



Sexual Harrasment at Work as A Barrier for Women Economic Development: The Case of Domestic Workers in Maputo City

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Abstract

This research aims to analyse the impact of sexual harassment at work, more specifically on domestic workers and on women's economic empowerment. The target group was selected based on the qualitative methodology, using the proportional sampling and with the snowball technique, where out of 50 maids, who were interviewed, 20 maids were found to have suffered sexual harassment. According to the Standpoint theory, sexual harassment constitutes an obstacle for women's economic empowerment, as it not only puts women employed in the domestic sector in a situation of being racially discriminated, but also at the social status level. At the racial level this happens because of the conception that white employers pay better salaries, and for fear of losing that salary, they submitted themselves to situations of harassment. At the level of social status, they are treated as people without dignity, as if the work they do is irrelevant, as it is not formally considered work like other jobs under the Mozambican law. Women domestic workers are forced to become sexually involved with their employers to guarantee their work, fearing that they will lose their jobs, and consequently will not be able to support their families.

Key words: domestic work, sexual harassment, women empowerment

1.0 Introduction

In this research, the main objective is to debate how sexual harassment becomes a barrier to the economic empowerment of women who work in the domestic sector in Maputo. The specific objective is to describe the actions of female domestic workers in Maputo city; describe the situations of sexual harassment

that happen in the domestic work sector with women in Maputo city; and analyse the perspectives that influence women working in the domestic sector, in Maputo city, all of which make it difficult to achieve economic empowerment.

In 2008, the *Domestic Work Regulation* was approved through Decree No. 40/2008, which was the result of demands by the union and the feminist movement at national and international levels. The Decree provides the extension of labour and social rights to this historically marginalized sector, including: the right to a fixed working day; to daily, weekly, and annual rest; enrolment in the compulsory social security system; adequate occupational health and safety conditions; and compensation for work accidents.

In this context domestic work is referred to as historically marginalized, according to the Workers Organization of Mozambique (*Organização dos Trabalhadores de Moçambique - OTM*), this profession was never considered work. Considering the high unemployment rate and the lack of employment opportunities, there was a need to create conditions for domestic workers to have their work situation formalized, having rights and duties like other workers. Thus, the Decree 40/2008 of 26 November in Mozambique was created, with the aim of reducing existing criticisms about the fact that domestic work is connoted as a form of modern slavery.

The focus of this research is on women, unions and associations linked to domestic work in Maputo city. During the interviews with the domestic workers, it was possible to see that, in fact, there are many women who see domestic work as a way to achieve self-support; to support their families; to be able to guarantee their studies and other personal needs. However, female workers in this sector declare that it is still in the consciousness of many employers that they must serve their employers in all the ways that are required by them, even without considering the formalities stipulated by the law, that is, doing the personal wishes of the employers. Their employers, regardless of professional ethics in the relationship between worker and employer, feel free to choose the lines of this relationship, and the employee is only being obliged to obey.

This article will bring up a debate on how the relationship between a female domestic worker and her employer can contribute to the empowerment of women working in this sector. During the interview with the representative of the Workers' Organization of Mozambique (September 2021), I found that more than 60% of domestic workers are women, working within homes.

2.0 Domestic Work as a Form of Empowerment in Maputo City

Domestic work in Mozambique is considered to be subordinate service, provided on a regular basis, to a household or similar, comprising preparation of meals; washing and treatment of clothes; cleaning and tidying the house; surveillance and assistance to children, the elderly, and the sick; treatment and care of pets; gardening work; and other coordinated activities in the domestic environment. (Decree 40/2008 of 26 November)

Domestic work represents the main source of paid employment for women and is the third largest activity after peasant farming and informal trade. However, even salaried workers find it difficult to meet their basic needs, as sectorial minimum wages are meagre (R. Castel-Branco and Isaacs 2017). According to the latest data presented by the Organization of Workers of Mozambique (OTM), the lowest sectorial minimum wage corresponds to a quarter of the basic food basket. This demonstrates that domestic work cannot guarantee the minimum conditions that can treat with dignity the human beings who work in this area.

According to the National Union of Domestic Employees, domestic work should not be legal, as this work is continuation of slavery, where the settlers determined the domestic chores the slaves should take care of. In the same spirit, no person should do household chores for another person, as it is each one's responsibility to take care of their household chores. However, due to poverty, and consequently, the lack of employment in Mozambique, it was decided to legalize domestic work as formal work. However, due to the nature of this work, the law has not yet managed to define rights and duties in the same way as other work performed in formal institutions. One of the domestic workers interviewed revealed:

I didn't sign a contract when I started working... We didn't discuss how much I'm going to get; they just told me that, this is your salary... Sometimes I work from 7 am to 6 pm and sometimes I leave at 5 pm, but I never had a full vacation for a month, I only go out for a week, then I arrange other times to complete the holidays. (Domestic Worker 13, September 2021)

The representative of the National Union of Domestic Workers mentioned that the fragility of the law makes domestic workers continue to work informally and without the coverage of important rights, such as access to a 13th salary, holidays, and lack of legal or documented contracts that can protect domestic employees from possible situations of insecurity.

Without a legally drawn up contract, it is difficult for the working day to be limited to eight hours a day. In addition, a legally established contract can prevent domestic workers from being subjected to various types of violence, such as racism, moral and sexual harassment, devaluation of their activities by society, stigmatization, and low wages.

The law of domestic work in Mozambique already has weaknesses that place domestic workers in a situation of insecurity, since the law itself, in its Article 6, clearly states that the domestic work contract is not subject to written form. This issue means that domestic servants do not have material to defend themselves in case something happens. It will just be the employee's word against the employer's. The clauses of their talks cannot prove that at the beginning of the conclusion of the contract certain elements were agreed upon. With regard, for example, to employee's rights, there is no question of working hours, because normally are 8 hours, but for domestic workers they put 9 hours, minimum wage issue, and the issue of social security is under the exclusive responsibility of the employee herself. Another interviewee stated,

When we did a lot of activism to have the rights of domestic workers guaranteed, it was a very difficult process... There was a lot of denial at the time, because domestic work could not be considered work, I mean, because it was work that was done by slaves, and slavery ended. but as there was no way to end domestic work, since there are serious employment problems in Mozambique, we ended up getting a specific law for domestic workers, but what we wanted was for them to be in the labour law, because the Decree is also a form of discrimination... that is to say, domestic workers are not like others in the normal private sector. (Interviewee 2, OTM, 2021)

With these aspects, we observed that the lack of supervision and the precariousness of work are the main factors that contribute to the susceptibility of the category, today. Domestic work can only exist due to one condition, that of social inequality, since the remuneration of these workers is paid by people who have a higher income.

The women employed as domestic workers, in general, are poor, with low education, who undertake to do the domestic work of wealthier families, The outsourcing of domestic work, therefore, creates an opposition of class and race among the women themselves, at the same time that it configures a private solution to a public problem, being, therefore, accessible only to those families with more income.

When we talk about empowerment, studies on gender by Mageste at all (2008) show that attention is more focused on well-being, issues of salary and equal treatment in relation to men, but currently the discussion broadens and starts to consider the relations between the sexes, which bring embedded power relations, which is unequally distributed, with women having a subordinate position in social organization. Not so long ago, the tasks that feminist movements were engaged in primarily involved the effort to achieve better and fairer treatment for women.

The focus was more on well-being, but the goals gradually evolved and expanded to emphasize the active role of women's agent status (SEN apud Mageste at all, 2008). These researchers emphasize that this expansion is neuralgic, since if, on the one hand, the search for female empowerment cannot ignore the importance of solving many inequalities that ruin women's well-being, on the other hand, any practical experience of increasing well-being, being feminine cannot ignore the condition of women's own agents to bring about such a change. Thus, the aspect of well-being and the aspect of being an agent present a substantial crossover.

However, although these two aspects complement each other, they are different in essence since the role of a person as an '*agent*' is fundamentally different from that of the same person as a '*patient*'. For the author, seeing women as people in need of well-being is important, but restricting oneself to this implies a restricted conception of them as subjects. Therefore, understanding the role of the '*agent*' condition is fundamental to recognize individuals as responsible subjects, who can act or refuse to act, or choose to act in one way and not another and who need to take responsibility for doing or not doing things.

In this respect, the change in the point of view of feminist movements from a vision that is extremely focused on well-being to a vision that defends the condition of women as active '*agents*' constitutes a crucial expansion of previous concerns, without implying a denial of these concerns. The relative lack of well-being of women was, and is, present in the world we live in and has visible importance for social justice, in addition, the limited role of women's '*active agent*' condition affects the lives of all people: men and women, children and adults. Still from the same source, it is also argued that focusing on the condition of women as '*agent*' is of great importance because it what will eventually lead to the elimination of injustices that harm women's well-being. Moreover, there is evidence which shows that respect and consideration of women's well-being are influenced by issues such as women's potential to earn an independent income,

gain employment outside the home, have property rights, be literate, and participate in decision making within and outside the family. While these aspects of the female situation seem varied and disparate, they have in common a positive contribution to strengthening women's voice and agency through independence and empowerment. Thus, they are no longer just passive recipients of help to improve their well-being and are seen as active agents of social transformation that can change the lives of women and men.

During the interviews, when we asked the Maputo city domestic workers about what it means to them to work in the domestic sector, they respond that domestic work is not a job that can be considered decent, since most employers behave as if their domestic workers are slaves. Among other mistreatments, the most frequent are insults, lack of regularization of vacations, low wages, lack of food, and sexual harassment issues. However, they see domestic workers as a way of guaranteeing their livelihood, as they do not have the required level of education to be able to get a job in the formal sector.

During the focus groups discussions with the same workers, they claim that working as domestic workers has enabled them to build their houses, support their families and guarantee their children's education. That is why they do everything they can to keep themselves in their jobs, regardless of the inhumane treatment.

Thus, according to Blétière (2014), it can be said that the devaluation associated with domestic work poses obstacles to the necessary institutional monitoring in promoting this activity within the sphere of the labour market. Furthermore, gender inequality intrinsic to domestic work persists and accentuates the *invisibility* of the domestic worker in the sphere of the labour market despite the growing importance she has acquired over the years, with the externalization of domestic work.

Therefore, housework would be a way that women find proportional to the time devoted to the family's well-being, and it would be a way to maximize their social utility (Becker in Blétière, 2014). Thus, the important contribution of domestic work in the production of human goods was underlined, as it provides essential conditions for the promotion of the workforce in the public sphere. (Anderson in Gomes, 2009).

Domestic work facilitates women's participation in the labour market, creating employment for some, and doubling down on productive and reproductive work for other women working in the formal sector. In our context, where basic social services are fragile, the provision of care for children, the elderly, the sick, etc. depends mainly on women's unpaid work. Thus, middle and

upper-class women have the option to outsource these responsibilities to less privileged workers, and thus gain time to invest in other productive and leisure activities (Castel-Branco 2017).

Another huge challenge is the ambiguous working parameters. It is common for a worker to be hired to perform a task, and over time, to be pressured to perform additional tasks. Another common complaint is the absence of health and safety measures at work. Employers often invent strict rules and processes to control workers' bodies, goods, and movements in the name of hygiene. However, they rarely guarantee occupational health and safety conditions. For example, domestic workers are forced to carry out life-threatening tasks, such as sanitation issues, using toxic products, and carrying heavy goods without adequate work tools and protection.

Associated with this, domestic workers work six days a week, with Sunday being their only weekly rest day. Not everyone enjoys paid vacations, holidays as employers insist that workers identify a replacement, effectively subcontracting their job. As a result, domestic workers not only do not enjoy the right to paid holidays, but they also run the risk of losing their jobs. Finally, domestic workers are subject to discrimination, harassment, and violence. Their bodies are tested for HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and vaccinations; their privacy is violated; their personal property is treated as contaminated; their emotional and physical integrity are violated; and their trivialized personal responsibilities. Despite, or perhaps because of, the intimate nature of this sector, power relations between domestic workers and employers are extremely unequal.

They do not give me all work materials... even gloves to clean the bathroom, they only buy them when I complain a lot, but I often work without gloves. Sometimes even when the lady is on those women's days and dirty her underwear, she tells me to wash her things... They don't give masks for cleaning days, because of dust... and when I say I'm sick, she thinks I'm lying to not come to work ... (Domestic worker 9, September 2021)

The entry of women into the labour market was undoubtedly an important event that triggered a series of important social changes to be considered in the analysis of domestic work and in the way it is perceived. This change resulted from constant social struggles in an attempt to overcome, day after day, the gender inequality installed through a sexual division of labour. These struggles did not take place without the additional effort of women to reconcile the rights and

responsibilities that they would now be allowed to do. The normative practices instituted by the sexual division of labour still remain, demanding an increased effort on their part.

Domestic work is family work, which consists of intimate activities, performed in private spaces, in physical proximity to employers. Despite the intimate nature of this work, power relations are extremely unequal. Despite exploitative working conditions, many domestic workers take pride in the work they do. Some derive pleasure from the activities themselves including cleaning the house, cooking, and taking care of children. They feel good watching children grow up and become adults. They feel satisfied when employers come home, happy to find a clean space, and praise them; when they are respected and given the autonomy to decide how to carry out their work; when they are valued and remunerated enough to be able to support their own households. But the most important thing is that maids feel that having a salary makes them feel independent and to some extent freer to express their opinions and fight against domestic violence against women.

3.0 Sexual Harassment in the Domestic Work

Firstly, it is necessary to develop the definition of sexual harassment, a context and information necessary for understanding the evil that sexual harassment is.

According to Silva (2020), harassment consists of an insistent and inconvenient persecution that targets a specific person or group, affecting their peace, dignity, and freedom. There are different types of harassment, such as moral, sexual, psychological, virtual, judicial, among others. However, they are all based on the principle of persecuting and forcing someone to do something against their will in exchange for favours or for some coercion. Sexual harassment is a type of violence that is characterized by the insistence of a certain person in insinuating himself sexually to another, causing discomfort in the latter. Sexual harassment at work is unwanted behaviour practiced with some degree of reiteration by a person in a higher category than the harassed person, and with the objective or effect of affecting the dignity of the person or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or destabilizing environment, where he negotiates the exchange of sexual favours in exchange for labour benefits.

Thus, if any of these acts described above are committed against a worker, he must be penalized. However, how can sexual harassment be controlled in a domestic setting, where there are no witnesses or other forms of evidence?

Domestic workers are among the most vulnerable when it comes to abuse in the workplace. Due to their isolation (working alone in a household) and the nature of the work (unskilled), domestic workers are subject to many types of unfair treatment and exploitation ranging from long working hours to substandard wages.

Sexual harassment may consist of the employer or member of the household making sexual jokes or comments, commenting on the domestic worker's clothing or figure, making rude noises such as whistling or laughing noises, touching, or caressing the domestic worker, demanding sexual favours so that the worker can keep his job and even rape. It is very difficult for domestic workers to report such cases, as they work in isolation and it is their word against the abuser, with rarely any sympathetic witnesses. Domestic workers also fear being fired if they report any sexual harassment, because they are repressed with fear of losing their jobs, which are the only guarantee of being able to satisfy their household needs. Interviewee 14 said,

That's right because I'm afraid of losing my job. Sometimes when I wake up to go to work, I get lazy because I don't know how to prevent my boss from wanting to have something with me. I'm only safe when my lady is at home... (October 2021)

During the focus groups discussions sensitive information was revealed by women domestic workers regarding the fact that they sometimes have to submit themselves and deal with situations of sexual harassment if they were to guarantee their employment. Some women said that they had to change jobs several times in order to avoid harassment. In some cases, they even suffer physical attacks perpetrated by their employers' wives, because of their jealousy that their husbands like the maid. Thus, they end up losing their jobs, without the right to compensation and forfeiting their salaries.

The complexity of harassment causes several consequences in the human psyche, especially for women, and can lead to chronic diseases, incurable trauma and so many different consequences that can even prevent an individual from leading a normal life.

According to Freitas in Silva (2020) there are actual consequences in the life of the victim of crime, so it is not only a legal issue. These consequences are included in psychological, medical, and even in sociological studies. Sexual harassment is, in fact, an action that disguises itself as an option for the victim,

who may be compelled to accept giving sexual favours because of a proposal for a raise or a threat of unemployment if the sexual harassment is rejected.

Sexual harassment is a situation that negatively affects the victim when her only choice is either to be fired or have her honour violated. It is worth mentioning that in addition, there is also the possibility of even physical violence. Sexual harassment triggers a series of psychological problems for the victim that can last for long periods. Furthermore, it will cause problems in the work environment and in the general life of the person.

Ximexes in Silva (2020) demonstrates that sexual harassment in work relationships can trigger unproductivity, putting the survival of the company or workspace at risk; it can also cause the victim to be unable to work due to the trauma, thus destroying a promising career and allowing the loss of libido in the face of other traumas. In the case of domestic workers, it would have even more consequences for them, as domestic workers in the city of Maputo are in a situation of constant risk of losing their jobs, since, even with so many complaints regarding domestic work, there is a lot of competition due to the serious fact of lack of employment and constant economic crisis and their low educational background.

Therefore, according to the interviewees, they often change jobs for fear of submitting to harassment, and they say that other colleagues prefer to submit, running the risk of being beaten by their employers' wives or girlfriends, and when they decide to leave their jobs return to a situation of uncertainty for not knowing when they will have the opportunity to get another job again, and this destabilizes their development process.

4.0 Racism Issues in the Domestic Work

Over the ages there have been two viewpoints to discuss the concept of racism and race from. The first, between the 18th and 20th centuries, explained the inequalities between human peoples through nature. It was '*scientific racism*', which justified slavery by legitimizing the racial hierarchy. In the viewpoint, which took place after the Second World War, inequalities between peoples were explained through culture: the emphasis on cultural differences was offered as a justification for exclusion Portela (2017). In this way, human groups that until then were racially categorized began to form ethnic groups, to include cultural characteristics in the global understanding of the term and no longer just hereditary as in biological racism.

According to Frederickson in Portela (2017), the term racism appears in the 1920s as a product of the West, dethroning ‘race’ as the dominant concept in that debate. For him, the word racism manifests itself associated with ideologies that made offensive distinctions between divisions of the ‘white’ or Caucasian race, to show that Aryans or Nordics were superior to other people normally considered ‘white’ or *Caucasian*. In turn, racial discrimination can be considered as the practice of racism and the realization of prejudice. While racism and prejudice are within the scope of doctrines and judgments, worldviews and beliefs, discrimination is the adoption of practices that make them effective. Racial discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably and may be placed in a group on the basis of skin colour, ‘race’, national or ethnic origin and social class.

The United Nations says that racial discrimination means any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, which has the objective of nullifying or restricting the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise on the same level (in equal conditions) of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

However, when talking about racial discrimination at work, Portela (2017) argues that it is a type of mechanism among a complex set of racist practices, whose cumulative effects reproduce the inferior social positions of black people, perpetuating racial stratification within social spheres such as the labour market. This mechanism of discrimination occurs through the racial division of labour; unequal unemployment among social groups; among racial groups; the differential at work between black and white workers and the precarious (physical and intellectual) reproduction of the black workforce.

The problem of slavery left a look at domestic work, as if those who performed it were in an inferior and servitude situation. Even after the abolition of slavery, people who are in a superior financial situation, who hire the services of domestic workers, still feel superior, and even though they are people of the same colour, as Fanon in Lewis (2014) avers “*the will of black is to be like white. For the Negro there is but one destiny. And he is white. The Negro has long since admitted the indisputable superiority of the white, and all his efforts tend to achieve a white existence*”. Thus, the question of domestic work arising from slavery, in the relationship between workers and employers, it is felt not only an economic inequality, but also a racial inequality.

The devaluation of manual work is directly related to who, in the beginning of colonial society, practised this work, '*black work*', '*slave work*'. The maids were responsible for reproductive work, from cooking and cleaning the house to raising children and satisfying their masters' sexual needs. Hence, there is also a peer perception or a sense of belonging that employers have in relation to their employees, which makes the practice of harassment frequent. The maids freed the white ladies from taking care of their own homes and their families, which marks the identity of domestic work, which today still has the roots of women's subordination in its characteristics.

According to Lewis (2014), reproductive work, which is the emotional, manual, routine work of taking care of those who cannot self-care, clean and tidy, cook and feed, is not socially valued nor recognized in the social organization of work, because it does not constitute a production activity and does not produce surplus value, therefore, it does not produce profit. In a capitalist society it does not constitute valid time. The value of domestic work has to be faced from the intersection of social cuts in which gender, race and class are fundamental. Intersectionality allows us a look that goes beyond the one-sidedness of an analysis that does not outline the type of subordination experienced by these workers.

Since women who work in the domestic sector are seen as if they still continued to serve their bosses, just like slave women, their bodies were always used, both reproductive during slavery, object of male satisfaction, of milk for the masters' children and capable of performing any and all domestic service. These representations have instilled in the cultural imagination that women are just bodies, without minds, incapable of ascending socially because they are seen as disabled, incompetent, and inferior, but also as not worthy of changing their social situation. Housework is one of the many forms of work that reflect racist and patriarchal cultural thinking, which massacres the daily lives of these women who, in their daily lives, are seen as domestic servants, and this is their profession that they deserve to stay in, with no prospect of development. However, this thought must be overcome, creating laws that consider domestic work as any work, which is legally considered to be at the same level of coverage as the labour law.

According to Eurico (2018) it is necessary to question the absence of institutional debate on the impacts of racism in the country as well as on the importance of collecting information on race or colour; as this issue has not yet been well examined. Promotion of measures against racism requires a broad debate and awareness of the impacts that more than three centuries of slavery have on the lives of men and women in the different generational cycles. Undoubtedly, this is an important initiative, but the collection of data cannot be understood as an end in itself. The mere filling of the data as a protocol requirement, without articulation and regard to the socio-historical determinations that contribute to the maintenance of generational poverty cannot encompass the multiplicity of factors that make this part of the working class more vulnerable. In the words of informant 15,

Sometimes I feel discriminated against... if I were black like me maybe I wouldn't treat myself like this... even when it's with a black boss they treat us badly, but when we go to complain the matter is usually resolved, but when it's a problem with a white boss it's difficult he is called... We are even afraid to go to Quaixar when he is white... we know that nothing will happen... here in white Mozambique they just want to ask you for money... just pay..." (Interviewed 15, October 2021)

The difficulty of understanding racism as a perverse mark of social relations in Maputo and in Mozambique is entrenched in the entire socio-historical construction which is structured based on the comparison they make in relation to the days of slavery; thus, the issue of servitude, domestic work and poverty are linked to racial issues. One can notice that in a number of speeches reference is made to 'the poor or ignorant black people', even though the person who speaks is black. In this case, the word black is attributed to the stigma of inferiority, disqualification, naturalized violence, among many other adjectives.

Racial equality presupposes fair treatment and social protection within the scope of labour relations, through affirmative action. Such actions should aim to curb situations such as the historical lack of protection of domestic workers, day workers, nannies, caregivers of the elderly or sick and those who, throughout their lives have not benefitted from social security. Thus, it is necessary that the racial issue be discussed in the context of domestic work in Mozambique to make the population aware of the need to think in a way that promotes equality, avoiding stigmas regarding race, financial status, work, or any other form of inequality.

When it comes to domestic work, it is impossible not to highlight the elements of the racial and sexual division of work, which relegates to women the almost exclusive responsibility for cleaning and caring for the family. However, one finds in these women the hope of making their work the source to guarantee their economic security.

Since generally white-race employers pay better wages, many women hope that they will be able to secure the best livelihoods if they worked for them. However, some workers tell that, in addition to being harassed by their employers, they are seen as mere slaves and servants, having to obey their masters because they pay better wages. At one of the interviews held in Maputo, Domestic Worker 3 shared,

I used to work for markets, but it didn't take me long. I used to get paid better with them, especially Europeans, because the monhé (name used to designate people of Indian or Arab origin) don't pay well. But Europeans pay good wages... it's just that they treat us badly, and my boss already wanted forcing me to have sex with him, that's why I stopped working... it's hard to denounce because as he has a lot of money, he never gives anything. (Domestic Worker 3, August 2021)

Therefore, as we can see, all actions are focused on the need that women have to empower themselves, earn their livelihood and that of their families, a fact that is used to oppress and harass women, jeopardizing the realization of their dreams. The issue of racism is very important to be brought up in a discussion forum in our context, not only because it is a subject that is still little discussed due to the fears that I believe the Mozambican people have, due to our financial dependence and other political fears. The fact is that this issue exists and is very much linked to the way female workers feel they are treated by their employers when they are of one race or another.

5.0 Conclusions

The data collected in this research demonstrate how difficult it is to address the issue of sexual harassment of domestic workers. Indeed, this experience of violence is characterized by the overlapping of class, race, and gender discrimination. It is gender-related violence that cannot be isolated from other forms of oppression, such as poverty and racism. Besides the difficulty of domestic workers in naming and denouncing sexual harassment, it is necessary

to recognize the broader social context, which, at the individual and collective level, denies and delegitimizes their experiences of structural oppression.

With regard to sexual harassment, there is still much to discover, as it is a sensitive issue, which domestic workers themselves do not feel liberated enough to address. The fear of losing their jobs or of creating situations of distrust by their employers makes the subject of harassment little discussed and little reported. Allied to this, there is the racial issue that constrains domestic workers, due to the political and social reality that is lived in Mozambique, specifically in Maputo.

In this case, it can be concluded that domestic work is still regarded as work where employees must only fulfil duties, without being covered by their rights. Their employers put themselves in a position where they take their female workers as their instruments, not only to tirelessly take care of domestic chores, but also to serve as sexual servant. Given this, we clearly see that, for the reasons mentioned above, domestic workers find themselves in a compromising situation which forces them to give up their job, thus failing to progress financially and achieve their economic freedom. Since there is the belief that those white employers pay higher wages, domestic servants try to get work with them, but the harassment and mistreatment are even worse, due to the existence of post-colonial thinking, which puts the domestic servants as retainers in the same mould as in colonial times.

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