic workers to be on the high side. Unfortunately, despite the importance of the role of domestic's workers in the nation economy the rights of domestic workers are habitually violated by the employers because of the nature of their work it is hard for them to organise in a union. This research is relevant to development studies because it contributes to the discourse around the challenges as well as the opportunities of domestic workers organising like other workers in the other sectors that were able to make demands for better wages and working conditions.

Keywords

Domestic Workers, Sources of Power, Trade Unions, NDAWU, UIHENI, Organising, Associational Power, Structural Power, Societal Power, Institutional Power.

Chapter 1 . Domestic Workers in Namibia and the Necessity of Organising Collectively

1.1. Introduction

Throughout history, labour unions and other forms of collective organization have always depended on collective voice and bargaining agreements as well as other forms of collective interest's representation as the indispensable conduit for realizing decent working environments for workers (Lewin, 2017; Hoque et al., 2017; Troy, 2016). According to Hobden (2015), traditionally, the primary purpose of forming unions is to ensure that there is a balance of power in the relationship between employers and employees. The employer retains the power to hire and fire which eventually affects the worker's livelihood because they could be cut off from the source of their income. However, the workers also retain the power to withdraw their labour by organising themselves in large numbers in situations where the employers did not meet up to or comply with the demands of the workers (Hobden, 2015:2).

Unfortunately, domestic workers (DWs) who account for a significant percentage of the workforce in informal employment globally are not only traditionally not captured in the labour movement's efforts in collective bargaining and organising, they are also excluded from the scope of many countries labour legislations because they work for private households, often without clear terms of employment, and difficult to monitor (Chen, 2011; Oelz, 2014; Schwenken, 2017). The 2017 ILO report estimated that there are more than 67 million DWs globally, with more than 80% women and about 11.5 million of them international migrants. Moreover, the vast majority of DWs are from disadvantaged groups, and a lot of them lack sufficient access to necessary protection (ILO, 2017:1).

Notwithstanding of the challenges, in recent years trade unions and DWs have made progress on the path of ending abuse and exploitation that is tantamount to modern-day slavery (ITUC, 2016:7). They have successfully bargained for protection and rights that include access to social protection, minimum wage, leave and fair working hours, just like other workers in the formal sector. Most especially, they have been successful in organising and mobilising in the building of collective power which is a requisite for successful bargaining for change in their working conditions from a deplorable one to a decent one (Hobden, 2015; ITUC, 2016; ILO, 2017).

As a result of DWs organising themselves through collective bargaining and by dropping the toga of unorganised sector, more than 15 million DWs now have the chance to enjoy more rights and protections. This is reflected in the fact that 22 countries have ratified the ILO Convention 189 on decent work for DWs with 48 others committed to labour reforms to address the DWs needs for decent work (ITUC, 2016:7). Namibia is one the 48 countries that have not ratified the ILO Convention 189 but has regulations relating to DWs under the Labour Act that guarantee DWs the right to join the union, to have a minimum

wage, maternity leave, a 45- hour week, and other rights (ITUC, 2016:22). Although, DWs have achieved significant progress globally as regards rights, the focus of this paper is to assess the sustainability of the progress of the DWs ability in Namibia not only to organize and negotiate but also to ensure that employers conform to labour standards, most especially on the issue of minimum wage.

The choice of Namibia as a case study was influenced by the fact that Namibia is one of the few countries that categorize domestic work under formal employment as against the habitual classification under informal work (LaRRI, 2016:2). Besides, the nationalist struggle for independence of Namibia cannot be dissociated from the agitation of organised labour against the colonial masters (Klerck, 2016; Jauch, 2018). Since there was empirical evidence of strong labour movement in Namibia, it is essential to know what kind of solidarity the DWs unions enjoy from mainstream national workers unions in the country as well as what lesson can the Namibian domestic workers unions learn from similar movements in other countries that explore various worker sources of power to mobilise their members in organising. This will enable us to put into perspective the challenges and opportunities which different sources of power offer DWs unions in Namibia to organise themselves and to achieve the desired outcomes.

In achieving the objectives of this study, a qualitative methodological approach was adopted through semi-structured interviews, focus groups discussion and working with the text as the source of data. With the help of the conceptual framework that comprises of agency, empowerment, power, and solidarity as data analysing tools, this study aims to identify the challenges that can hinder the DWs unions in Namibia to tap into the workers sources of power to improve their capacity to organise and mobilise.

1.2. The Research Problem

Despite the fact the domestic work is recognised as formal employment by the Namibian government since independence (LaRRI, 2016:2), DWs form one of the most vulnerable groups that work in precarious conditions and receive a very poor wage. The Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers Union (NDAWU) acknowledges that low wages is one of the significant problems facing domestic workers (Solidar, 2013:11) despite the importance of domestic workers to the Namibia economy. Across all industries and sectors in Namibia, DWs earn the lowest wage of N\$1,334 (\$92.5) per month with the highest average wage earned by those working in the professional, technical, and scientific sector at N\$19,907 (\$1,380) per month (NSA, 2016:49).

However, after severe agitation and campaigning by various stakeholders, the government introduced a national minimum wage and conditions of employment for DWs on 1 April 2015 (LaRRI, 2016:2). According to the government Gazzet released by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation in September 2017, the minimum wage for DWs is N\$1,502.05¹, N\$346.89 per week, N\$69.37 per day, N\$8.67 per hour and N\$43.35 per day for DWs that works on part-time hours that is less than five hours a day

¹ Based on the current exchange rate \$N1,505 minimum wage is equivalent to \$104 per month

excepts on a Sunday or public holiday. The law also stipulated that DWs that work overtime be entitled to the minimum N\$17.34 per hour, as well as payment, should be made to DWs that accompany the employers to vacation and holidays based on hours spent with the employer offering care work (New Era, 2017).

Nonetheless, the approval of the minimum wage exposed the fragmentation of the Namibian DWs movement. On the one hand, the National Domestic and Allied Workers Union (NDAWU) welcomed the minimum wage for DWs in the country with the hope of continued engagement with the government to improve the working conditions of their members. On the other hand, the Union for Institutional and Household Employees of Namibia (UIHENI) countered the endorsement with a strong protest covered by various media houses rejecting the minimum wage by the government. UIHENI maintained that the government had no right without consulting with all the relevant unions before making any announcement. The grievance of UIHENI was that the announcement already led to more than 70 of her members to lose their jobs. These are members that are earning beyond the approved minimum wage before the government benchmark, and the employers just saw it as an opportunity to employ cheap labour (Heita, 2015; Kahuirika, 2015).

Unfortunately, the Namibian domestic workers do not have a united front to speak collectively as a group there are splinters groups. The implication of this is the non-implementation of the minimum wage for domestic workers by many employers in the country, in particular, those in rural areas even after two years of its pronouncement. Without a doubt, DWs in Namibia have progressively gained rights recognised by law regarding improved working conditions (Selçuk, 2005:39-40). The problem remains in their ability to organise, negotiate – and, through organising, to make sure that employers will conform to labour standards.

1.3. Objectives

The objective of this study is to explore the potential sources of power in precarious work that domestic workers could tap into to organise themselves and explore whether such sources are available to domestic workers in Namibia. It is also the objective of this study to investigate how best the DWs unions can tackle the challenges that limit their capacity to mobilise and organise effectively.

1.4. Research Questions

1.4.1. Main Question

- How can the domestic workers unions in Namibia organize and mobilise enough support for the actualisation of the minimum wage and decent working conditions for domestic workers through the worker sources of power?

1.4.2. Sub-Questions

- What are the sources of power applicable or already in use by the domestic workers unions in Namibia in organising towards achieving their goals on minimum wage and decent working conditions?
- What are the challenges that can hinder the identified sources of power to improve the Namibia domestic workers unions' capacity to organise and mobilised towards achieving their goals on minimum wage and decent working conditions?
- What can be done to address the challenges that hinder the domestic workers unions in using the identified sources of power in Namibia?

1.5. Structure of the Paper

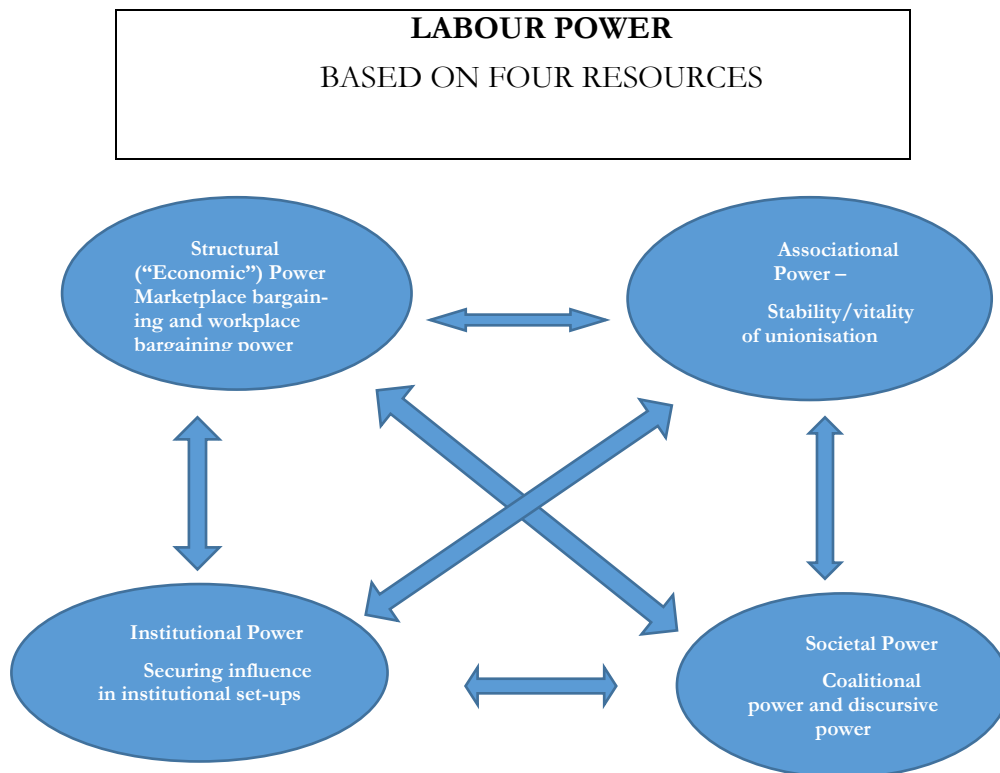
In the first chapter of this paper, we discuss the research problem and present the research objectives and research questions. The remaining part of the paper is organised in five chapters, and the second chapter discusses the concepts of worker sources of power that as well as identifying the available source of power that the DWs can tap into for mobilisation. In this chapter, the concepts of agency, power and empowerment and solidarity are also discussed concerning the source of power. The focus of chapter 3 is on the methodology and process of data collection for the study while chapter 4 paints the background of the situation of the DWs in Namibia. Chapter 5 discusses the findings along the research questions thematic. In chapter 6, I revisited the research questions and draw a conclusion based on the findings.

Chapter 2 . Agency, Power, and Solidarity: A Critical Component for Domestic Workers Source of Power to Organize

2.1. Introduction

This study adopts the concept of the sources of power to examine the different ways that the domestic workers’ unions in Namibia can mobilise towards the realisation of decent wage and working conditions. The power resources approach has gained substantial attention from various scholars in the last two decades to explain the successes and failures of various labour movement campaigns and agitation for workers’ rights. The various scholarships (Wright, 2000; Silver, 2003; Chun, 2009; Brookes, 2013) on power resources have led to different typologies. The types of power include structural power (influenced by the location of the workers in economic system), coalitional and societal power (as a result of forming alliances with stakeholders that are outside the workplace), and institutional power (the ability to make use of existing laws as well as informal norms), and associational power (addressing the workers collective organizations).

Figure 1: The Power Resources Approach



Source: Adapted from Michael et al. (2018:4)

However, Webster (2015:3-4) went further to argue that the typology of the source of power already identified in the literature of labour movement can be best understood under the classification of the traditional source of workers power and the new sources of power. For Webster, structural power (market-place bargaining power and workplace bargaining power) and associational power (the ability to form an association to influence government policies and influence the political process) are all traditional forms of worker powers.). Regardless of the typology, the relationship that exist between the four sources power as demonstrated in the Figure 1 above is not only complex, but at times conflicting, and should not be considered merely as an add-on (Strategic Unionism, 2013 cited in Schmalz et al. 2018:115). This implies that while each source of power is mutually inclusive to each other, they can also be explored independently even when one or two sources of power are absent or when there is no capacity to explore. In the next section we will examine what these sources of powers entail. First, we look at the structural power.

2.2. Source of power that domestic workers can explore

2.2.1. Structural Power

According to Wright (2000: 962) and Silver (2003:13), structural power can be understood as the ability of workers to influence their employers as a result of the location they occupy in the economy of the country. Silver distinguishes two subtypes, the work-place and marketplace bargaining power. For market-place bargaining power, Silver argued that this comes into play when workers have the capacity to force the hand of the employers because there is no or little alternative of workers with the same skills to be recruited to replace the workers when they decide to withdraw their labour, while workers who do so can survive on income sources that are not tied to wages earned from the employers (Silver, 2003:13). The second subtype of structural power is the workplace bargaining power that speaks to the ability of workers to shut down the whole system of production because they are profoundly and tightly integrated into the process of production (Silver, 2003:13). Workplace bargaining power goes beyond ordinary industrial action; it is an industrial action that impedes the employer's actions (Selwyn, 2007:549) because it is tactical and selective (Juravich, 2007:21).

Judging from the two subtypes of the structural source of power the “work-place bargaining power is perhaps the most direct and intuitive form of labour power” (Brookes, 2015:183). This is because it entails physical actions and sometimes inactions to disrupt the status-quo of employer’s operations. One typical example of workplace bargaining power was the domestic workers spontaneous strike in Pune, Maharashtra India, against the dismissal of one of their members that have served her employer for many years even though, the dismissal added fuel to the fire of existing burning anger against low wages they suffered (Gothoskar, 2005:51). However, the Pune example of workplace bargaining power was sustained by the swift movement of some left oriented activist that help them to convert DWs spontaneous reaction to an organised one that is sustainable after the DWs confronted both the employer and the domestic

worker that was hired to replace the one that was fired and as result declared a strike (ibid.)².

2.2.2. Societal Power /Coalition Power

As the labour movement evolved over the years so are their strategies evolving with novel ideas on how the unions can organise and mobilise. One of such strategies is coalition or alliance building, where the unions look beyond their traditional networks to established cooperative relationships with different community organisations. However, the terminologies of ‘community unionism’ and social movement are used by various scholars (Cranford et al., 2005; Wills, 2001) to describe the efforts of unions to forge alliances with the non-labour community groups that look to draw support beyond the workplace to encounter the prevalence of precarious work. Tattersall (2013) posits that the potential of the coalition is enormous, and it is beyond advancing the goals of the union, it is a source of power that offers the opportunity to achieve new sets of social change that may perhaps also contribute to the reinvention of unions.

For Tattersall (2013:2) “social isolation and membership decline make it ever more necessary for unions to unite with other social forces if they are to advance a broad vision of economic and social justice successfully. If unions are going to survive this crisis of power, they need to reinvent themselves”. This is a shift to a movement-oriented approach that departs from the traditional tactic of the union that follow the path of strike actions to address precarity of work (Fine, 2007:342) and focuses on developing an alternative source of association power (Chun, 2009). However, building alliance is not enough as suggested by Clawson (2003:194), it is essential that the labour union must fuse into the movement and blur the line that will make it challenging to differentiate. For example, if the movement is an immigrant issue or woman issue.

This is an approach that is plausible for adoption by the domestic workers unions in Namibia because there are lots of social issues that intersect with workers minimum wages. For example, a movement on food security or rights to food or perhaps police brutality or corruption led by the union in collaboration with non-labour movement. Although it is not a given that such a movement will succeed because lots of unions still hold onto their old ways of mobilising, which depends solely on industrial actions. Besides, the clash of interests between community groups and unions is capable of thwarting any sustainable and meaningful partnerships between the labour and community organisations and non-labour movement (Wills, 2001:471; Tattersall, 2013). Besides, the emergence of internal conflicts within the rank and file of unions can also undermine any successful implementation of the alternative model of organisation most especially when it entails fault lines such as ethnicity, migration and race (Chun, 2016:174). While in Namibia, the domestic workers union might encounter the

² A domestic worker named Khandarebai was fired by her employer and this infuriated her colleagues working in the same neighbourhood. Other domestic’s workers responded angrily by first confronting the woman domestic worker that was hired to replace Khandarebai to the extent that they almost roughed up the woman as well as the employer. As a result, all domestic workers in the neighbourhood refuse to go to work and make it difficult for any replacement in a massive protest

challenges of internal conflicts it is highly unlikely to face these fault line challenges.

Apparently, the coalition building with community organizations is an essential strategy that the Namibia domestic workers union can adopt to build a positive-sum coalition as against the traditional transactional coalitions because a positive-sum coalition as suggested by Tattersall (2013) will build both the community organizations and the union and achieve social change as well. Besides, the unions stand the chances of building a new political climate that can set them on the winning paths on various issues that they usually would have lost without the alliances. Positive-sum coalitions build the power of unions and community organisations while also achieving social change. A typical example of alliance building that the Namibia domestic workers unions can learn from is from the waste pickers in Colombia who formed an alliance with other organizations both at the national and international level that in turn gave tremendous visibility to their demands which helped them in strengthening their bargaining position with both local and national authorities (Arbizaid, 2015:6-7).

2.2.3. Institutional Power

The understanding of the sources of power of domestic workers in Namibia is not limited to their location in the economic system and their capacity to ally with both union and non-union community organisations. The institutional power context is equally important at this juncture because the assemblage of laws and regulations as well as procedures, practices are deeply rooted in the structure of both the formal and informal rules that are important to the understanding of the power dynamics since institutions themselves are products of the ongoing and past power struggles (Mahoney and Thelen, 2009). Institutions are the main elements that hinder or embolden organised labour since industrial relations laws, the court system, state policy, for example, shape the worker's legal rights, employment conditions and their relationships with employers (Soskice and Hall, 2001). The implication of this is that the opportunity for unions to explore the institutional source of power depends on the institutional arrangement in their countries.

Therefore, institutional power as defined by Brookes is “the capacity of workers to influence the behaviour of an employer by invoking the formal or informal rules that structure their relationship and interactions” (2015:188). Brookes (2015) maintained that institutional power could be explored by suing the employer for violating the existing labour laws or in a subtle way of threatening a breakdown in the established cooperative relationship that is in existence between the management and the union which is the bedrock of the employer's productivity. Although the institutional source of power is not limited to the national institutions, labour unions can explore the regulations of international institutions that their countries government are state parties' signatories to international laws. For example, the European Union regulations have offered protection for workers in some cases beyond their countries of origin (Juravich, 2007:18). While in Namibia, institutions offer protection to domestic workers in terms of minimum wages and decent working conditions, the unions can also

explore the institutional source of power by invoking international legal instrument if the national institutions are not strong enough to protect the domestic workers interest.

2.2.4. Associational Power

Another critical source of power is the collective organisations of workers to speak in one voice against undesirable working conditions by forming an association or organisation. Ordinarily, for many years “labour organizing and domestic work usually do not mix” (Viajar, 2017:197), and domestic workers were considered as ‘unorganizable’ (Ford, 2004:103) because they work behind closed doors as well as the non-recognition of domestic work as a formal source of employment. However, the label of domestic workers as ‘unorganizable is a myth’ (Ford 2004, 103) and such myth has been dismantled by the formation of more than 198 domestic workers unions, associations and other forms of collective organisations (Viajar, 2017:197).

The example of the women domestic workers in Pune, India that I discussed earlier comes to mind in elaborating how Namibian domestic workers unions can explore associational power for the realisation of decent working conditions. Initially, the first strike in 1980 by the women domestic workers in Pune was spontaneous without organising, however, after the strike they started to organise and grow in number that makes up to 600,000 members across even beyond Pune. According to Gothoskar (2005:52), as a result of collective organisation, the once voiceless women domestic workers organised strikes actions more than ten times between 1980 and 1996 on different working conditions issues. Gothoskar (2005) maintained that as a result of the collective organisation by the women domestic workers, “a great deal of progress could be secured due to these collective actions, as women domestic workers were able to negotiate their wages and conditions and terms of work” (Gothoskar, 2005:52).

However, the Namibian main body of workers can also help in organising the domestic workers by emulating the Malaysia Trade Union Congress. “Through a collaborative project with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the MTUC embarked on domestic workers’ organising and labour policy reform agenda in 2005” (Viajar, 2018:8). To ensure the successful implementation of the project, MTUC formed a Domestic Workers Desk saddled with the responsibilities of coordinating the programs and activities of the policy reform agenda (ibid.).

It is worthy to note that the MTUC mainly uses its institutional and societal sources of power to expand representation of domestic workers, seen as a prerequisite for building associational power in the sector (Viajar, 2018:13-14). The MTCU ensures that its campaign alters laws which inhibit organising of domestic workers, for example, the numbers of days off from work (ibid.). This implies that the effectiveness of the national trade union centre with a more substantial coverage leading the campaign in Namibia is more likely to force the hands of the employers to comply with the demand of the domestic workers for decent working conditions.

2.3. Agency; critical to source of power

At the core of mobilising domestic workers is the decision of domestic workers to participate in the worker's movement or union to speak collectively against their precarious working conditions. This decision to speak out against injustice is deeply rooted in the concept of agency.

Agency can merely be described as the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices (Kristiansen, 2014), or intentionally to exert influence on one's life. (Bandura 2006; Hitlin and Elder, 2006). Similarly, Hewson (2010) argued that there are three main characteristics of human beings that lead to the agency: rationality, power, and intentionality. Hewson maintained that while human beings act with intention and are goal oriented, their ability to act on such intentions and goals differs because of differences in resources and abilities that make some to have greater agency (power) than others (Hewson, 2010:10). Nonetheless, many scholars (Kristiansen, 2014) have argued that what we considered as intentionally, or free choice is not really free, the intention and choices are limited and shaped by the institutions, social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, customs, among others that are components of social structure that determine or limit an agent and his or her decisions. This implies that the construction of individual agency is situated within the social context that provides both opportunities and constraints (Hitlin and Elder, 2006).

For clarity, let me make a simple analogy. When we enter into a restaurant, the dish we order is guided and determined by the restaurant menu, and in some cases, we are forced to change our order when told that the dish we ordered is out of stock for the day. While we decide to enter a particular restaurant, whether a general one or specialised one such as Chinese, Italian, African, Caribbean, Latin, the restaurant menu at the end of the day shaped our choice. It does not matter if we have made a prior decision by free choice to enter a Japanese restaurant to eat a typical Japanese dish whether we will end up eating Shushi at the restaurant is subjected to the restaurant. Although, we have the choice to look for other restaurant or decided to go back home to cook depending on our capacity to do so. Similar to the restaurant analogy, the DW opportunity for agency is structured and since DW and the DW experiences at the workplace are not homogenous, the level of agency depends on the individual ability as well as the institutions, environment, and situations that give room for opportunity for agency which is socially structured (Moen; 2013:192-193 cited by Kristiansen, 2014:4).

However, as suggested by Hewson (2010) there are different types of agency, the individual, proxy, and collective agency (2010:13-17). From Hewson's point of view, individual agency is when a person acts on his/her behalf, while the proxy agency is when an individual or groups acts on behalf of someone else. Collective agency occurs when people act together, such as a social movement. This kind of typology as posited by Hewson is very crucial in the understanding of the resistance or acceptance of Namibia DWs willingness to participate in the union or allow other non-domestic workers unions, community-based organisations, NGOs or IGOs to fight as a proxy towards the realisation of decent working conditions for DWs in the country. The concept of agency is highly germane in unveiling the process of how DW are using different

sources of power to mobilise and organise themselves in Namibia. Besides, the human agency has been proven to be an asset in progressive change but also used to endure and persist scenarios brought about by precarious working conditions. The implication of this is that the agency is a double-edged sword that serves as catalysts as well as inhibitors towards the realisation of DWs organising them-selves (Connor, 2011:3).

2.4. Empowerment and Power

Without been grandiloquent, it has been established that DWs lack bargaining power that is required to be in control of how they work and the terms of their employment with their employers (Mousaid et al., 2017). As a result, they become a vulnerable group in the society and in order to address their vulnerability they need to be empowered (Chaney, 1991; Schwenken, 2017). For Mousaid et al. (2017:2), “bargaining power refers to the ability of domestic workers to enforce their rights and influence their quality of work”. However, one of the main strategies of empowering DWs to fight for decent working conditions is through collective voice by organising into unions to have the bargaining power that individuals lack. Empowering people means to make them aware of their rights and show them how to defend such rights and how strong they can be if united in solidarity (UN, 2014:51).

Be that as it may, empowerment, just like the majority of the concepts in social sciences, is not just a contested concept but also a complex idea which cannot be represented by a single definition or measured with a specific yardstick (Gibson 1991). Nonetheless, Parpart et al. (2003:4) argued that, it is merely a waste of time to spend energy trying to define empowerment with a definite definition, instead empowerment ought to be understood as a multidimensional social process (economic, political, sociological, psychological) that supports individuals to take charge of their lives.

For Parpart and her co-authors, to empower implies the ability to exercise power over situations because inclusion in the society is determined by whether one has power or not. As a result, to gain such power going by Wolf’s argument (1999: 4-8) the DWs unions in Namibia will have to engage in a process that can lead to significant social transformation because power relations are deeply entrenched in institutional, material and symbolic/linguistic contexts. The relationship between power and empowerment is tantamount to the relationship of Siamese twins because empowerment did not only make people powerful, it also enables them to actively participate in the activities of the society (UN, 2014:10). As a result of active participation in the society, they will develop the capacity to address crucial issues that are inimical to their well-being. In agreement with Parpart et al., (2003:3) it doesn’t matter the outcome of empowering individuals, whether the empowerment is about gaining skills, making decisions or developing consciousness, all the empowerment process takes place within the structural limitations of both the informal and formal institutions and discursive practices which are extremely rooted in the power structure.

According to Page and Czuba (1999), the discussion around empowerment should consider two main factors. The first one is that empowerment demands

that power is changeable because if power is inelastic to change, then empowerment is neither possible nor conceivable in any meaningful way. Furthermore, the notion of empowerment is deeply rooted in the thinking that power can grow beyond those that are wielding power (Page and Czuba, 1999). However, in most circumstances, power is often connected with the ability to make others realise own goals and desires, notwithstanding of others' desire. Thinking about power in this manner signifies the conception of power as a zero-sum which implies that unless the influential people wielding power gives it up, power will always remain the hands of the powerful. While this is one of the standpoints that power can be understood and probably adopted by vulnerable people such as DWs, it will be narrow, although valid, narrative limiting the understanding of power to domination and control (Page & Czuba, 1999). The implication of accepting this linear narrative of power as a given is that DWs venturing into organising themselves into unions to collectively bargain for decent working conditions from both the state and their employers is an exercise in futility. It means no matter how the DW in Namibia exercise their collective agency that serves as a source of strength to speak out against work-place abuse and precarious working conditions and challenge the power of the constituted authorities will not be successful.

It is essential to reject the impression that power is unchangeable as suggested by Lips (1991) because power does not exist in isolation as its existence is situated within the relationship between people. This means that, since power is established within relationships it can also be altered (Page & Czuba, 1999). The DWs cannot organise themselves that empowered their employers to exercise power and domination over them when they demand better working condition, but this can be altered in a way when they organised themselves.

2.5. Solidarity

The attention given to the concept of solidarity by social science scholars continue to increase since it first came to prominence through the 1893 work of Emile Durkheim, "The Division of Labour in Society" (Wilde, 2007:1). Solidarity is a concept that mostly appealed to revolutionaries among other ideas such as fraternity and community that are also common in the revolutionary movement (Wilde, 2007). Solidarity tends to dislodge other related concepts (Steinvort, 1999:29) "as it conjures up positive images of the strength of togetherness and community, but in practice, it is experienced by groups when confronted by real or perceived threat from other groups" (Wilde, 2004:1). Today programmes and platforms of political parties and associations often appeal to liberty, equality and solidarity, and though it is difficult to define what exactly "solidarity" means, there is a general understanding that it is used for paying at least a verbal tribute to a non-individualistic, non-competitive, and non-exclusive ideal of behaviour (Steinvort, 1999:29). Since labour unions foundation was based on solidarity, the effectiveness of such unions will be determined by how they conceptualise solidarity and by extension have a significant impact of the lives of workers that are in precarious employment.

2.6. Conclusion

It is without a doubt that the concepts of agency, empowerment and power, and solidarity helped us to have clarity and a comprehensive perspective as regards to whether the DWs have the potential to draw from the different sources of power available to the labour movement as discussed in this chapter. In particular how they can tap into the potency of associational, coalition, the structural and institutional power to alter the dominant employer and institutional power relations that are emboldened by the societal normalisation of discrimination against DW.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This study used qualitative methods for its data collection of both primary and secondary data. While interviews and focus group discussions were used in collecting data to answer the research questions, the foundation of answering the questions was set through comprehensive literature review of existing texts to identify the different sources of power that the DWs unions in Namibia can explore to effectively organize themselves towards the realization of decent working conditions for their members. In this chapter, the discussion focuses on the methods of data collection, the process and tools of data collection as well as the selection of respondents.

3.2. Method of Data Collection

The viability of adopting existing data has been substantiated by some scholars (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009; Creswell, 2009). Moreover, exploring existing data offers a practical alternative when conducting research with limited time and resources (Creswell, 2009:56). O'Leary (2010) argues that when exploring pre-existing texts, the first step is to establish a checklist of relevant text and identify the approach of accessing the text while being conscious of addressing the issue of bias and credibility in the text. According to O'Leary, the most critical aspect of dealing with pre-existing text is for the researcher to have a clear understanding of what he/she is looking for in the text as well as to identify ethical issues that might be inherent in the texts (O'Leary, 2010:222). Exploring pre-existing texts for this study depend mainly on published and non-published texts from different journal articles, official reports by Namibia government, ILO, UN, newspapers, magazines, and academic books.

Also, primary qualitative data were collected in the fieldwork carried out in Namibia through the interview and focus group discussion. The choice of conducting qualitative fieldwork is not only because it is feasible and addresses the research questions, it is also within my ability. This is consistent with O'Leary's (2010) argument that, before a researcher adopts a research method, the researcher must first consider the feasibility of the study and if the research method is within the ability of the researcher. Most importantly the research method adopted must be viable in answering the research questions. Besides the qualitative approach of analysis enabled the researcher to play an active role during the data collection that a questionnaire might not guarantee, offer a space for flexibility to adjust the research design on the field as a result of unanticipated situations. To address the research questions, interviews sessions were organised for members of different trade unions as well as government officials and representatives of NGOs, in Namibia. A set of semi-structured interview questions were constructed as a guide to ensure that the participants of the interview sessions did not only stay on track and address the critical components of the research, it also allows the respondents to express themselves freely.

It is essential to hear both the views of DWs that have not joined the union as well as those that have joined the union. Therefore, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted for each group each, one each for male and female DWs making four FGDs in total. FGDs encourages participants to share experiences and interact, give room to seek further clarification on issues that are not clear (Belzile & Öberg, 2012). This approach offered a rare opportunity for the researcher to access more information and gave the researcher the close opportunity to varieties of experiences of domestic workers since their experiences are not homogenous.

With the research questions and objectives in mind, this study adopted both snowball sampling technique to assemble the DWs and purposive sampling techniques for the key informants. The purposive sampling method is most useful when data required for the study can only be acquired from a specific source (O'Leary, 2010). The population sample of this study is therefore made up of one representative each from NDAWU, UIHENI, NUWN, Legal Assistance Centre, Ministry of Labour, and twenty-nine domestic workers for the focus group discussions. The table below shows the frequency of participants of the study data collection process.

Table 1: frequency of participants of the study data collection process.

N0 of Participants	Method of Data Collection	Membership with Union	Gender	Category
8	FGD	Yes	Female	DWs
5	FGD	No	Male	DWs
4	FGD	No	Female	DWs
5	FGD	Yes	Male	DWs
1	Interview	Yes	Female	NDAWU leadership
1	Interview	Yes	Female	UIHENI leadership
1	Interview	No	Female	Government
1	Interview	No	Male	NGO

Source: Field work, July-August 2018

In total, thirty-two respondents participated in the process of data collection, however, it is worthy to note that all the DWs that participated in the study falls under the DWs typology of live-out. Only four of the DWs had previously worked as a live-in DW before, all effort to see at least one DW that is presently working as a live-in to participate in the study failed. As a result, the previous experiences of the live-in DWs were considered to give insights into the plights of the live-in DWs otherwise the representation of data would have addressed the plights of live-out DWs only.

3.3. Data collection Process

I started the process of collecting primary data for this study before I left for the field. After identifying critical informants for the interview, letters were sent to the Ministry of Labour, UIHENI, NDAWU, Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) and the NUNW for booking appointments. After fixing a date for the

interview, the LAC requested that I should send them the interview questions to study them beforehand. After few weeks before our meeting, they answered all questions and sent them back to me via email and suggested that there is no need to meet again since they appeared to have answered all the questions. I replied them in clear terms that I did not intend to use online interview and the questions I sent to them were guiding question to guide our discussion since the interview I will conducting with them is semi-structured. I requested that we should continue with our appointment since I need to have some clarification on some of their answers as well as broader discussion. Then, our meeting was shifted to my first day after arriving Windhoek.

Therefore, my first point of contact was LAC even though locating their office is not an easy task for me since I am not frequent and used to Windhoek and this cost me extra money. The difficulty I encountered in locating LAC office and how much it cost me getting there gave me the idea of why most DWs might not be able to access their service when needed due to the cost of transportation because the office is located in an elite neighbourhood. My insistence on having a face to face interview rather than sticking to the digital communication of answering my questions as they did earlier paid off. It gave me the opportunity to have detailed insights regarding the services LAC rendered to the people which include migrants from different parts of the world residing in Namibia. During our discussion, I could see the body language of the respondent, especially on the politically sensitive issues, such as sexual harassment of domestic workers working for diplomatic officials/embassies levels, or on government roles on the minimum wage. This helped me to understand more than the text answers with no explanation. It is noteworthy to emphasize that during the interview session with the LAC, I requested recording our conversation so that I can concentrate on the discussion as well as giving us the opportunity to cover broader areas. The request was granted with the agreement that after transcribing I will send the transcript back to the LAC office for confirmation of what we have discussed. I allowed the respondent to either add or remove what she deemed necessary from the transcripts. Even though I was expecting some of the text to be removed probably for sensitivity reasons, to my surprise the respondent did not remove any part of the transcript but instead added some of the points that I missed when transcribing or those that which I did not write clearly.

Done with LAC, the next point of call was the office of Union for Institutional and Household Employees of Namibia (UIHENI). The office of UIHENI was not difficult for me to locate, it is a small office located inside the compound of Evangelical Lutheran Church in a high-density suburb of Windhoek. During the interview session, I realised that many DWs have easy access because their office is located in the informal and poor settlement. I had an opportunity to hear more on the National Union Federation, the role of the government and NDAWU and UIHENI political infight. It is also worth to note that I followed the same process of recording interviews conversation that I had with LAC during the UIHENI interview session. The next line of action to hear from the NDAWU and NUWN.

The first to be interviewed was the NUWN deputy secretary, and I asked if I can get the contacts of other affiliates members of NUWN, but he could not provide the numbers to me. Although, I felt that such an office should have the records of all its affiliates in place. I must say that getting the deputy secretary to

be interviewed was a herculean task as all the officials claimed that they do not have the records of me sending them an email for an appointment. After back and forth on the need to interview NUWN, I do not have any option to make them understand that I will not be responsible for any misinformation about the NUWN that I report based of my encounter with other groups if they refuse to grant me an interview. They have the opportunity now to have their voice represented, and I left. Probably after careful consideration, I received a call two weeks later that the deputy secretary will meet me. Similar experience of NUWN repeated itself at NDAWU office in an attempt to have an interview. It appears that there is a restriction of information, but I managed to get the President of NDAWU talking that lasted for about 4 hours because she narrated the whole story of the establishment of the union and the whole process of successes and challenges of the union.

The two FGDs of union and non-unions members was not an easy process. Being a religious Catholic nun working in the parish, I came to have ample contacts with many parishioners. After my final decision to conduct research on the DWs, I communicated with some parish members whom I know to have DWs working in their houses. One of them referred me to others and then, from there I kept communicating with them till I arranged the place where to meet. So, with this group, there were some of the DWs who have to quit from the process because they were afraid of their employers and for those who turned up, I arranged a place at the church, and there we had our focus group discussions to compare the two groups.

With the Ministry of Labour was another dilemma following bottleneck protocols although the ministry officials claimed that they have been very busy getting trying to resolve national demonstration of Shoprite employees. After a long wait, I got the chance to interview the person assigned to me to answer my questions

3.4. Conclusion

The methodological approach adopted for this study is more suitable for studying cases that require a thorough examination of personal experiences such as the domestic workers working in precarious conditions in Namibia. Although the process is not time friendly and transcribing - analysing the data was difficult at times, it proved to be useful and appropriate for this study.

Chapter 4 Understanding the Labour Movement in Namibia Landscape

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on the brief discussion of the landscape of labour movement in Namibia. This is important because it will give us the background understanding of how the workers and the DWs in particular have been organizing which is crucial to the understanding of the data analysis in the next chapter. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section looks at the history of labour movement from the pre-colonial to post-colonial era of independence. In the second section, we look at the consequences of fragmentation for the labour movement and the spiral effects it has on DWs movement. The third and fourth sections focus is of DWs union and the typology of DWs to give an idea of the different experiences that the DWs in Namibia might expressed. First, we look at the historical background of labour movement in Namibia

4.2. Historical Background

The National Union of Namibia Workers (NUNW) which is the most substantial national union body in Namibia played a fundamental role in the expansion of collective voice in the workplace that led to the dramatic increase in strike actions from 1986 onwards. The 1986 industrial actions served as a premise for the 1989 cumulated strike action that remains the second largest industrial action by workers in Namibia in a single year of colonial rule (Klerck, 2016: 211-212).

The NUNW had two previous phases of mass organising. It was first established by SWAPO in April 1970 and helped the SWAPO Youth League to organise the 1971/2 great workers' strike. In 1978, NUNW re-emerged after disappearing from the scene (Namibia Support Committee, 1991:70) as a general union, with particular strengths deeply rooted in the miners' rank and file before being crushed again in the 1980 by the colonial masters. Subsequently, NUNW existed in exile as the SWAPO's trade union wing (Namibia Support Committee, 1991:71). Presently NUNW have nine affiliates with over 85,000 members (Jauch, 2018) from a total labour force of 630,000 (NSA, 2016:45).

However, as predicted by the Namibia Support Committee (1991:71) doubts about the clear-cut relationships between the NUNW and its affiliates, SWAPO as a political party, and SWAPO as the majority power in government started to become manifest few years after Namibia's independence. Some members of NUNW pointed out to that the continued affiliation with SWAPO did undermine not only the independence of the union but also formed a threat to the labour movement unity. The debate on independence of NUNW continued for many years until those that argued NUNW could not act independently and play the role of a watchdog over government as long as it was linked to the ruling party decided to opt out of NUNW and form the Trade Union Congress of Namibia (TUCNA) in 2002 (Jauch, 2018:18).

TUCNA's early formation stage saw a merger between the Namibia People's Social Movement (NPSM) and the Namibia Federation of Trade Unions (NAFTU). TUCNA presently has 13 affiliated unions with more than 64,000 members. Its largest affiliates are the unions operating in the public sector and the fishing industry. Since its establishment, several newly formed unions have joined TUCNA such as the Namibia Cabin Crew Union (NCCU) and the Namibia Football Players Union (NFPU) (Jauch, 2018:19). While the rivalry between NUNW and TUCNA is ongoing, another union, the Namibia National Labour Organisation (NANLO), emerged in 2014. NANLO was established by Evalistus Kaaronda after he was dismissed as General Secretary of the NUWN. NANLO with its three unions affiliates and 13,000 members still maintains a close alliance with SWAPO unlike TUCNA (New Era, 27 January 2016).

4.2. Division and Consequences

Labour unions played a crucial role in the independence struggle in Africa, but unfortunately, the political independence led to the rapid demobilisation of trade unions. This demobilisation was accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, by absorbing trade unions as an integral part of the ruling party as well as co-opting union leaders into government (Bauer, 2007:229-254). Apart from the fragmentation of unions, the highly decentralised nature of collective bargaining inhibits the pace at which the unions should organise nationally to support some affiliates that could not negotiate and bargain (Klerck, 2002:107). The implication of this is that recalcitrant employers might opt to ignore the national union body and choose to renegotiate with each workers' union one by one rather than negotiating with them collectively.

A typical example was the 2015 and 2016 workers' showdown at Shoprite, the retail giant corporation from South Africa. While all the three unions have members working in Shoprite's, each union started to compete and wanted to negotiate independently with the Shoprite management, but none was able to achieve any plausible outcome (Jauch, 2018:20). As a result, the management of Shoprite called the bluff of the three unions by not recognising any of them as the "bargaining agent" and determined conditions of employment unilaterally. The consequences of the three unions competing with each other led to the dismissal of many workers that protested against their poor working conditions while others were subjected to disciplinary action with none of the three unions able to protect them (Jauch, 2018:20).

As Valenzuela (1991) suggested, fragmentation of unions does not necessarily reflect a bad thing. What makes the fragmentation of unions toxic for workers welfare and rights lies in the process of such fragmentation. Most especially when the process involves political differences and personal interest of the union leaders, the various union leaders must, in spite of their occasional collaboration, compete for the support of the rank and file (Valenzuela, 1991:8). While the negative effect of fragmentation of the unions was visible in the Shoprite's saga in Namibia as it destabilizes the essence of collective voice among the various organizations when confronting the state and/or employers, since each union will try to present itself as the most dedicated defender of the interests of the rank and file (Valenzuela, 1991:8). A more successful example of "unity of purpose" regardless of fragmentation was provided by Namibian teachers and

their unions where the officially recognized union (NANTU) called a strike ballot amongst teachers and the second teachers union (TUN) came out in full support of the strike and after just 2 days of strike action, the teachers' key demands were met (Jauch, 2018:20).

4.3. Domestic Workers Unions in Namibia

The Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers Union (NDAWU) was the first organised body for DWs in Namibia although one cannot say the exact year it was formed due to contradictory accounts. While there are reports that place the formation of the union to be around pre-independence in the mid-1980s (Jauch, 2018:17), the International Federation of Domestic Workers listed the date of establishment as 2013 (IDFED, 2015). Unfortunately, the crisis that rocked the unity of NUNW also led to domestic workers in Namibia to have two unions, the Namibia Domestic and Allied Workers Union (NDAWU) and the Union for Institutional and Household Employees of Namibia (UIHENI)³ competing with each other. The affiliation of NDAWU with NUNW as well as personal issues led to the departure of some of NDAWU executives to form UIHENI. Since the division is political, the unions find it difficult to speak in unison even on issues that affect members on both sides of the divide alike. A typical example was the rejection of the new minimum wage leading to protest organised by UIHENI against the NDAWU approval of the minimum wage since they were part of the process as a result of affiliation with NUNW.

The unionization rate among the DWs is very low when compared with other sectors even though only 17.5% of the total documented employees in the country belonged to trade unions (NSA, 2016:52). To be precise, out of 630,000 employees only 83,516 were union members (Jauch, 2018:17). Although, there are no documents that reveal the official membership of UIHENI and NDAWU apart from our research findings which will be discussed in details in chapter five of this study, it is difficult to get accurate members of DWs that are union member. What the Namibia Labour Force Survey (LFS) of 2016 shows was only about private household workers which are 570 (1.2%) out of 36,365 belonging to union under unionization rates when compared to other sectors such as the educational sector with 55.8% (NSA, 2016:45-54).

4.4. Understanding the Heterogeneity of Domestic Workers.

Domestic workers are classified under the category of vulnerable workers as they are often subjected to exploitation from their employers. The exploitative practices include extended working hours with no rest periods or breaks, unpaid sick and annual leaves, and not being registered with relevant bodies such as the Social Security Commission even though the latter is illegal since 2010 (Legal

³ UIHENI is organising workers who earn a better wage than NDAWU and as the inclusion of "Institutional" in the name suggest that it also focusses on cleaners in companies etc. And thus, a group of workers who are more easily to be organised and less dependent on the whims of individual employers / madam.

Assistance Centre, 2010). Moreover, most DWs do not have written contracts hence employers can decide what to pay them even if it means the pay will be below the legal minimum wage.

However, DWs in Namibia just like other countries are not a homogeneous group of workers just because of the word “domestic”. There are various categories of DWs, and the vulnerability or the challenges DWs encountered are not the same. Among DWs, there are several types of employment agreement that create subgroups within the sector. One significant differentiation is between DWs who resides with their employers (live in) and those who reside in their own homes (live out). Among the live out, some work full time for a single family while others work on an hourly basis for multiple households within a week, or even within a single day (ILO, 2016:92). However, live-in DWs encounter greater isolation and more limited mobility; longer working hours and a larger share of payments in kind since they are living in the household of the employer under the notion that part payment of wages have be done in kind since the DW is living with the employer (ILO, 2013:2). This can put live-in DWs in a vulnerable position such as vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse by their employers; and more impoverished living conditions including lack of privacy (Chen, 2011:170).

Apart from the live-in and live-out typology that can help to understand the level of vulnerability within the rank and file of domestic workers, the mode of employment is also important. While some of the DWs got employed by the employer directly or through the referral from close associates to the employer or from fellow DWs that got wind of an employment opportunity in the neighbourhood, others are hired through a "third party" agency or contractor. "As a result, the employer-employee relationship becomes tripartite, more formal, and less personal. In a few such cases, the agency or contractor provides support services to the domestic worker" (Chen, 2011:172).

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter have prepared the ground for the next chapter by revealing the impact of fragmentation on the Namibia Domestic Workers movement and the labour union in general. This fragmentation was mainly based on disagreement on affiliation with the ruling party SWAPO although personal difference ambitions also contributed to the division that has led to hostile rivalry that is hurting the movement. In the next chapter, the voices of DWs will be presented as well as that of the DWs unions leadership to assess the level of worker source of power the unions have been able to explore in organising and the challenges

Chapter 5 Level of Sources of Power in Namibia, The Opportunities and Challenges for Domestic Workers Unions

5.1. Introduction

This chapter focus is on the discussion as regards the findings the fieldwork to answer the research questions of this study. The chapter is divided into four main sections along the research questions asked in chapter 1 with the first section discussing the applicability of the identified sources of power in chapter 2 of this study in Namibia. The second section addresses the challenges that can hinder the successful implementation of the sources of power identified to be applicable or presently in use by DWs in Namibia, and the third section suggests ways that the challenges can be addressed. The last section is the conclusion of the chapter.

5.2. Assessing Workers Sources of Power in Namibia.

The findings of this study is a validation of the position of Schmalz et al. that it will be “hardly possible for unions to advance all power resources at the same time. Therefore, it is not so much the extent of power resources, but rather their development and specific combinations which are crucial for unions’ assertiveness” (Schmalz et al., 2018:115). The findings of this study show that not all the sources of power as discussed earlier apply to the DWs unions in Namibia, at least for now.

5.2.1. Associational Power

The DWs unions’ formation in Namibia is the most visible indication of the DWs exploring the possibilities of the associational source of power in the country. The first step in the emergence of associational power entails the workers coming together to form collective trade union or political (workers party) workers associations (Brinkmann and Nachtwey, 2010 cited in Schmalz et al., 2018:118). According to the findings of this study, the first DWs union, NADWU had its root traced back to the pre-independent era when it was first announced by a group of 20 domestic workers in the late 1980s. It will not be until 2011 when the union was officially registered with the Ministry of Labour and as well achieving affiliation status with International Federation of Domestic workers in 2013. However, to successfully harness associational power, unions have to optimise their structures so that associational action can be aligned with the fundamental structural conditions and the interests of the members (Ganz, 2000: 1012). From the discussion I had with its President NDAWU it was clear that it has a well structural organisational arrangement.

As you can see from the constitution, I gave you and the different offices in the building with the different designation, NDAWU is well structured and well organised with a national congress, national executive committee, branches and branch executive committee, and section committee. NDAWU have representatives with the government Labour Advisory Council, which was

not possible to be included if DWs do not come together to form NDAWU (Ms Nelie, NDAWU President).

While NDAWU has a more robust structure than UIHENI, the weakness in the structure of UIEHNI can be attributed to the fact that it a new organisation and have no external funding like NDAWU, not affiliated to the ruling party and NUNW. The associational power that gave room for the emergence of NDAWU also led to the formation UIHENI to accommodate a broader range of DWs⁴ in Namibia that the mandate of NDAWU did not cover. For example, while NDAWU negotiation on minimum wage was based on the average salaries that majority of their members earn per month, such negotiation did not cover the vast majority members of DWs that are already earning beyond the agreed minimum wage.

We understand that no single organisation can represent the interest of all DWs because not all DWs work in private households. For example, none of our members earns N\$1500; they were all earning more than the N\$1,500 minimum wage approved by the government. If there is no UIHENI, nobody would be able to speak for them because their employers have already started implementing the N\$1500 minimum wage, therefore, reducing their salaries. We kicked against it, and the government is presently reviewing their position on minimum wage to accommodate our demands (Ms Suxus, UIHENI Secretary General).

The accounts of both UIHENI and NDAWU leaders resonates with Webster's (2015: 2-3) arguments that associational power is deeply rooted in the DWs ability to influence government policies by forming an association that will collectively speak for their interest. Individual DW now has the opportunity to share his/her experience at the workplace with the leadership of the unions. From the findings, the DWs unions in Namibia play significant roles in making sure that DWs have hope for decent working conditions by regularly bringing the plight of DWs to the attention of the government and other stakeholders. For the fact that the government is currently having talks with the UIHENI leadership on the review of the minimum wage that is not favourable to their members is a testament of the associational power, something that they would not have achieved if there is no union. Although, whether the outcome of the talks with UHENI and NDAWU will be favourable now depends on the strength of the organisations concerning membership because one of the major components of effective associational power is membership (Schmalz et al., 2018:118).

While NDAWU and UIHENI give unverified figures of having more than 20,000 and 1,300 members respectively during my interaction with them, the Namibia Labour Force Survey of 2016 did not reveal the actual number for unionized DWs but appears to have capture them under private households workers which revealed that only 570⁵ out of the 45,000 are unionized (NSA,

⁴ UHENI covers DWs that works in Hotels and institutions such as embassies, Banks, Companies as well as private households while NDAWU main focus is on DWs in private households.

⁵ The reason for contradictory figures from the Government Labour Force Survey and the accounts of NDAWU and UIHENI can be understood by financial registered members to the Labour Ministry and the overall population including the non-financial registered members that the unions have in their database.

2016:54). This is a significant weakness, and the weaknesses of the DWs unions associational power in Namibia explains why after the government of Namibia has set the minimum wage in the country, many employers are not adhering to the minimum wage requirements and are still paying the workers low pay (New Era, 2016). The next session looks at what other sources of power that is applicable or already in use by the DWs unions in Namibia.

5.2.2. Institutional Power

Apart from the associational power, the other source of power that the DWs unions in Namibia are already exploring to mobilise DWs into their rank and file is the institutional source of power. Although, institutional power is usually the result of struggles and negotiation processes based on associational power and structural power. This means that institutional power is “a secondary form of power” that can only be successfully explore based on the existence of other sources of power (Brinkmann and Nachtwey, 2010: cited by Schmalz et al., 2018:121). From the findings DWs have been able to use their associational power in NDAWU and UIHENI to tap into the institutional power through legal campaigns against different employers to earn the trust and confidence of DWs and as such serve as a conduit to membership recruitment. Also, the Secretary-General of UIHENI emphasised the importance of the organisation recorded success in suing erring employers in court against unfair dismissals and unfair treatments of DWs at their work-place which has sent signals to the employers that it is no longer business as usual where they can treat their DWs anyhow they deemed fit. She explained further that;

Before the emergence of the new minimum wage we use to have between 60 to 80 cases of unfair dismissals annually. However, now we have more than 200 cases which were the result of the minimum wage law as many employers’ unjustly sacked the employees that have been serving them for years and recruits news ones with the minimum wage which is lesser than what they were paying the sacked employees. I can say that we have recorded 95% success in all our cases in court, so the employers are now very conscious in the way they deal with DWs (Ms Suxus, Secretary General UIHENI).

The position of Ms Suxus was echoed by the DWs that were part of UIHENI or NDAWU during the focus group discussion. They all acknowledged the fact that the success story of the unions in dealing with bad employers motivated them to join the union. From the findings, it was gathered that both UIEHNI and NDAWU have a Labour Relations Officer (LRO) that handles cases. If a worker is dismissed unfairly, then a mediation meeting for the employer and employee is called for in their office. If they could not reach a peaceful resolution, then a case will be filed to the Office of Labour Commissioner and if the issue involves physical abuse, the LRO files an immediate complaint to the police to get the employer arrested while notifying the Office of the Labour Commission. Mr John who has been working as a DW for more than 25 years said that;

I joined UIHENI in 2015 after I was maltreated by my employer for 5 years, I approached them, and they took up the case, and we ended up in court where my employer was fined and asked to pay me compensation. Although I lost the job, I am more than happy that he did not go scot free which will make him understand that because he has money does not mean that he can do whatever he likes (Mr John, Age 50, 25 years Working as DW).

These findings resonate with the argument of various scholars (Soskice and Hall, 2001; Brookes, 2015) that the capacity of the workers and the union to make use of existing institutional laws is crucial to how the employers will relate with their employee. The beauty of institutional power is that even when the associational power of unions is shrinking due to fragmentations or loss of membership as is evident in the fragmentation of labour unions in Namibia, trade unions can continue to use institutional power (Schmalz et al., 2018:122). Schmalz et al., argument explains why UIHENI and NDAWU are still able to continue fighting for the interest of DWs through legal means. The loss of some of the members of NDAWU to UIHENI did not stop NDAWU from having a representative with the government Labour Advisory Council, and the small size of UIHENI in terms of membership did not hinder the organization from pursuing legal cases against employer regardless of the status of employers. As the findings suggest, the erring employer's behaviours were put into check as it was clear that DWs are not powerless in challenging the employer's power because the institutional power (Labour Act and the court system) works in favour of DWs. Although it is not because the DWs now have unions that pressurized the government to introduce protective legislation and minimum wages since the associational power of the unions are too weak for that. However, the ability of the union to explore institution power was enhance by the fact that Domestic Work is categorized under formal employment by the constitution and the Namibia Labour Act 2007. As a result, it is the responsibility of the Namibia Wage Commission under the Ministry of Labour to review minimum wage and working conditions of all employees in Namibia including DWs, this give the DWs the opportunity to tap into the institutional power which is difficult for individual DWs.

5.2.3. Societal Power

The findings of this study show that there is a possibility for the DWs unions in Namibia to tap into the societal power, but these possibilities are threatened with the weak associational power due to fragmentation in the DWs unions that split into two rival group. As suggested by Urban (2013 cited in Schmalz et al., 2018: 120), the useful exercise of societal power is also “expressed by being able to successfully intervene in public debates on historically established underlying hegemonic structures of the public sphere”. The fragmentation hindered the potential of the DWs unions to have a formidable front that can be used in forming a coalition with NGOs and other social forces that are advocating, for example, gender-based violence, women issues, child labour and rights and other societal related issues that can be of benefit to DWs. This was gathered from an interview session with one DW that preferred to be anonymous. According to him,

I am a member of NDAWU as well a volunteer for an NGO that deals with child labour issues in Namibia because I only work for four days in a week as DW, so I have time to do other activities. I can tell you that the split in the DWs movement did not benefit any of the two groups. There was a day that I discussed with the National Coordinator of the NGO to let us work with NDAWU on DWs right; she was of the opinion that working with NDAWU will mean that they are taking sides since the rivalry between UIHENI and

NDAWU is well known to the public. Therefore, she rejected the idea (Anonymous, age 50, 20 years as DW).

What can be deduced from the account of the respondent was that both UIHENI and NDAWU are missing out on the opportunity to strengthen their voice against injustice suffered by the DWs in the country because other social forces and community influencers that could solidarize with them will instead keep their distance. Regardless of the division among the DWs unions, the one that assumes the role of opinion leader on non-union related societal issue stand a chance to receive mutual support in the form of solidarity (Schmalz et al., 2018:122-123). This is because trade unions most often appeal to a kind of ‘organic solidarity’, that is deeply rooted in connection and “similarity of status and fate, mostly through the class but also, indirectly nation and gender” (Van Gyes et al., 2001 cited in Meardi, 2013:7). Because 75% of DWs in Namibia are women (NSA, 2016:45), NDAWU and UIHENI occupying the forefront of womens’ and girls’ child right agitation might strengthen the coalition power. Moreover, “social isolation and membership decline make it ever more necessary for unions to unite with other social forces if they are to advance a broad vision of economic and social justice successfully” as Tattersall (2013:2) posited.

Be that as it may, I approached both Ms Nelie of NDAWU and Ms Suxus of UIHENI if they are aware of the implication of the fragmentation of DWs union on the DWs rights and wellbeing in the country. While both of them opined that they are open to working together on mutual interest, from my findings, there was no sign or evidence that they have worked together in the past or will be working together in the future. According to Ms Suxus:

I first worked with NDAWU and I was the secretary which placed me in a position to have access to information on the problems of DWs in the country. However, a union that is affiliated to the ruling party and the government cannot in any way represent the true interest of her members because who pays the piper dictates the tune and that was why we did not even attempt to join NUNW because they are affiliated to the ruling party (Ms Suxus, UHEINI Secretary General).

Mr Herbert Jauch, Chairperson of the Economic and Social Justice Trust who has been involved in the Namibian labour movement for more than three decades was of the opinion that the DWs union fragmentation weakened the DWs ability to speak in one voice. He maintained that the fragmentation is not limited to DWs unions. The fragmentation of the labour movement in general defeated the pre-independence goal of having one big union in Namibia because they knew that multiple unions would be counterproductive if those unions work against each other. The fragmentation very often is driven by personal interest such that when a group loose elections for a leadership position, they move out to form a rival union. Sometimes another union is formed because the main union body is affiliated with the ruling party and they want to be apolitical. On the DWs unions he had this to say:

In NDAWU’s case it seems it was internal deference’s between groups, they were all together in NDAWU, and then one group move out to start another union called UIHENI in the same sector and they operated as rival to each other’s. The tragedy is that none of them have the majority and this is where the labour act and the situation of domestic workers is crashing, the labour act says in order to be recognised by employers, you must have a majority of members in the bargaining union. However, the position of NDAWU in the

NUWN is very weak because, although NDAWU is represented in the Congress, they only have a very small number of delegates. Therefore, big public sectors unions dominate the direction of the decision making which makes small unions like NDAWU to have lesser say (Mr Herbert Jauch, Chairperson of the Economic and Social Justice Trust).

The implication of the above statement is that if both NDAWU and UIHENI can come together and if they can manage to put their resources together to mobilize 1/5 of the estimate 36,000 DWs to be part of the union, DWs stand a better chance forming a strong coalition with other unions because they could be occupying leadership positions in the national union Centre that negotiates directly with the government and --going by the testament of the DW who also belonged to an NGO-- many organizations will start to take them serious and support them in their action plan. Nevertheless, forming coalitions, tapping into the possibilities of law and forming an association is not without challenges that still hindered mobilisation of DWs. In the next section we will look at some of these challenges.

5.3. Challenges against the Application of Workers Sources of Power in Namibia

5.3.1. Structural Power: The Lack of Workplace and Marketplace Bargaining power.

The findings of this study resonate with Silver (2003:13) disposition that, for workers to successfully harness the structural power through the marketplace bargaining power, they must possess rare skills and qualification coupled with low unemployment rate, and besides they must have the capacity or ability to live off other sources of income while withdrawing from the labour market (Silver, 2003: 13). The predominant reason for not joining DWs unions that is common to all the DWs that participated in in this study was the employer's easy access to alternatives to replace them if they demand any improvement in wages or working conditions. While the threat of the employers to fire the employees is not limited to the domestic work sector, employers ignore threats of unions because, for every DWs that leaves his/her job, there are three unemployed people that are ready to take over the position even with lesser pay. Alina Jonas a 39 years old, single mother with five children was of the opinion that it is difficult even to find domestic work because many people are jostling for limited space.

There was a day two women approached my boss pleading with her to give them domestic work even if it is laundry three times a week or sweeping the compound. Fortunately for me, my boss asked them to leave and as they are leaving my boss stared at me, and I know what that means because earlier that day I already complained that my work in the house is too much compared to what I am being paid. Since that day I keep quiet because I don't want to go back to the village (Alina Jonas, age 39, 11 years as DW).

The testimony of Alina Jona further validates arguments of various studies that DWs across the world opts for the options of keeping silent against harsh working conditions as well as not joining the labour union due to the fear of losing their jobs (ILO, 2012; Thobejane and Khosa, 2016). Not only Alina feels to be lucky to have a job, the majority of DWs that I discussed with considered

themselves to be lucky of even having a job and they do not mind if their employers decided to deduct from their pay anytime, they do not show up at work for whatever reasons. What matters most is that they have a job when they go back to resume at their workplace. A DWs that choose to be anonymous, who is a single mother of three children working as DWs for the past 20 years was of the opinion that the situation of DWs in the country could be understood with the example of prices of goods in the market because when there is surplus, the price will fall. She shared one significant experience of hers;

There was a day I made up my mind that I was going to the NDAWU to report my employer and I shared my plans with a friend that attends my church. However, I did not file the report and I did not go to work for three days because I was sick. To my surprise when I tried to resume to work the house-help that opened the door for me was my same friend that I shared my experience with when I was troubled. She went to my boss to say bad things about me and offered herself as a cheaper replacement. Ever since then I do not share my experience with anybody again because you do not know who will be interested in your job (Anonymous, Age 55, 20 years as DW).

Apparently, the silence of DWs on their working condition or harsh treatment that the union can help them to address is not only embedded in the narrative of the employers having the power to fire them when the union is involved. As the findings reveal, the people that are unemployed or not satisfied with their employment status can also serve as a threat to DWs unionization. In fact, high rate of unemployment is a serious threat to job security, in particular to those in the private sector (Luechinger et al., 2010:1) and without the confidence that DWs jobs will be secured even after joining the union, it is a big challenge that can hinder DWs organizing. I must say that I am not surprised with the unemployment factor because what can one expect since the unemployment rate of Namibia is about 35% (NSA, 2016).

Using children as domestic help is another major threat to the jobs of many DWs as they claimed that many employers have opted for using children from age as low as 12 years old as house-helps and many of these children are members of their employer's extended families from the village. The majority of the DWs they were of the opinion that it is difficult to compete with somebody that will do the job that you are complaining about free of charge because the culture and society has made her see doing domestic chores and taking care of home as part of training and contribution to the family (see also White 1999:133). Child Domestic Work (CDW) is broadly perceived as tolerable in a child's own family (Bourdillon, 2009:1) and therefore it is not morally wrong. Besides, from the findings, the majority of the DWs that I interacted with have in one time or the other, when they were children, travelled to the city from the village to stay with uncles and aunts that need help in taking care of the home. Pia Nande 35 years old, married with two children shared her experiences

When my employer felt that my complaint was too much for them, they just called me and said, Pia, you have been a wonderful house help, but me and my husband have decided to bring two of his nieces from the village to come and be living with us as well as help take care of the house, and as a result, we will not need your service again (Pia Nande, Age 35, 8 years as DW).

We can now understand why DWs tapping into workers sources of power is difficult if there is a readymade alternative to replace them from the village which eroded the hope of structural power. Since employers can get alternative

sources of service free of charge, it is difficult for the DWs to harness any form of structural power. Because of the atomization of their services, they are neither in the position to withdraw their services to force the hand of their employers nor capable of making demands because they do not possess any rare skills needed to their jobs like that of other sectors.

5.3.2. Poverty, Lack of Trust in DWs Unions and Cost of Advocacy

Since it has been established that there are laws in Namibia that allow DWs to join and participate in unions and for the fact that not all employers have access to alternative source of recruitment that can be used to threaten DWs working in precarious conditions, I probed further to understand why the DWs decided not to participate in the union that can fight for their rights. From the findings, the lack of money to pay membership registration fees top the reasons given. Eve, a single mother of 4 children that has been working for more than two decades as a DW that participated in the focus group discussion doubted if any DW in Namibia has not heard about DWs union in Namibia most especially those that are not living with their employers but the challenge is that the money that DWs earn is meagre and they are hardly left with anything as a savings that can allow them to pay for membership fees. Eve elucidated further that;

How do you expect me to be able to pay any fee for membership card when I am always in debt because what I earn cannot even take care of half of my monthly expenses? For example, I earn N\$2490, and I spend a minimum of N\$1120 on transportation to and from work, N\$400 on electricity in my house, N\$500 on food every months and I still have to pay hospital bills, school toiletries and books for my children, transportation for my kids going to school every day among many other daily expenses. I am even scared right now because if anything happens to me, my children will suffer because I have no savings (Eve Abraham, 45 years old, 22 years as a DW).

To corroborate Eve reasons for many DWs not opting for the opportunities of joining the union, Emma Nangolo, a single mother of three children that has been working as a DW for past 10 years was of the opinion that if not every DWs, the vast majority are aware of the existence of the DWs union. This is because on many occasions that DWs encounter problems with their employers, people always suggest to them to report or threatened to report the employers to the union, but the main problem is that the unions hardly help non-members which means the DWs have to pay membership fees before they can be attended to. According to her;

You have to pay for membership card which I cannot afford from the monthly salary I am receiving. Unfortunately, I have approached NDAWU for help regarding issues that I have with my former employer, but I was told that I have to pay N\$500 since I am not a member of the union and this is not just my only experience with the union (Emma Nangolo, Age 37, 10 years as DW).

Notwithstanding the negative feedbacks about how NDAWU treated non-members, I asked them if they are aware that NDAWU is not the only DWs union in Namibia. Although the majority of them are not aware of UIHENI, however, there are those that are aware of the existence of UIHENI but considered the organisation to be in the same league with NADWU by charging membership fees. Listen to John who is a 40-year old DWs with 18 years' experience;

UIHENI is not so different from NDAWU because they charged almost the same membership fees, while NDAWU charges N\$40 for membership registration and N\$7 for printing, UIHENI charges N\$40 only. It is like a competition; lowering price to attract customers. We have workers whose monthly expenses are not less than N\$2500 and earn N\$1500. How did you expect such people to be able to have money to pay for membership fees?

I probed further that both NADWU and UIEHNI got the members that paid the fees from DWs like them. One DW that refused to be named flared up with anger and condemned both unions for prioritising money rather than the welfare of DWs they claimed to represent. He argued that the unions are not interested in safeguarding the interest of the DWs but focus on making money out of the people that don't have enough. He maintained that

Not all fingers are equal even as we seated here; I have given somebody among us here money today to buy medicine for her sick child. For me, it is not that I cannot pay the membership fee but the main duty for a union is to protect the vulnerable and not a money-making business (Anonymous, Age 35, ten years as DW).

From all the responses I got from the DWs that participated in the focus group discussion, it was clear that the inability to pay fees is not the only issues they have with the DWs union. There is also lack of trust as they see the unions turning to business enterprises making money. However, the allegation against NDAWU and UIHENI required clarification from the representatives of both unions. Ms Neile, the president of NDAWU, rejected the reasons given by the DWs that refused to be part of the union as untrue. From her point of view, the officials of the union are working on pro-bono sacrificing their working hours to attend to office work to address complaints of members and help organise campaigns without been paid because the union does not have money even though the constitution of the organisation stipulated that officials should be paid. According to Ms Neile,

We do not have a reject platform that turns people away. The truth is running an organisation that focuses on advocacy for human rights cost money, and the only way to supplement the little we get from donors is through membership fees (Ms Neile Kahua, NDAWU President).

Also, the UIHENI Secretary General denied ignoring DWs that are not registered members of the organisation when they approach the union for help. Ms Suxus rejected the notion that UIHENI is after money because as for the organisation they do not have any funder or donor, they organised themselves and executed different campaigns with the membership fees. She explained further that;

We depend on membership fees, and we do not have donors like other unions so there is no way we will not charge a membership fee and if you look at it \$N40 is affordable for every DW. Getting time slot at live radio program, mobilization, printing of materials, and office running come at a cost that no single DW can shoulder (Ms Suxus, Secretary General UIHENI).

What I can deduced from the discussion so far was that while poverty played a significant role in impeding the vast majority of DWs in Namibia to join the DWs unions these unions cannot function properly without DWs contributing financially to the union activities. According to Casey (2011:4) "while organizing ad hoc protests, information sessions, or letter writing campaigns can

be done with relatively little money, prolonged advocacy requires considerable resources, particularly, if it involves litigation or media campaigns". From the situation in Namibia, the NUNW need to step in and help NDAWU in terms of funding and accessing international grants because a significant source of funding that is beyond the meagre contribution from DWs fees which has made several DWs to turn away from union, the unions will struggle to explore the workers' sources of power to organize.

5.4. Improving the Domestic Workers Unions Capacity in Exploring Workers' Sources of Power

5.4.1. Unified front and avoid been affiliated to the ruling party or the opposition

According to Patrias and Savage (2012:4) when workers join together in unions, their collective voices have more significant potential to shape and influence both the terms and conditions of their employment and the broader political, social, and economic spheres in which their employment relationships are embedded. Their argument echoes the importance of the concept of solidarity which is the core of any social movement. From the findings of this study, if the two unions don't come together to work for a common goal, it will practically impossible to have a successful mobilisation of DWs. Therefore, fragmentation and split in Namibia DWs need to be addressed if they stand any chance of achieving significant success in DWs right. Mr Herbert Jauch was of the opinion that;

Splitting of the DWs union into two means none of them will have a solid base because DWs are not like mine-workers or those that work in the steel industry where you can have more than one worker union in the same sector. DWs are atomised, so the only way the union can become relevant is to harmonies their resources together and speak in one voice.

Mr Jauch's statement can be better understood from the perspective of Von Holdt, & Webster (2008:341) argument that fragmentation and splitting of union organisation as witnessed in Namibia is not only an obstacle for mobilisation of domestic workers because it destabilised the union strategies. It also emboldens the employers to reverse whatever gains had been made by the union mobilisation and agitation for a better working condition. The stance of different unions representing the domestic workers in Namibia is a testament that they are not speaking with a collective voice and engage in collective bargaining for the betterment of the domestic workers working conditions as well as the realisation of decent wages for their members in the country. When there is no noticeable difference between them, the union leaders can collaborate with relative ease in negotiations with the employer associations and/or with the state; as a result, the fragmentation does not severely weaken the labour movement (Valenzuela, 1991:8).

Therefore, both NDAWU and UIEHNI do not need to dissolve again into one whole union, they can maintain their structure, and nevertheless, the enmity between the two leaders that are outside ideological principles of affiliation with ruling party should be put aside. This is because virtually everywhere, national union organisations have established, either from their inception or eventually,

some relationship with one or more political parties or party factions (Valenzuela, 1991: 9-10). Therefore, maintaining hostility against each other will not do any good for the DWs they claimed to represent because potential DWs that ought to join them to strengthen their base will not consider them to be serious.

5.4.2. Empowerment Initiative to Address Lack of Structural Power

This is important for DWs unions because successful mobilisation of DWs to build a solid membership base that can be considered as a threat by the employers. This also depends on how the unions address the multi-dimensional aspect of empowering their members. As shown in this chapter poverty of DWs has significant negative consequences for both NDAWU and UIHENI membership base. However, from what I observed when I visited UIHENI office, I saw various craftworks such as ladies' handbags and sandals, necklaces made with beads among others being package to go and sell later. It was from a discussion with Ms Suxus I discovered that UIHENI has made it a compulsory mandate to train their member in art and craft work. For Ms Suxus

Poverty among members must be addressed. As a result, we train our members in different crafts to make Ladies handbags made from beads, which cost between N\$500 to N\$1000 depending on the sizes, some are trained in the bakery, baking bread and "fat kook" which can be carried and sell in the bus when going to and from work so that they will not depend on the wages from employers (Ms Suxus, UIEHNI Secretary General).

From the Ms Suxus argument what the UIEHNI was trying to do by the empowerment initiative is to create a balance that can challenge the power relations between the employer and employee. While the employer has the power to fire DWs at will because they have alternatives for replacement, tackling poverty also empowers DWs to have alternative sources of income which is one of the requisites for marketplace bargain power. As a result, they will not be under compulsion to stay quiet when their primary source of income is threatened by the employer since they can survive off the wages earned from their employers if they decide to withdraw their services. All the DWs associated with UIHENI considered the training on skills to make crafts more critical than their domestic work employment because to them it is a life skill that is sustainable.

I never regret the day I joined UIHENI because I now see the benefit of joining the union. The handmade neck and waist beads you are holding cost N\$100, and I was taught how to produce it here. While my house-help job fetches me N\$ 2600, I also earn additional N\$1000 per month at a minimum depending on how I can sell these products at bus-stops when going and coming from work. Even I do sell to people on my employer's street and drop some at convenient stores in the neighborhoods I worked. I can boldly tell you that I am not scared of any employer because I know I cannot go hungry if I am fired today (Tunealo Petrus, Age 45, 15 years as DW).

Other DWs that have acquired one skill or the other supported Tunealo because they shared similar experiences. It is important that the empower initiative started by UIHENI to be scaled up and adopted by other DWs unions in the country. Majority of DWs are uneducated or with low education and therefore easy to be manipulated by their employers. Successful workers organising should not just focus on speaking on behalf of the vulnerable members but also help build their capacity to exercise their agency by empowering them.

5.4.3. Decentralization of Domestic Workers Desk At Ministry of Labor

In my interaction with the representative of the LAC that have been offering legal assistance to DWs in Namibia for decades, it was discovered that many DWs knows that they can punish their employers by reporting but where to report is a problem. Many DWs don't have money to travel far to the regional offices to report employers but will be happy to do so just next door if there is an opportunity to do so.

Whether live-in or live-out, DWs are aware of their rights because of the continuous radio and TV sensitization. However, knowing your right is different from knowing where to claim the right. I think the Ministry of Labour should have official structures in different informal settlement to enable domestic workers access to their services easily. For example, to have a branch Centre in each location (Yolande Engelbrecht, LAC, Interview July 2018).

This is an opportunity that can strengthened the DWs union because it will be easy for them to coordinate and follow to logical conclusion cases of DWs violation against employers. Besides, it will allow the union to have access to more DWs that are not aware about the union but can easily access the Ministry of Labour informal settlement office at no cost of traveling far to make report

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter critically examined the current state of DWs and DWs union ability to organise in Namibia. Out of all the source of power identified in chapter only institutional power has a strong presence in the Namibia DWs struggle, although there is a possibility of strengthening the associational power by exploring the coalition or societal power which has the propensity to be more applicable. However, these sources of power are threatened by the lack of structural power as well as poverty, lack of trust, hostile fragmentation, and high level of unemployment that create a massive competition for jobs in the sector. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrate that these challenges can be addressed if DWs are empowered with poverty alleviation skills.

Chapter 6 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion and summary of the findings of this study. The discussion in the chapter is sectionalised along the themes of the research questions. The main research question in this study is to understand how the domestic worker's unions in Namibia can organise and mobilise enough support for the actualisation of the minimum wage and decent working conditions for domestic workers. To answer the question, three other questions were proposed, 1) what are the sources of power applicable or already in use by the domestic workers unions in Namibia in organizing, 2) What are the challenges that can hinder the worker sources of power to improve the Namibia domestic workers unions' capacity to organize and mobilized, and 3) what can be done to address the challenges that hinder the domestic workers union's exploring workers sources of power?. At the end of the chapter recommendations are presented on how DWs unions can improve their organising capacity.

6.2. DWs Union in Namibia and Level of Sources of Power

This study demonstrates the weaknesses in the organising capacity of the DWs unions in Namibia when subjected to the worker's sources of power analysis. Out of the four sources of power used as indicators to assess the DWs movement in Namibia, only institutional power appears to be fairly strong. The DWs unions were able to seek legal redress of injustice against their members, although, the acclaimed figures of courts victories cannot be independently verified.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that DWs rights have been protected from violations by employers to a certain level. However, the downside of harnessing the institutional power is that the DWs in questions are unlikely to retain their jobs with the employer that legal actions were taken against. Although the institutional power was based on the existing legislation that protects DWs and domestic work, the ability of the DWs to make use of the existing institutions to hold employers accountable was possible because they were able to come together as a union. Individual DWs are hardly capable of accessing this form of power. Nevertheless, regardless of the little success recorded from court cases, as revealed in this study, the associational power in the DWs movement in Namibia is very weak. This is because associational power relies on membership as well as organisational structure and both DWs unions in Namibia struggle with membership. Unfortunately, the societal power that can be used in strengthening the associational power through the coalition with other unions and non-union social forces and stakeholders in the social movement sector remained unexplored. The hostile fragmentation and rivalry between NDAWU and UIEHNI have seen NGOs advocating for issues affecting DWs on a broader level to distance themselves from both unions. Moreover, the fragmentation and lack of coalition weakened both unions membership base.

6.3. Challenges against Successful Harnessing of Workers Sources of Power by the Unions

The primary challenge that DWs unions face in harnessing the sources of power in Namibia is deeply rooted in the DWs lack of structural power. The DWs are not well positioned in the country like other workers to make demands through workplace or marketplace bargaining power. For the fact that there are tens of thousands of unpaid family workers that are also rendering the services that DWs are offering employers coupled with high level of unemployment, it becomes practically impossible for DWs to challenge employers that violate their rights to decent working conditions and better wages. In particular, when the vast majority of DWs have no other alternative source of income like the employers who have an array of alternatives to labour.

Since it is unlikely to see multiple DWs working in the same household, holding the employers into ransom by refusing to work just like workers in the health or transport sector that can paralyse activities, DWs unions in Namibia will continue to struggle to solidify their base. While lack of structural power remains the biggest threat to DWs union organising in Namibia, the fact that the vast majority of DWs are in poverty also contributed to the weakness of the unions. Since the unions have limited access to donors funding, the only option they have is to rely on membership fees from poor DWs that hardly make ends meet. Squabbling among the DWs unions did not help matters; it sends a wrong signal to many undecided DWs to lose trusts in the leadership of the unions.

6.4. How Best To Address the Challenges?

Although difficult to achieve, the DWs lack of structural power must be addressed and the most plausible approach is through empowerment initiatives that can alleviate poverty of DWs. The empowerment initiative of UIHENI as demonstrated in this study addresses some elements of marketplace bargaining power that DWs are lacking by making them independent of wages from their employers. The empowerment of DWs to be financially independent as a result of access to alternative sources of income did not only embolden them to some level to take a stand against inconsiderate employers; it also motivates them to be active in the union.

By and large, the leadership of two unions must bury their hatchets and set aside personal differences to present a unified front. The unified front does not mean that one should dissolve into the other and as shown in this study, having multiple unions in the same sector doesn't mean not working together on common interest, which is the constituents they represent. This will go a long way in making the union be more attractive for collaboration and forming coalitions with other unions and non-unions organisations such as faith-based, CBOs and NGOs that will strengthen not only the societal power but also the associational and institutional power for effective DWs organising.

6.5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are suggested.

- 1) The empowerment initiative of UIEHNI should be scaled up and extended to other regions of the country.
- 2) Both UIHENI and NDAWU must come to a compromise and establish a working relationship.
- 3) The domestic workers unions should review their membership fees to a very low amount (#NS 10) to attract numbers in thousands rather than maintaining a fee of \$NS 40 and continue to struggle with memberships.
- 4) The domestic workers unions can also throw the membership open free of charge using a first assistance to bring them in the union while NDAWU seek international assistance to make such a scheme possible;
- 5). The unions can also reach out to different non-union organizations in collaboration to advance social cause outside the union core interest to establish opportunities for solidarity which is crucial to the union cause.
- 6) Ministry of Labour, should have structures put it into place of decentralize to informal settlement to enable domestic workers access to their services easily for example to have a branch Centre in each location.

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Appendix 1: Profile of Study Participants

Serial No	Name of Participants	DW Typology	N0 of Years as DW	Age	Marital status	Membership of Union
1	John Shipe	Yard cleaner	25	62	Married	yes
2	Alina Jonas	Private household worker	11	39	Single Mother	No
3	Anonymous	NDAWU & volunteer to an NGO	20	50	Married	Yes
4	Anonymous	Private household worker	20	44	Single Mother	No
5	Pia Nande	Private household	6	35	Married	No
6	Eve Abraham	Private household	22	45	Single Mother	No
7	Emma Nagolo	Private household	10	37	Single Mother	No
8	John John	Yard cleaner	18	40	Married	No
9	Anonymous	Private household	10	35	Single Mother	No
10	Anonymous	Private household	20	40	Single Father	Yes
11	Tunelao Petrus	Government reserve area cleaner	15	50	Single Mother	Yes
12	Suama Kapofi	Private household	11	36	Married	No
13	Anonymous	Private household	5	29	Single	No
14	Anonymous	Private household	10	42	Married	Yes
15	Peni Lucia	Private household	25	56	Widow	No
16	Silka Lazarus	Private household	12	40	Single	Yes
17	Prisilla David	Private household	5	29	Single Mother	No
18	Joster van Wyk	Yard cleaner	30	59	Married	Yes
19	Cloet Saima	Private household	15	38	Single Mother	No
20	Kahee Daniel	Cleaner	12	44	Widower	No

